

# **Teaching Folk:**

## **The Educational Institutionalization of Folk Music in Contemporary England**

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**PhD**

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**Contemporary England**

Simon Keegan-Phipps

**Abstract**

This thesis offers an ethnomusicological account of a contemporary movement toward the formalization of education in England's folk music culture. The report considers, in particular, two case studies: Folkworks and the associated degree course in folk and traditional music at Newcastle University; and the folk festival subcontractor organization, Shooting Roots. These are located first within the socio-historical context of the English folk revivals, and then within the – largely disparate – contemporary musical-cultural contexts of the North East of England, and (southern) 'England' respectively. Methodologies for the research draw predominantly on ethnographic techniques of participant-observation and interview, but these are combined with the less orthodox methods of internet and media-based fieldwork to offer the widest socio-cultural contextualization of the movement. The discourses surrounding these cases are analysed in terms of pedagogy, education markets and a folk music industry, whilst the musical texts with which they deal are shown simultaneously to assert and repudiate regional and national identities. The thesis also offers key examples of the influences of such institutionalization beyond the boundaries of organizations themselves. It concludes that it is possible to regard the movement as a manifestation of an individualist-consumerist culture and goes on to propose some critical theories of the movement in relation to processes such as elitism, standardization and recontextualization.

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# **1. Introduction**

In a nation on the periphery of Europe, in a region most distant from the capital, the country's indigenous musical traditions are undergoing a process of institutionalization. A significant proportion of the nation's population fear the loss of their ancient customs and national identity to the ever rising tide of foreign cultural influences. The locality itself, however, enjoys both a strong regional identity and a unique musical repertory, a repertory that plays a central role in both the text and context of the institutionalization in question. The resultant institution is multifaceted – its activities include: the collation and publication of music recordings and transcriptions; the promotion of performances by locally and nationally revered folk musicians; the creation and direction of a folk orchestra; and, most importantly, an extensive folk music education programme, culminating in a nationally recognised qualification. The organization receives financial support from the state departments for education and culture, and has been quietly accused by independent folk musicians of standardizing and formalizing the music it professes to support.

This brief account could accurately describe the processes of institutionalization undergone by the various folk musics of the USSR's many states from the outset of the Soviet regime. So too would it serve as a portrayal of the folk music institutionalization and policies of regionalization employed by the nationalist governments of fascist Italy, Spain and Portugal.<sup>1</sup> Within the larger context of European folk music scholarship, these periods of institutionalization are generally

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<sup>1</sup> Events that shall be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

regarded as having cloven traditional music apart from notions of textual and contextual authenticity, to make way for an almost entirely manufactured idiom best suited to the aspects of social engineering for which it would be employed. The processes of classicization, standardization and recontextualization inherent in these developments are tacitly regarded – and often explicitly depicted – as shameful events in the maturation of folk music and folk music scholarship, never to be repeated. And yet the possible repetition of such processes is close at hand, as an instance of institutionalization on a considerable scale goes largely unmentioned in the ethnomusicological record. The description given above does not recount the state of folk music in the Soviet Union or Fascist Europe of the mid-twentieth century: it refers to the cultural processes encapsulated within the thoroughly modern surroundings of The Sage Gateshead, in the North East region of contemporary England.

The organization alluded to above is called Folkworks. This is not the only contemporary example of folk music institutionalization in England – its development has occurred alongside the growth of another, very different example of educational institutionalization resident in the Southern and Midland regions of England, Shooting Roots. This study shall attempt to characterize and explain Folkworks and Shooting Roots through offering a comparative ethnography of their respective textual characteristics, as well as through the study of their global, national and regional contexts. The aims of the research presented herein can be understood in terms of two separable objectives: firstly, to provide a detailed ethnomusicological account of the music cultures in which Folkworks and Shooting Roots are located; secondly, to offer



specific discussion on the nature and practices of the these two institutions. The first of these aims is attempted through the posing of the following questions:

- What are the key musical (repertorical and stylistic) features of the ‘English’ and North East folk music cultures, and in what ways do they differ?
- How do these features reflect and affect the non-musical elements, cultural identities and value systems of the contemporary ‘English’ and North East contexts?

The second of the two objectives shall be achieved primarily by the specification of the pedagogical and cultural methods by which the two institutions operate: research into these institutions has been guided by the following questions:

- How do the two organizations negotiate definitions of folk music?
- In what ways do they recontextualize folk music, in relation to wider socio-cultural spheres?
- To what extent, and in what ways, do these instances of institutionalization result in the canonization or transformation of repertoires?
- How do they justify (or problematize) the formalized education of folk music in the wake of the – largely discredited – attempts by previous, twentieth-century revivalist movements?
- How do they reconcile concepts of economic viability (and success) and cultural philanthropy?

To begin to address these issues, this report commences – in chapter 1 – with a discussion and explanation of the primary methodologies employed during the year

of fieldwork on which the following research is based (September 2004-September 2005), and a contextualization of these methodologies within the existing literature on English folk music. This is followed by a presentation of the broader definition of the term folk music as a field of study within prior scholarship, and a rationalization of terminology in the present study. Finally, this chapter will offer a brief account of how this research resides within a wider body of work on the educational institutionalization of folk music in Europe.

Chapter 2 is aimed at providing a more in-depth analysis of the – historical and contemporary – English folk music context: it begins with a very brief overview of key elements of the “first” folk revival period as they pertain to the educational transmission of folk music. The chapter then goes on to present the key socio-cultural and pedagogical issues relating to the formalization of folk music training with reference to these events. It then closes with a discussion of the current nature and status of folk music in relation to issues of national media, politics and identity in England.

In chapter 3, I shall introduce the central features of the folk music culture of the North East of England, before providing a detailed survey of Folkworks as an instance of educational institutionalization. This includes an ethnographic examination of the organization’s primary educative tool – the workshop – and a textual analysis of its main written resource – a collection of tunes entitled the *Folkworks Session Collection*. In chapter 4, the discussion on the educational activities of Folkworks shall be expanded to include the BMus undergraduate degree course in folk and traditional music, a joint venture between Newcastle University and Folkworks. This

chapter shall consider the ways in which the lecturing staff (the majority of whom are professional performers) represent themselves in the academic context, and how appropriate repertory is characterized and performed on the course. I will go on to discuss the responses of the wider folk music cultures of England to the creation of the degree, and to its students, and shall finally discuss the discourse offered by some of the founding lecturers for justifying the degree course's creation.

Chapter 5 will begin by presenting a very different folk music cultural context to that of the North East: the 'English' folk music culture.<sup>2</sup> Into this context shall be posited the educational institution of Shooting Roots, whose history, specific milieu, nature and educational practices shall be examined. Its role as a commodity to festival organizers shall also be investigated, before I go on to provide a detailed scrutiny of the ways in which Shooting Roots' repertoires relate to the teaching/learning context.

In chapter 6, I shall introduce the notion of a developing 'English' folk music style, and identify the ways in which educational institutionalization is influencing this development. This shall be followed by an examination of the ways in which the institutions are involved in the development of a competition culture, and complicit in a broadening folk music industry. Finally, I shall draw conclusions from the ethnographic evidence provided, illuminating the nature of folk music's educational institutionalization as an economically charged entity. This chapter shall offer a new understanding of the folk music cultures discussed as based, not on repertorial specifications or canonizations, but rather on socially constructed concepts of

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<sup>2</sup> The use of these terms shall be explained later in this chapter.



“community”, and shall consider the varying ways in which these concepts are culturally maintained and articulated.

## **Methodologies: ethnomusicology, music sociology and folk music in England**

The development of ‘folk’ and ‘traditional’ music in the modern world, the myriad musical and cultural characteristics denoted by the terms and the numerous instances of socio-political manipulations to which such music has been subjected, have fallen into the intellectual domain of either music sociologists or ethnomusicologists, depending on the relatively arbitrary factor of geographical location. It is nothing new to suggest that the musics of the non-western cultures of the world have generally remained the fields of choice for the Anglo-American ethnomusicologist to conduct his or her anthropologically orientated, qualitative research. Meanwhile, indigenous folk music of ‘the West’ has – certainly for the latter half of the last century – fallen, with generally tacit acceptance, under the remit of the socio-historical disciplines. The orientation of British and American ethnomusicological study towards non-western musics continues in spite of the efforts of some 40 years to redefine the field as a processual, scholarly approach.<sup>3</sup> Much has been made of ethnomusicologists’ attempts to set new sights on music in ‘the West’, but the results are often heavily preoccupied with the musics of diaspora situated within western countries, most

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<sup>3</sup> e.g. Alan P. Merriam, ‘Ethnomusicology: Discussion and Definition of the Field’, *Ethnomusicology*, 4/3 (1960), 107-114; Alan P. Merriam, ‘Definitions of Comparative Musicology and Ethnomusicology: An Historical-Theoretical Perspective’, *Ethnomusicology*, 21/2 (1977), 189-204; Alan P. Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964); Marcia Herndon and Norma McLeod, *Music As Culture* (California: Norwood Editions, 1981); Timothy Rice, ‘Towards the Remodelling of Ethnomusicology’, *Ethnomusicology*, 31/3 (1987), 469-487.



usually *non-western* diaspora, betraying the ethnomusicologists' – and their readership's – fixation with alterity that fuelled the discipline's earliest beginnings.<sup>4</sup>

English folk music of the last two hundred years has enjoyed much scrutiny from the sociological fraternity over the last half century, but this period of examination appears to be drawing to a close since most involved have treated the folk music of England as a socio-historical artefact.<sup>5</sup> In short, sociology has 'done' the English folk revivals of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and little attempt has been made to achieve a phenomenological understanding of the contemporary folk music culture extant in England.<sup>6</sup> And yet this folk culture, whose heavily ideological and largely fabricated foundations have suffered the damaging onslaughts of numerous academics – in particular, Boyes and Harker – is not only fully recovered, but continues to develop and thrive.

The research documented herein not only seeks to swell the small number of qualitative, ethnographic studies into English folk music and, more generally, folk music in England; it is also intended as a phenomenological snap-shot of a period in the development of folk music in England that has gone largely without consideration

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<sup>4</sup> e.g. Philip V. Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988); Mark Slobin, *Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West* (Middletown CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> e.g. Albert L. Lloyd, *Folk Song in England* (London: Paladin, 1967); Dave Harker, *Fakesong; the Manufacture of British "Folksong" 1700 to the present day* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1985); Georgina Boyes, *The Imagined Village; Culture, Ideology and the English Folk Revival* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993); Simon Frith, 'Review. "The Imagined Village. Culture, Ideology and the English Folk Revival": Georgina Boyes; "The British Folk Scene. Musical Performance and Social Identity": Niall MacKinnon; "Transforming Tradition. Folk Music Revivals Examined": Neil V. Rosenberg.' *Popular Music* (Australia and New Zealand issue), 13/3 (1994), 345-353; Mike Sutton, 'England, Whose England? Class, Gender and National Identity in the 20th Century Folklore Revival', *Musical Traditions*. <http://www.mustrad.org.uk/articles/england.htm> (December, 2000); Michael Brocken, *The British Folk Revival 1944-2002* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> A notable exception being the survey of British folk clubs conducted by MacKinnon in the late 1980s, and published in 1993; Niall MacKinnon, *The British Folk Scene: Musical Performance and Social Identity* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993).

in the last ten years. That said, however, ethnomusicology's first tentative embraces of contemporary, mass-mediated Western music cultures have necessarily been characterised by a multidisciplinary reconciliation of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, a reconciliation in which the present study also engages.<sup>7</sup> The essential ethnographic practices of participant observation, unstructured interviews with key individuals in the relevant field and detailed musical analysis, remain the most valuable of the many tools at the ethnomusicologist's disposal, but this study shall endeavour to supplement these methodologies with historiographical and media analysis. These approaches are by no means unheard-of within the wider body of ethnomusicological research, but are not so prevalent as methodologies dealing with direct interpersonal and performance behaviours. Whilst historiographical and textual media analyses are not employed as to supersede the ultimately anthropological approach of the work documented here, it is contended that these levels of scrutiny take place, often unconsciously, by every human being in the social and personal construction of his or her cultural experiences. Through this multidisciplinary approach, then, I am not simply reporting the cultural experiences related to me by informants: I seek to undergo a process of creating and recreating a specific cultural understanding, a process equivalent to that which is silently – but perpetually – undertaken by the musicians studied.

Since the commencement of the research on which this study is based, ethnomusicologists have begun to document British traditional or folk musics. An important watershed in this respect was the publication of an edition of the journal

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<sup>7</sup> See for instance Chris Goertzen, *Fiddling for Norway; Revival and Identity* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Tina K. Ramnarine, *Ilmatar's Inspirations: Nationalism, Globalization, and the Changing Soundscapes of Finnish Folk Music* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2003).



*The World of Music* in 2004 devoted to 'Contemporary British Music Traditions', itself arriving in the wake of the British Forum for Ethnomusicology annual conference of the same year, at which roughly half of the papers delivered were related to the topic of 'Ethnomusicology at Home' (a topic that shall be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter). However, <sup>the ?</sup> these two articles within that journal edition referring to contemporary *English* (indigenous) musical traditions are of a nature that appears to indicate the uncertain role of the ethnomusicologist in Western folk music scholarship.<sup>8</sup> Both embrace a "microcosmic" approach to the delimitation of their respective fields; each study represents an ethnographic discussion of the musical activities of relatively small numbers, within the confines of a very clearly defined performance context (one a minority carol singing tradition in Yorkshire; the other, a single instrumental session in Sheffield).

This approach is, of course, widespread in the discipline of ethnomusicology, and made most explicit in Slobin's *Subcultural Sounds*, where he embarks on the study of 'small musics'.<sup>9</sup> Since Rice's inclusion of the individual as one of the three components of his remodelling of ethnomusicology, the reduction of the ethnomusicologist's field has, of course, been taken to the logical conclusion via the argument in favour of an 'ethnomusicology of the individual'.<sup>10</sup> And few would wish to deny the value of these micro-musical accounts. Nonetheless, in the context of English folk music scholarship, the inclination towards this approach means that each

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<sup>8</sup> Ian Russell, 'Sacred and Secular: Identity, Style, and Performance in Two Singing Traditions from the Pennines', *World of Music*, 46/1 (2004) 11-40; Jonathan P. J. Stock, 'Ordering Performance, Leading People: Structuring an English Folk Music Session', *World of Music*, 46/1 (2004) 41-70.

<sup>9</sup> Slobin, *Subcultural Sounds*, ix.

<sup>10</sup> Rice, 'Towards a Remodelling of Ethnomusicology'; Jonathan P. J. Stock, 'Toward an Ethnomusicology of the Individual, Or Biographical Writing in Ethnomusicology.' *World of Music*, 43/1 (2001), 5-19.

example can be read as a particularly tentative step towards an anthropological recording of contemporary English folk music. It may be argued that these small-scale pieces of research do relatively little to place their objects of study within a larger context of contemporary folk music in England; certainly, neither author claims that such is within the scopes of their respective studies. And such a concentration on the specifics of a “subcultural” group (or musical “community”) is not without good reason: so little has been written on the subject of the English folk music culture from an ethnomusicological perspective (or, on the subject of *contemporary* English folk music culture, from *any* perspective), that any consideration of this substantial population as a contextual whole, whilst not beyond the application of ethnomusicological methodologies, would be unsupported by a body of pre-existing groundwork.

Furthermore, the probable need to grapple with issues of popular culture, youth culture, economic and political globalization, postmodernism and media representation makes the task all the more unpalatable, since these epistemological realms are traditionally less familiar to the ethnomusicologist than those based on more directly experiential analyses. Thus, when ethnomusicology *does* tackle English musical traditions at length, (i.e. Britta Sweers’ study of the English folk rock movement), it must resort to the historiographical methods of the existing sociological record.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Britta Sweers, *Electric Folk; The Changing Face of English Traditional Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).



And yet this thesis seeks to demonstrate that contemporary folk music culture in England does *not* exist in isolated pockets, although it is *possible* to break it down into micro-repertoires and micro-contexts for the purposes of conducting a brief musical survey. Instead, I intend to demonstrate that, for contemporary folk musicians in this country, the ‘sum of the lived experience’ (Slobin’s chosen definition of culture)<sup>12</sup> occurs on a “macro” rather than “micro” scale. After all, few practising folk musicians in England have not purchased a recording of a nationally recognised artist in their genre/field/culture, with whom they have no personal contact, in the last twelve months. Few practising folk musicians in England have not also purchased a CD from an *alternative* area of the record shop. Their world extends beyond the realms of their specific activity, to include – or, at least, engage with and interact with – not only CDs, but also internet chat rooms and blogs for likeminded musicians and enthusiasts; specialist radio broadcasts (including internet and digital radio); festivals all over the country and the globe; internationally distributed publications; and (the principal focus of the present study) educational institutions. These elements – to name but a few – all play a role in the creation of (to use Geertz’s terms) a ‘web of culture’ that is not limited to a single session, a single town, a single region, or a single element of the wider “folk arts”.<sup>13</sup>

It is not my intention to suggest an “all-or-nothing” ultimatum: studies of the type listed above are indisputably valuable in the search to document and understand the daily – as well as monthly and yearly – practices of subcultural groups. Nor do I propose that the present study falls into the “all” category: this is by no means

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<sup>12</sup> Slobin, *Subcultural Sounds*, 11.

<sup>13</sup> Clifford Geertz, ‘Thick Description: Toward and Interpretive Theory of Culture’, in Geertz, C. (ed.) *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, inc., 1973), 4.

intended as an holistic and comprehensive survey of folk music culture in England at the present day; it concentrates, instead, on the specific element of formalized education within that culture – an element in which not *all* English folk musicians participate. However, the ethnographic methodologies employed in this thesis do seek to avoid an unnecessarily narrow scope or approach; furthermore, every attempt is made to apply adequate contextual setting to the details of the main focus. Thus, in order to maintain a balance between text and context in this study, statements are made – about, for instance, the popularity of Irish traditional music in the North East, or morris dancing in the South – that are unaccompanied by lengthy, evidential illustrations and may, therefore, be read by some as generalizations. In constructing the present study, I have been forced to regard such potential for criticism as necessary: to provide close ethnographic detail on morris dancing performance in England would be to eclipse the principal crux of my research; alternatively, not to include comment on the popularity of Irish traditional music in the North East would be to make a nonsense of the region's most common educational practices and repertoires.

This contextualizing approach is, however, tempered by the presentation of the subject matter in the form of a phenomenology. Relatively little time is spent on the facts, names and dates of the English historical context; since I have already suggested that sociological discourse has covered the factual matters of the English folk revivals, it would be quite pointless for me to return to those narratives and historical analyses; unlike in the case of *contemporary* English folk music, this groundwork has been written and rewritten in much greater depth than would be achievable here. In chapter 2, therefore, I shall offer a short narrative of the key



events and personalities in the history of English folk music *education* before going on to present, in subsequent chapters what is, essentially, a contemporary snap-shot of the practices and contexts of folk music pedagogy over the last decade or so.

This imbalance of historical context with regional and national contexts can also be related back to the quest for the ‘lived experience’: I have been a folk musician of sorts since my early teens (as shall be discussed in the following subsection of this chapter) and have been an active member of various subcultural groups within both the ‘English’ and North East folk music cultures for twelve and six years respectively. In short, I have considerable ‘lived experience’ of these music cultures, and of the wider regional and national contexts in which they operate. I was not, however, active as a musician, or even alive, to experience the last two periods of revival; moreover, most details of these periods in England’s folk music history, whilst fascinating in themselves, are *by no means* essential cultural capital for the attainment of successfully functioning membership of these music cultures today. A contemporary, Shropshire-based fiddler does not need to know about the achievements of Fox-Strangeways, whereas he/she would be expected to have a general understanding of the Licensing Act controversy or the basic differences between border and Cotswold morris dancing (matters on which there is very little – up to date – background literature). If one is to consider the ‘ethnographer’s self as the field’,<sup>14</sup> then it is reasonable to concentrate on what I have experienced during my period as both a researcher and a musician; that which I (and my informants) have not lived or experienced, whilst possibly still of great importance to an understanding of

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<sup>14</sup> Slobin, *Subcultural Sounds*, 3.

the present, can be distinguished as separate from the strictly ethnographic data on which this study is firmly founded.

*New sources: publicity, pamphlets and E-fieldwork*

Alongside the ethnographic mainstay of the unstructured interview, the other key elements of the conventional ethnomusicologist's methodological repertoire – field recording, transcription, performance ethnographies, musical analysis – are also employed in this research. They do, however, play a more modest role in the overall narrative of the thesis than in the case of other ethnomusicological studies: transcriptions of field recordings are less prevalent here, since the majority of playing encountered in the field of educational institutionalization originated – to a great extent – from widely available, and culturally central written notation which is itself often supplied by the institution in question. In such cases, I have deemed a rigorous analysis of the published source to be at least as important to an ethnography of musical institutionalization as an analysis of a performer's adherence to (or deviation from) it, and have favoured the in-depth, case-study based approach to such ends.

Also, the close musical analysis which enjoys such a central place in the ethnomusicological record writ-large is, here, tempered by equally meticulous textual analysis of the written word. Whilst the ethnomusicological fraternity, along with many other disciplines, continues to rehearse a concern about the use of language to discuss art (often citing the legendary “dancing about architecture” adage as they do



so),<sup>15</sup> the musicians and listenership who form the field with which this study deals are rarely halted from speaking and writing on the subject by such philosophical dilemmas. These (often emotive) conversations and writings are fundamental to the construction of musical and cultural identities, and therefore as deserving of scrutiny as the musical artefacts to which they refer. In short, if writing/speaking-about-music is an essential element of the music culture being studied then it must, necessarily, be written about. This is certainly true in the case of the folk music cultures of contemporary England, since the demographic of these cultures are primarily comprised of the educated middle-classes, for whom articulate debate is an especially important, defining element of social interaction. For this reason, much of the material collated in the field-research phase of this study appears in the form of programme notes, leaflets on workshop series and forthcoming concerts, degree course handbooks, newspaper and magazine articles, CD reviews and various other forms of “non-academic” text. Many of these are of ambiguous – or even quite anonymous – authorship, although every effort has been made to identify originators, and publishing institutions in such cases are generally explicit.

Another form of written text that is treated here as a vital source of cultural discussions and negotiations is that of internet web logs (or blogs) and chat rooms or discussion fora. Such fields of cultural study, whilst unconventional as explicitly declared sources for discourse analysis within the wider body of ethnomusicological research, are now well established as sites for discussing music of every sort (along

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<sup>15</sup> Popularly attributed to, among others, Steve Martin and Elvis Costello. For a brief but recent example of such commentary, see Arthur Knight, ‘Review: Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music by Simon Frith’, in *American Music* 16/4 (1998), pp. 485-487.

with most areas of human cultural life), and visitation of – and participation in – such sites is a ubiquitous feature of cultural communication across the developed world.

As new methodologies for the qualitative and quantitative data collection over the internet have been developed, so too have the ethical issues surrounding such research enjoyed considerable profile.<sup>16</sup> The creation of ethical frameworks for internet research are often, however, geared towards internet-specific methodologies such as internet interviews, online focus groups, etc., and necessarily aimed at regulating research into non-public or sensitive research. In the case of the present study, the majority of internet research was carried out purely at an observatory level: that is, I took on the role of a “lurker”, a non-participating visitor to online chat fora.<sup>17</sup> In this way, I did not intervene in the topical direction of discussion threads.

However, I was forced to avoid rehearsing standard ethical practice as it exists in the wider discipline of internet ethnography. For instance, in order to observe conversation on various subject matter in online chat rooms without inducing an observer-effect, it was necessary not to draw attention to my “presence” or research intentions. Likewise, anonymity (in the strictest sense) has not been afforded those participants in the web chats: in the majority of cases they have already assumed pseudonyms for the discussion fora, and these pseudonyms actually hold a wealth of information regarding the participants’ *cultural* identities (as, for instance, in the case

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<sup>16</sup> For a broad discussion of the key issues see, for instance, Steve Jones, *Doing Internet Research: Critical Issues and Methods for Examining the Net*, (London, Sage Publications: 1998); Chris Mann and Fiona Stewart, *Internet Communication and Qualitative Research: a Handbook for Researching Online*, (London, Sage Publications: 2000) 39-65.

<sup>17</sup> For more on “lurker” status within internet research, see Patricia Winter, *Reading the Exercise Video: Analysis of Video Exercise in Relation to Critical Debates Within Feminist, Media and Cultural Theory*. PhD Thesis (University of Sunderland, 2003), 66-9.



of the contributor to the BBC Acoustic Message Board, who goes by the screen name of ‘Surreysinger’). Ultimately, the discussion sites used in this thesis have been accessible to the public *without login status or subscription*, and the threads researched can be arrived at via standard (e.g. Google) searches. In the case of BBC Acoustic Message Board, all contributors are aware of the administration of a message-by-message moderation process – presumably by representatives of the BBC – and so are conscious of the “public” nature of their communications.<sup>18</sup> It is for these reasons, combined with the fact that the present study is not designed for general publication and widespread distribution, that I have felt justified in the direct quotation of contributors’ messages and screen names.

## **Ethnomusicology at home: issues of proximity**

The phrase “at home” with regards to a particular ethnography (or “native” to describe an ethnographer), is widespread throughout the anthropological disciplines, and has generally been used to signify an overriding perception that the author’s cultural – or, more accurately, *enculturational* – experiences are, at least to some extent, shared by those whom he/she is studying. In recent times, there has been an assumption – usually a perfectly correct assumption – that such an author’s perceptions are somehow imbued with an unusually close proximity to those of his or her subjects, and that the study’s findings will therefore represent another step in the direction of the “insider view”; the *-emic* perspective. Ethnography of the familiar, as an academic trend, has received considerable attention in the ethnomusicological record of the last two decades, with discourse on the subject being concerned with the

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<sup>18</sup> Thus, this research is distinguished from more ethically questionable “lurking” as discussed in Mann and Stewart, *Internet Communication*, 46-7.



epistemological justification of culturally reflexive analysis and the practical implications of conducting fieldwork within one's own music culture.

The current growth in the number of ethnomusicological studies consciously conducted in the researcher's "home" (whether that be in the researcher's home country, in his/her own primary music culture, or simply within the relatively unscrutinised field of globalized Western society), is a sizeable event in the development of the field of ethnomusicology, but is also a mirroring of a larger-scale trend across social and cultural studies. As sociology and anthropology have moved steadily away from the rigid methodological emphases of the physical sciences, so too have the "social sciences" begun to accept the solipsistic philosophy most succinctly defined by Fay as the notion that 'you have to be one to know one'.<sup>19</sup> Until some fifty years ago, it had long been regarded as inconceivable for an ethnographer to achieve sufficiently profound level of comprehension in such a familiar cultural environment, since he or she would be unable to identify and explore – objectively or subjectively – the deep seated and commonly subconscious bases of that culture's interactions and ideologies.<sup>20</sup> The belief that an objective and impartial overview of a culture must be sought, and that such an overview may only be achieved from an exterior – and, by implication, elevated – vantage point, was until the latter half of the last century an internalised 'common sense' of socio-cultural academia.<sup>21</sup> In the specific case of ethnomusicology, Nettl stated in 1964 that 'the idea of comparing other cultures and styles with ones' own, and the principle that one can be more objective about other

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<sup>19</sup> Brian Fay, *Contemporary Philosophy of Social Science* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1996), 9.

<sup>20</sup> Nigel Rapport, "Best of British!": an Introduction to the Anthropology of Britain', in Rapport, Nigel (ed.) *British Subjects: An Anthropology of Britain* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 3-23, 7.

<sup>21</sup> Alfred Schuetz, 'Common Sense and Scientific Interpretation of Human Action', in Natanson, Maurice (ed.) *Collected Papers I: The Problem of Social Reality* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1962), 20-26.

cultures than about one's own, are important fundamentals of our field'.<sup>22</sup> Even by this stage in the discipline's development, however, such 'fundamentals' were being eroded by researchers positing themselves as "inside" their subject cultures.<sup>23</sup>

Within the discipline of ethnomusicology, numerous studies have since been carried out that have described themselves as "at home".<sup>24</sup> Such works are presented with varying degrees of self-conscious positioning on the part of the author, ranging from those where the researchers' familiarity with the music culture is little more than implied (as in the case of Cotterell), to those where the assertion of "at home" status is a predominant feature of the theoretical motivation behind the research. Perhaps the most consciously thought-provoking of the latter extreme is *Heartland Excursions*, Nettl's contentious account of music academia in the universities of heartland America.<sup>25</sup> This work was shocking in its frank and often unfavourable reinterpretation of musical values and cultural traits in American universities, but is most radical in being an ethnography of the author's true primary culture: what Nettl refers to as "my" music and "my" culture in the most specific sense'.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Bruno Nettl, *Theory and Method in Ethnomusicology* (New York: Free Press, 1964), 70.

<sup>23</sup> Most notably in the case of the Ghanaian scholar Nketia: J. H. Kwabena Nketia, 'The Problem of Meaning in African Music', *Ethnomusicology*, 6 (1962), 1-7.

<sup>24</sup> See for clear examples Mellonee Burnim, 'Culture bearer and tradition bearer: an ethnomusicologist's research on gospel music.' *Ethnomusicology*, 29/3 (1985), 432-447; Henry Kingsbury, *Music, Talent, and Performance: A Conservatory Cultural System*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988); Rulan Chao Pian, 'Return of the native ethnomusicologist.' *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 24 (1992), 1-7; Kofi Agawu, *African Rhythm: A Northern Ewe Perspective*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Chou Chenier, 'Experiencing fieldwork: a native researcher's view.' *Ethnomusicology*, 46 (2002), 456-86; Stephen Cotterell, 'Music as capital: deputizing among London's freelance musicians.' *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, 11/2 (2002), 61-80.

<sup>25</sup> Bruno Nettl, *Heartland Excursions: Ethnomusicological Reflections on Schools of Music* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 9.



Whilst the relative epistemological and practical benefits and problems of researching one's own music culture have enjoyed considerable discussion, the qualification of an individual's claim to being "native" – the question of just how "at home" the specific ethnographer is (or can be) within his or her research field – is often subject to less reflexive scrutiny. It might even be claimed that, since "ethnomusicology at home" has, over the last two decades, retained a certain degree of novelty value, claims to "at home" status have been open to exaggeration by scholars seeking to raise the profile of their research. Thus Chou is forced to critique Pian's 'native' claim:

...Pian, who has lived in the United States for many decades, was briefly visiting a place that was not her childhood home town, region or province, and with which she had had no previous direct cultural contact.<sup>27</sup>

In the wider context of contemporary anthropological ethnography, ambiguities over the meaning of the term "at home" have also been apparent. The broadest definition of the term – the studying of "Western" cultures by "Western" ethnographers – has enabled the anthropologist Nigel Rapport to hail his edited publication *British Subjects; An Anthropology of Britain*, as "Anthropology at Home".<sup>28</sup> The book in question contains a number of enlightening ethnographies: most are by British anthropologists, but the book also includes – amongst others – a study of Welsh ethnicity by Douglas Caulkins (a professor from South Dakota) and Carol Trosset (a lecturer from Cincinnati, Ohio), and a paper on London Ballet culture by the Swedish anthropologist, Helena Wulff.

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<sup>27</sup> Chou, 'Experiencing fieldwork', 458.

<sup>28</sup> Rapport, 'Best of British', 6-7.



The issue of qualifying an ethnography's "at home" status has been articulated by Narayan as the need to negotiate a complexity of cultural and academic identities, rather than merely to position oneself on one side of a – largely simplistic – dichotomy between "native" and "foreigner".<sup>29</sup>

Instead of the paradigm emphasizing a dichotomy between outsider/insider or observer/observed, I propose that at this historical moment we might more profitably view each anthropologist in terms of shifting identifications amid a field of interpenetrating communities and power relations.[...] I argue for the *enactment of hybridity* in our texts; that is, writing that depicts authors as minimally bicultural in terms of belonging simultaneously to the world of engaged scholarship and the world of everyday life.<sup>30</sup>

Rapport goes yet further, justifying reflexive cultural anthropology by suggesting that the boundaries between 'engaged scholarship' and 'everyday life' are porous and ambiguous, possibly even non-existent:

Culture is not a secret, it is something experienced – the formal medium of an experience – and its study is not an esoteric pursuit so much as an exercise in concentration and will; anthropology as a frame of mind, and as a fieldwork practice is not so much a perversion of an everyday mindset as an exaggeration of one. People are all and always anthropologists in and of their lives, to a variable degree pondering their selves, their worlds and others.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Kirin Narayan, 1993. 'How native is a 'native' anthropologist?' *American Anthropologist*, 95 (1993), 671-86: 671-2.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 671-2.

<sup>31</sup> Rapport, 'Best of British', 7.

### *Ethnomusicology at home, or away?*

As with those scholars mentioned above, I consider my research to be largely “at home” but, like Narayan, regard an explicit and precise explanation of my relationship to – and involvement in – the culture being scrutinized as essential: the practical and epistemological contextualization of this (or any other) study cannot successfully rely upon socio-cultural implication or biographical suggestion. Therefore I shall now summarise the key elements of my biography as a musician and ethnomusicologist in order to explain my cultural proximity to – and situation within – the field.

Firstly, I am English: my paternal and maternal ancestors have resided in England for a number of generations (although both family trees can be traced back to Ireland). Whilst I have not been instilled with any great sense of English national identity (as with most English people of my generation – a point discussed in chapters 2 and 5), no other national or ethnic identity has played any role in my enculturational experiences from birth, and I have not lived for any period of time outside of this country. Secondly, I am an English folk musician: it is fair to say that I have been involved in playing “folk music” from a relatively early age. Since first accompanying my local Border morris dance side on the mandolin in my early teens, I have been an active performer of English instrumental music – from the repertoires of both my home county of Shropshire, and (more recently) of my adopted home of County Durham. Like most performers of folk and traditional music, I play more than one instrument (including the piano accordion, mandolin, guitar and English concertina), and like the majority of English folk musicians, I hail from an educated, middle class background. The folk and traditional music referred to in this text is made up of a number of distinct musical repertoires (for instance, Northumbrian pipe

tunes, English fiddle singing, “Celtic” jigs and reels, etc), some of which are more familiar to me than others. Nonetheless, the respective participants of these repertoires employ the same signifiers and labels (“folk”, “traditional”, etc), and it is worth noting that I have played tunes from all of these repertoires in my role as a professional performer. Furthermore, most of the musicians within this field have also undergone relatively recent processes of familiarization with repertoires outside of their original sphere of musical enculturation – especially those young people partaking of the educational experiences that form the main focus of this thesis. At first sight, then, the solipsist assertion that I may be successfully positioned within my field of study appears to be sound. I can claim a strong understanding of what it means to create “folk music” in “the West”, in Britain and in England. I am “at home” within this musical genre.

On the other hand, whilst it could currently be described as my “primary” music culture, I have not been surrounded by folk music alone all my life: I was already a proficient and classically trained pianist and trumpeter when I was introduced to folk music, in my mid teens. Currently, I spend as much of my time playing both of these instruments in jazz ensembles as I do playing folk music on the accordion. And, if common assumptions regarding “folk music” were correct, this would render my study an exceedingly long way from “home”, culturally and musically. However, this is not so, since musical diversity is common place amongst today’s English folk musicians: several of my informants are accomplished jazz musicians on alternative instruments to the ones they play for folk music and many more have begun their careers via a classical training (as shall be demonstrated in chapter 3). Furthermore, heavily oral – or aural – methods of dissemination provide an important link between



the folk music I am studying and the jazz element of my musical upbringing, all of which assists in strengthening the argument that my study of English folk music can lay claim to some degree of “at home” status.

However, as an ethnomusicologist studying processes of educational institutionalization in folk music, my experiences in some areas are somewhat limited. For instance, I have not been encultured in the role of learner within the educational structures discussed herein; indeed, since the institutions scrutinized in this study are relatively recent establishments, the first generation of young people that one might describe in such a way is a number of years my junior. In fact, I had not attended formally organized “workshops” – the mainstay of the educational institutions referred to in this thesis, and of the current educational movement within folk music culture in England – until the commencement of my research for the present thesis.

In other respects, however, my research could be said to be *too* close to “home”: my considerable personal and professional proximity to informants and institutions examined in this text raise a number of methodological problems. At a basic professional level, I am a registered research student and member of the International Centre for Music Studies (ICMuS) at Newcastle University, where the BMus Degree in Folk and Traditional Music (to be discussed in chapter 4, and to be referred to herein as “the folk degree”) was launched in 2001. Thus many of the informants who have provided me with information and ethnographic material over the course of my research are – or have been – fellow students or colleagues. As in the case of most postgraduate research students, I have taken on various teaching duties within the department, including the conducting of seminars for the second year undergraduate

World Music module, a course taken by students on the aforementioned degree programme. I am, therefore, to some extent complicit in the pedagogy of the degree course itself. On a personal note, it is perhaps not surprising that I – an active performer of folk and traditional music in England – have close friends who are heavily involved in the institutions discussed in this study: I perform regularly in a band who have among our number a student on the folk degree; a close relative is a regular part-time employee of Shooting Roots.

A central element of the present study is the assertion that the North East folk music culture can be seen as largely distinctive from that of the other (combined) regions of England. This makes my claim to the ethnographic status of “native” problematic, since my earliest experiences within folk music were obtained through membership of the morris dancing culture in Shropshire, which is both geographically and characteristically distant from the North East. In this regard, it is worth stating that my career as an ethnomusicologist began with the study of folk music in the North East: upon arriving at the University of Durham as an undergraduate in 1999, I began attending a local folk session; I became fascinated by the repertorial features of the North East folk music culture of which I was unconsciously becoming a part, and finally made the characteristics of this specific session the subject of a Masters thesis in 2004.<sup>32</sup> Here, many parallels can be drawn between my current research and that of Chou Chenier, whose ethnographic research into Taiwanese *nanguan* was also preceded by a lengthy period of enculturation and internalization.<sup>33</sup> Like Chou, I feel that my experiences of the North East folk music culture constitute ‘more than a

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<sup>32</sup> Simon G. Keegan-Phipps, "Folk Music" and the Pub Session in Durham. MA Thesis (University of Durham, 2003).

<sup>33</sup> Chou, 'Experiencing fieldwork'.



background to subsequent “proper” fieldwork following ethnomusicological training’.<sup>34</sup> Thus, my claims that the North East folk music culture is distinguishable from that of the rest of England, both in terms of repertory and sub-cultural attitudes, do not wholly negate my claims to being “at home” within the North East – despite my originating outside of that region: in practical terms, I have spent as long a period as a functioning and accepted performer of folk music in Durham and Newcastle as I have in Shropshire. I can therefore claim to be equally “native” within the two cultures.

I should recount at this point that my ethnographic research in this field has been affected by a strong – and unusually tangible – political element. This has been particularly apparent in the case of my research into the folk degree at Newcastle University: here, I have been required to exercise diplomatic caution in my scrutiny of the key lecturers’ motivations and discourses, since much of my research has been geared towards the – ultimately existential – questioning of these individuals’ respective roles and influences. My investigations have left some key informants feeling required to defend not only the course but also, therefore, their own careers and wages, a challenge few would – and did – relish. It was essential for me to employ a considerable degree of tact in my questioning, but a certain degree of tension between myself as a researcher and those who were the subject of my ethnography was often unavoidable. This tension was confounded by my informants’ awareness that the resultant thesis would be read by (at the very least) two of their colleagues within the ICMuS, and would ultimately be made available to all members

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid: 457.



of the department to which their course is beholden, thus implying the potential for internal and external scrutiny.

The most significant and problematic element of the study's "at-home-ness", however, is the fact that my informants within ICMuS and I share a very strong socio-cultural hierarchical structure, in which I am politically located *beneath* the individuals I have been consulting: within the university structure, they are lecturers, whereas I am a research postgraduate. For the political supremacy to lie with the informants in such a directly equivalent manner (i.e. within the academic confounds of the ethnomusicologist's undisputed "home") is a relatively unusual event in the milieu of ethnomusicological fieldwork. Here, a student can be observed researching and writing a contentious ethnographic account of his departmental superiors. At a more generic, societal level, my stature was vastly diminished in comparison to that of a Western ethnomusicologist in a more conventional field: unlike in the conventionally reciprocal relationships of other ethnomusicologists and their informants, the individuals involved here were to gain relatively little (from their socio-economic perspective) by talking at length to me about their musical histories, influences and motivations, since I have not been able to offer my informants a rare opportunity to disseminate their opinions, beliefs and musical traditions among an audiences that they are unable to reach themselves. Nor is my research likely to raise their profiles as performers amongst world music enthusiasts. The television broadcast on Channel 5 in 2006 – *Kathryn Tickell's Northumbria* – demonstrated that performers of Tickell's profile are able to achieve such self-promotional sounding boards through their engagement with cultural media, without the need to be

“discovered” by an academic such as myself.<sup>35</sup> It is, no doubt, for a combination of all of these reasons that fieldwork with reference to the folk degree was difficult. E-mails rarely received responses; interviews were unforthcoming and difficult to arrange; information was promised but failed to transpire. However, the position of these individuals within this research was extremely complex – was it, for instance, their option to furnish me with information and opinion as informants, or was it their *duty* to support me as departmental colleagues. I must accept for my part that my expectations may, at the start of the project, have been geared towards the latter; such expectations were quickly eliminated by the reality of the scenario.

## **Folk music**

The etymology of the phrase “folk music” varies significantly from text to text. This is essentially due to the effective – albeit largely tacit – division of contemporary scholars into two camps: those who are concerned with identifying and documenting the cultural elements of a sociological construct that is “the folk”; and those who seek to specifically classify, analyse or otherwise research a genre of music.

Academically, the two concepts are generally treated as quite separate, from which we can infer that “folk music” has undergone a bipartite etymological development, and that the respective meanings of the term have endured considerable change since the two words were first assembled together. What follows is a brief summary of the development and redefinition undergone by the term over the past two centuries,

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<sup>35</sup> Kathryn Tickell, in *Kathryn Tickell's Northumbria*: Channel 5, London (14th March 2006). See also Patricia Winter and Simon Keegan-Phipps, *Music, Memory and Regional Identity in 'Kathryn Tickell's Northumbria'* Conference Paper *Sounding Out 3* (University of Sunderland: 8th September 2006).



followed by a more in-depth consideration of the relationship between the folk music genre and present-day academia.

It is generally accepted by those etymological texts concerned with linking the term *folk* to the study of music, that it was originally coined by the eighteenth century cultural philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803), and established in print by his publication “Stimmen der Völker in Liedern”, *Volkslieder* (1778-9).<sup>36</sup> The late eighteenth century saw considerable academic interest in the study (and collection) of all aspects of the German traditional culture, as can be observed in the contemporaneous texts of the brothers Grimm, and A. W. Schlegel; at this point, the collection and study of *Volkslieder* instigated by Herder was simply regarded as a sub-field of this cultural academy (the English incarnation of which was, in 1846, to be dubbed ‘Folk-Lore – the Lore of the People’ by W. J. Thoms).<sup>37</sup>

German Romantic scholars of the eighteenth century used the term *folk* to mean the people of a nation, regardless of social strata, level of modernity, or spiritual concerns. This definition was persistent throughout the nineteenth century: as late as 1878 Carl Engel was using the terms *folk music* and *national music* interchangeably, to refer to those musics differing from *popular* and *art music*, and it would appear that he is responsible for the introduction of the term *folk song* into British academia.<sup>38</sup> It is therefore not surprising that nineteenth century study of folk music and folk song

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<sup>36</sup> Carol Pegg, ‘Folk Music’, in Sadie, Stanley (ed.) *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan, 1980), 63-67 (63).

<sup>37</sup> Raymond Williams, *Keywords: a Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana Press, 1983), 136.

<sup>38</sup> Cecil J. Sharp, *English Folk Song, Some Conclusions* (London: Mercury Books, 1907), 02. It would appear that this synonymy of “folk music” with “national music” has been a particularly enduring one, as can be seen in Andriy Nahachewsky, ‘Once again: on the concept of “second existence folk dance”’, *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, Vol. 33 (2001), 17-28.

played an important role in the formation, and reassertion of nationalism across Europe. In Britain this nationalistic cultural tendency was well established, and had been instrumental in Thoms' choice of a 'good Saxon compound'; Raymond Williams explains that the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1830 saw calls for *lore* to replace Greek suffices to the names of sciences.<sup>39</sup> The significance of the term *folk* in nationalism remains an issue for considerable debate: Williams implies that English usage of the term derived from the old English *folc* – affirming the presence of nationalism; Cecil Sharp appears to argue that the word was an importation of the German *Volk*, fulfilling an academic requirement to identify that which differs from the *popular*.<sup>40</sup> A combination of the two approaches may be plausible: the term could-as a cultural construct – be linked to old English, whilst being accompanied by the associations of the German cultural-academy, thus fulfilling both nationalistic and epistemological requirements.

Only in the late nineteenth century does it appear to have been made explicit that studies of folk culture were pivoted on the concept of a "peasantry". The clearest and most concise example of such definition is provided by Cecil Sharp's publication of 1907 entitled *English Folk Song; Some Conclusions*, in which Sharp defines folk song as:

. . . The song which has been created by the common people, in contradistinction to the song, popular or otherwise, which has been composed by the educated . . . 'the common people' are the unlettered, whose faculties have undergone no formal training, and who have never been brought into close enough contact with educated persons to be influenced by them.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> William, *Keywords*, 136.

<sup>40</sup> Sharp, *Some Conclusions*, 3.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 4.



Sharp's collection, discussion and definition of folk song from 1899 to his death in 1924, was pioneering in a number of ways.<sup>42</sup> For the purposes of this chapter, it is simply worth remembering that Sharp appears to have been the very first British scholar to go into any depth when defining what he meant by the term *folk song*. *Some Conclusions* opens with a chapter entitled 'Definition', which specifies with great eloquence his criteria for collection and, as well as identifying the folk to whom folk songs should be attributed, he also lists the processes of historical continuity, musical and textual variation and selection by the community as vital components. Of course, many of Sharp's criteria are at best ethnocentric and patronising by today's standards, betraying the rigid class-based attitudes and assertions of the period's academia. Nonetheless, it represents the first instalment in the concerted debate on defining folk music that has persisted for a century. Furthermore, despite its colonialist undertones and idyllic pastoral images, the basic implications of Sharp's definition continue to feature heavily in modern attempts.

Certainly by the time Béla Bartók wrote his paper entitled *What is Folk Music?* (1931), very little erosion of Sharp's original assumptions had taken effect: according to Bartók, folk music continues to be orally transmitted, of unknown authorship, and belonging to the lowest echelons of society.<sup>43</sup> However, Bartók broadens Sharp's boundaries in two very important ways. Firstly, he uses the term *folk music* to refer to music from both the country and the town: he differentiates between 'urban folk

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<sup>42</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of Sharp's work, see Harker, *Fakesong*; Boyes, *The Imagined Village*; Sutton, 'England, Whose England?'; Brocken, *The British Folk Revival*.

<sup>43</sup> Although Bartók does not make explicit his knowledge of Sharp's writings, *Some Conclusions* is likely to have influenced his own work to some extent, be it directly or indirectly. Bartók does make clear his knowledge of the collections of folk music in Britain and North America, which would suggest his coming in to close contact with Sharp's work. Béla Bartók, 'On American and British Folk Music Material.' in Suchoff, Benjamin (ed.) *Béla Bartók Essays* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), 37.

music' and 'rural folk music' (the former being synonymous with 'popular art music', the latter being synonymous with 'peasant music'). He cites Kodály as defining 'urban folk music' thus:

The Popular art songs have flooded Hungary especially in the second half of the nineteenth century. Their main artistic form is the monophonic tune with stanza structure; the principle means of transmission is oral – everyone knows a few tunes without ever having seen them notated or published. Although most of them have been published, it is not customary to sing them from notation. The name of the composer is not evident; even if it was known it is forgotten. The melodies are conceived as monophonic ones, the composer usually does not have the knowledge to compose the accompaniment; someone else is assigned this task or it is freely improvised. Because the melody is not compared to the original score, it undergoes changes.<sup>44</sup>

Although it is clear that Bartók devoted most of his life to collecting and studying the rural folk music, he is the first to point out that what Kodály describes above may also be referred to as folk music of a sort.

Bartók's second point of departure from Sharp's theory may, at first glance, appear pedantic and relatively unimportant, but it holds great significance for the present study: in his non-specific theoretical works, Sharp almost never used the term *folk music*, but instead referred only to *folk song*; Bartók, on the other hand, referred to *folk music* throughout his generic writings. Of course, this may have been necessary for Bartók – after all, the emphasis of his research into Roma music of the twentieth century would seem to suggest that the East European nations had (and continue to

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<sup>44</sup> Zoltán Kodály, in Béla Bartók, 'Mi a népzene? [What is folk music?]', in Suchoff, Benjamin (ed.) *Béla Bartók Essays* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), 5-8 (5).



have) strong instrumental traditions, and in many areas the dance melodies far outnumbered the songs.<sup>45</sup> It is unclear in the existent literature whether or not folk songs truly outnumbered instrumental folk melodies in England during the time of Sharp's collection, or whether saleability and academic interest depended on the poetic element that the song texts provided.

During the inter-war period, the definition of folk music in the West lay relatively static. The underlying assumptions on which Sharp's definition was based remained dominant in any text of this period that deemed clarification necessary. After the Second World War, however, the study of folk music gathered new momentum: 1947 saw the founding of the International Folk Music Council. After much wrangling, the council was forced to admit the impossibility of an all-purpose definition, but went on to argue that 'provisional declarations' were required (albeit in order for the society to function).<sup>46</sup> These provisional declarations were decided upon at the first conference of the IFMC in São Paulo in 1954, and were published as a 'resolution' in the council's journal of 1955:

Folk Music is the product of a musical tradition that has been evolved through the process of oral transmission. The factors that shape the traditions are: (i) continuity which links the present with the past; (ii) variation which springs from the creative impulse of the individual or the group; and (iii) selection by the community, which determines the form or forms in which the music survives.

The term can be applied to music that has been evolved from rudimentary beginnings by a community

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<sup>45</sup> See, for example Bartók 'What is Folk Music?'; Tiberiu Alexandru, *Romanian Folk Music* (Bucharest: Musical Publishing House, 1980); Bruno Nettl, *Folk and Traditional Music of the Western Continents* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1965), 85-111.

<sup>46</sup> International Folk Music Council, 'General Report', *Journal of the International Folk Music Council*, 5 (1953), 9-35 (12).

uninfluenced by popular and art music and it can likewise be applied to music which has originated with an individual composer and has subsequently been absorbed into the unwritten living tradition of a community.

The term does not cover composed popular music that has been taken over ready-made by a community and remains unchanged, for it is the refashioning and re-creation of the music that gives it its folk character.<sup>47</sup>

It is clear to see the similarities between this definition and that of Cecil Sharp some 50 years before: whilst avoiding Sharp's assertion that the exponents of folk music must be illiterate, the council acknowledges that oral tradition is a vital defining feature. Interestingly, this makes the final paragraph of this quote somewhat redundant: if a song is maintained through oral transmission, one can almost guarantee that it will be in a state of creative perpetual motion (albeit of indiscernible velocity). The IFMC also adopted Sharp's three principles: continuity, variation and selection. When placed in this format, they start to represent a three-way processual model, linking history, the individual and the community. Only as late as 1987 would such a model be presented in more profound anthropological terms by Timothy Rice.<sup>48</sup>

In the discipline of Comparative Musicology, (renamed 'ethno-musicology' by Jaap Kunst in 1950)<sup>49</sup> Sharp's definition seemed perfectly adequate: scholars in this field were primarily concerned with the exotic and so called "primitive" musics of undeveloped nations, whose "common people" were exactly as Sharp had described them. In 1965, Bruno Nettl offered a definition through distinguishing between 'folk

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<sup>47</sup> IFMC in Lloyd, *Folk Song in England*, 15.

<sup>48</sup> Rice, 'Towards the Remodelling of Ethnomusicology'.

<sup>49</sup> Merriam, 'Ethnomusicology: Discussion and Definition of the Field', 107.



music' and 'tribal music' ('folk music' occurring in contradistinction to 'art music', 'tribal music' occurring in a culture where no 'art music' exists).<sup>50</sup> This definition attempted to place folk music in a cultural and musical context. However, this theory has since been derided for its colonialist outlook, as it implies a distinction between the civilized and the barbaric, reminiscent of nineteenth century evolutionary theory.<sup>51</sup>

American revivalists in the 1960s returned to the implicit synonymy of *folk music* and *national music*.<sup>52</sup> However, British post-war sociologists reopened the debate on the premise that Sharp's characterization was no longer accurate for identifying the folk music of the modern, industrialized Western world. Perhaps the most significant of these early sociologists was Albert Lancaster Lloyd. Lloyd was both a collector and performer of folk songs, whose Communist political stance resulted in his playing a major role in the documenting of "industrial folk songs" during and after the Second World War.<sup>53</sup> Not surprisingly, his main contribution to the definition of *folk music* was a Marxist development of Sharp's theory: Lloyd embraced the notion of an *urban folk music*, facilitated by nineteenth century industrial migration, social realism and a working-class camaraderie. Whilst accepting Sharp's three processes, Lloyd could not accept his predecessor's definition of the *folk* community, pointing out that:

Now it is true that early in the century when Sharp was cycling along the lanes of the West Country in search of songs, class differences were clearer than they are now and a wide gulf separated the pen-and-ink man from the man with bowyangs of binder-twine. But a whole class,

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<sup>50</sup> Nettl, *Folk and Traditional Music*, 1.

<sup>51</sup> See Alan Dundes in Bohlman, *Folk Music in the Modern World*, ix. It is interesting to note that Nettl's definition has remained unrevised in later editions of his book.

<sup>52</sup> Lloyd, *Folk Song in England*, 12.

<sup>53</sup> For a comprehensive biography on Lloyd, along with a scathing critique of his work, see Harker, *Fakesong*.

in Western Europe, in England, in Somerset moreover, entirely shut away from and uninfluenced by the world of the educated élite, surely that has not existed since the Middle Ages, if then? Were Sharp's countrymen quite out of the orbit of the newspapers, railways, pillar-boxes, medical prescriptions, lightning conductors, fit-up theatres, romantic novels, *Hymns A. & M.*, to name but a few factors that might break down old 'primitive' ideas and replace them with modern ones including some in the service of squire and stockbroker?<sup>54</sup>

Lloyd's negation of this element of Sharp's theory, along with his emphasis on the folk music of the working classes (as opposed to that of the rural classes) and his working class background (which differentiated him from the bourgeois majority of the scholars in the field), made his work seminal to the definition of *folk music* in England. He has, however, been heavily criticized by successive scholars for his replacement of one mythology with another – an exclusion of Sharp's idyllic image of a totally uneducated farmhand in favour of an equally fictitious image of a "typical creator of industrial ballads" who he claimed

made his song under a hedge perhaps, sheltering from the rain after a fruitless trudge round the mills for work, or who sat up all night by candle-light with a stub of pencil in his fist, writing an elegy on his neighbours killed in yesterday's pit explosion . . . [He] had a narrow political horizon as a rule, but he understood solidarity with his work-mates, could tell when he was hurt, and more and more in the nineteenth century he realized the need for fighting and said so in his songs.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Lloyd, *Folk Song in England*, 14.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, 330.



The significance of Lloyd's work lies in the fact that his approach opened the way to several historiographical accounts of English folk music by exponents of Marxist sociology in the 1970s and 80s.

One such Marxist account was offered by Dave Harker in 1985, as part of the *Popular Music In Britain* series edited by himself and Richard Middleton. Harker's book, entitled *Fakesong; The Manufacture of British "Folksong" 1700 to the present day*, aims to demonstrate that folk music has, for three centuries, been the product of a bourgeois class, since it has been people from this social strata that have collected, studied and preserved these songs. He works on the principle that songs have come to be accepted in Britain as *folksongs*, via what he calls 'mediation'.

By *mediation* I understand not simply the fact that particular people [bourgeois collectors] passed on songs they had taken from other sources, in the form of manuscript or of print, but that in the very process of so doing their own assumptions, attitudes, likes and dislikes may well have significantly determined what they looked for, accepted and rejected. Not only that, but these people's access to sources of songs, the fact that they had the time, opportunity, motive and facilities for collecting, and a whole range of other factors will have come into play.<sup>56</sup>

By considering the biographical histories of the various collectors over the period in question, as well as their respective collection methods and political persuasions, Harker demonstrated quite convincingly that the creation of British folk music was less to do with the *folk* (rural or urban) to whom it has for so long been attributed, and more to do with the scholars who had collected it. Furthermore, although basing the

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<sup>56</sup> Harker, *Fakesong*, xiii.

majority of his book on this occurrence in Britain, he introduces the concept by offering examples of ‘manufactured’ folk music elsewhere in the world, giving the argument greater relevance to the definition of the term in general.<sup>57</sup>

Harker does not seek to redefine the term *folksong*, or *folk music*. He describes them as ‘intellectual rubble which needs to be shifted so that building can begin again’; he considers them totally obsolete in light of the unreliable subjectivity of the enthusiasts who have hitherto wielded them.<sup>58</sup> However, this argument could be regarded – particularly by those experienced in the collation and interpretation of ethnographic data – as the greatest pitfall for Harker’s assertions: he appears to make little or no attempt to concede that any degree of objectivity may have been attempted by the scholars whom he discusses; more fundamentally, it is difficult to see how any scholarly research can be carried out on this or, indeed, any other subject without the researcher’s ‘assumptions, attitudes, likes and dislikes’ having some small effect on the outcome. Of course, it is the concern of the modern social scientist to keep such effects to a minimum (in anthropology, the -emic/-etic debate rages on), but to imply that even the slightest amount of subjectivity makes for inaccurate and ineffective research would seem to cause grave epistemological problems since it implies that, after the intellectual rubble has been cleared, nothing of any structural quality can ever be erected in its place.

In the 1980s, Harker was not the only scholar to have lost all faith in the term *folk music*. In 1981 the International Folk Music Council chose to change its name to the

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<sup>57</sup> Harker, *Fakesong*, x.

<sup>58</sup> Harker, *Fakesong*, x.



International Council for Traditional Music. The council did not explain its negation of the term *folk music*, or even discuss it within the pages of its yearbook, making the repudiation all the more significant. It was this, perhaps more than any other event, that spurred ethnomusicologists such as Philip Bohlman to consider the term from an ethnographic perspective. Bohlman's book *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World* opens with a criticism of the council's actions:

We can surely imagine that, by 1981, the IFMC might have honed its theoretical acumen sufficiently during its almost thirty-five years of existence to suggest the need for reconsideration of its name and the object of its study. But *traditional music* hardly seems more precise than *folk music*. Yes, folk music forms traditions, but so do other genres of music. One can speak about traditions of Italian opera or traditions of South Indian classical music without provoking battles over the use and abuse of the terminology.<sup>59</sup>

Bohlman describes his book as 'less an account of folk music itself than an appraisal of the study of folk music' and as such, it does not attempt to provide a new umbrella-definition of the term *folk music*.<sup>60</sup> Rather, Bohlman takes those features that have been offered as definitive by his predecessors, and assesses them in terms of ethnomusicological research from around the globe (and in much the same way as he briefly assessed the supposed synonymy of *folk music* and *traditional music* in the quote above). He offers two reasons for not attempting a definition:

First, the different contexts of folk music that I investigate here yield very different definitions. To apply many of the most common definitions of *folk music* in Europe and North American society to the

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<sup>59</sup> Bohlman, *Folk Music in the Modern World*, xiii.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, xvi.

Middle East would be a pointless and thankless undertaking. Second, because I regard change as ineluctably bound to folk music tradition, I also assert that the dynamic nature of folk music belies the stasis of definition.<sup>61</sup>

From this statement, one can extract some form of definition, albeit a remarkably vague one – for instance, Bohlman defines folk music as ‘ineluctably bound’ to a process of change, acting within the cultural framework of a ‘tradition’. This can be clearly related to Sharp’s (and subsequently the IFMC’s) idea of a continuity/variation dichotomy. It is Bohlman’s first point which stands out – the acknowledgment that different *folk musics* in different countries of the world, warrant different definitions. This is important, since the book aims to discuss the significance of modernization (be it cultural, social or technological) to the development of folk music cultures: since these instances of modernization differ both in nature and degree from country to country, it is essential to accept that the defining features of folk music must also differ from country to country.

The other important aim of Bohlman’s study is to concentrate on the *contemporary* folk music cultures of the world. This is arguably something that had not been done in folk music scholarship in the West since Bartók’s fieldwork:

Exceptional has been the perspective that did not turn toward the past, idealizing and revering a community of folk music that was just out of reach and then fretting over the best ways to rescue folk music before it disappeared. Many of the fundamental endeavours of folk music scholarship are steeped in this conservatism

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<sup>61</sup> Bohlman, *Folk Music in the Modern World*, xviii.



and the ideological stances it engenders: collection, classification, revival, canonization.<sup>62</sup>

We can certainly observe such conservatism in the writings of scholars such as Cecil Sharp and Bert Lloyd. Furthermore, the vast majority of writing on the folk music of Britain in the last thirty years has been historiographical, plotting the events and significances of the two British folk revivals (1890-1914, and 1950-1970), whilst paying little attention to the folk music of today, and often making little or no attempt to define the term.<sup>63</sup> The lack of definition is most probably down to the fact that the majority of these historiographers were heavily involved in the second of the two folk revivals, either as performers and collectors (as in the case of Bert Lloyd) or simply as revivalist enthusiasts. As a result British folk music scholarship has, for some time now, been plagued by a belief that the reader knows full well what the author means by terms such as *folk music*. And in the vast majority of cases, this convergence of understanding is probably quite successful. However, it can be reasoned that a failure to define such vital terms can result in an inability to substantiate critical analyses of folk music cultures, both in the past and in the present.

Perhaps the most telling way to assess the use and understanding of the term *folk music* in current, English-speaking society is to offer a summary of generic and academic dictionary definitions. Arguably the most generic of all such dictionaries is the Oxford English Dictionary, which defines *folk music* as:

Music that originates in traditional popular culture or that is written in such a style. Folk music is typically of

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<sup>62</sup> Bohlman, *Folk Music in the Modern World*, xix.

<sup>63</sup> See Boyes, *The Imagined Village*; Sutton, 'England, Whose England?'; and Brocken, *The British Folk Revival*.

unknown authorship, and is transmitted orally from generation to generation.<sup>64</sup>

This is, by and large, a fairly comprehensive account, but suffers from some remarkably problematic terminology: for instance, the union of the terms *traditional* and *popular* causes the folk music scholar immediate difficulties. We have, after all, just established that for much of its history the term *folk music* has been used to refer to that music which differs from *popular music*. However, it is important to remember that, when this distinction was accepted, the term *popular music* would have been taken by the likes of Cecil Sharp to mean that which Bartók later described as ‘urban folk music’. Of course, nowadays the term *popular music* is defined in terms of a culture predominated by a modernized mass media. In other words, the use of the phrase ‘traditional popular culture’ can be regarded as a subtle acceptance of the existence of ‘urban folk music’.<sup>65</sup> It is also interesting to note that no reference is made in the OED definition to a distinction between *folk music* and *art music*, as was suggested in Bruno Nettl’s definition of 1965.<sup>66</sup> It would appear that such an explicit differentiation is becoming increasingly unnecessary, as the chasm separating contemporary *popular music* and *art music* widens, particularly in the English-speaking world.<sup>67</sup>

The second sentence of the OED entry presents the two defining features upon which almost every dictionary agrees: the concept of unknown authorship, and maintenance

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<sup>64</sup> P. Hanks (ed.), *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 713.

<sup>65</sup> This is not, however, a concept that is fully accepted by all folk music scholars: Bruno Nettl, in his entry for the *New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, is quick to state that folk music is ‘primarily of rural provenance’: Bruno Nettl, ‘Folk Music’, in Randel, D.M. (ed.) *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music* (London: Harvard University Press, 1986), 315-319 (315).

<sup>66</sup> Nettl, *Folk and Traditional Music*, 1.

<sup>67</sup> For further discussion of the use of the terms folk, popular and art music, see John Blacking, ‘Making Artistic Popular Music: The Goal of True Folk’, *Popular Music*, 1 (1981), 9-14.



via oral transmission. The possible origins of folk songs, tunes and tales have undergone some considerable discussion over the last two centuries. Folk music scholarship of the nineteenth century was often based on the romantic view that folk songs and tunes were originally created through group improvisation. However, ethnomusicologists have been forced to refute this suggestion: the repertoires of most folk music cultures are consistently changing but rarely are such creative group improvisations observed. It is commonly accepted in today's academia that most folk songs or tunes are the result of two processes: conception – the composition of a piece, usually by a single individual; and what Nettl describes as *communal recreation*, or what Sharp terms *variation*.<sup>68</sup> This notion that, over a considerable period of time, a piece may be anonymously modified, embellished or simply misremembered continues to be regarded as an extremely important defining feature of folk music.<sup>69</sup>

Many dictionaries have, over the period of the term's development to date, treated maintenance through oral transmission as perhaps the most significant element of folk music. For instance, Nettl's entry in the New Harvard Dictionary of Music begins: 'Music in oral tradition...'.<sup>70</sup> It is somewhat strange that the importance of this concept has persisted as a defining feature within folk music scholarship, since rising levels of modernization have made it less and less relevant. The issue has been debated for some time now, not least of all by Bert Lloyd who, in response to the assertions of Sharp, pointed out that the Broadside Ballads should surely be accepted as folk songs. Appearing at the height of eighteenth century British industrialization,

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<sup>68</sup> Nettl, *Folk and Traditional Music*, 5; Sharp, *Some Conclusions*, 15.

<sup>69</sup> Sir J. W. Westrup and F. Ll. Harrison (eds.), *The Collins Encyclopaedia of Music* (London: Chancellor Press, 1984), 214-215; Nettl, 'Folk Music', 315; Pegg, 'Folk Music', 64.

<sup>70</sup> Nettl, 'Folk Music', 315.

these ballads were so called because they were written down on large pieces of parchment called Broad­sides. However, as Nettl points out these songs are now accepted by scholars as folk songs only due to the fact that they had been absorbed into an oral tradition and communally recreated.<sup>71</sup> Thus, the import of oral transmission has been maintained. It is worth remembering that the IFMC's resolution described folk music as having 'evolved through a process of oral transmission', implying that oral transmission does not necessarily need to play a leading role in a folk music culture's present, only in its past.<sup>72</sup> This association is affirmed by numerous other (less cautious) definitions, including Nettl's.

Major difficulties exist with the use of oral transmission as a point of definition, not least of all the fact that so many other genres of music can also be defined in the same way: oral transmission is pivotal to the maintenance of the "art music" of the Indian Subcontinent; "playing by ear" is also a key feature of modern-day occidental *popular music*. The overlooking of these facts betrays the typical ethnocentrism of early folk music scholarship. Beyond this, is the more fundamental fact that oral transmission is certainly *not* universal in folk and traditional music. As linguistic and musical literacy have increased in the modern, Western world, so too has the reliance on an oral tradition decreased. As a result, Bohlman lists oral tradition (along with rurality and antiquity) as a feature that can no longer be relied upon for defining purposes.<sup>73</sup> Across the modern world, contemporary players may often continue to regard oral tradition as important, but will not necessarily choose to restrict themselves to acquiring tunes orally when alternative methods are available to them. This study

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<sup>71</sup> Nettl, *Folk and Traditional Music*, 63.

<sup>72</sup> This point is developed further by Andy Necessian, *Defining Music* (London: Scarecrow, In Preparation).

<sup>73</sup> Bohlman, *Folk Music in the Modern World*, xvi.



shall demonstrate that the role of written music in the dissemination of folk music in England is not merely of a supplementary nature, but central to the development of repertory and, therefore, musical identity.

Interestingly, recent attention has returned to a (largely sociological) definition of folk music as a “vernacular” music, differentiated from contemporary pop music genres. Most notable is the explication of this delimitation by Pickering and Green in their neo-Marxist examination *Everyday Culture: Popular Song and the Vernacular Milieu*. Here they claim that ‘vernacular song’ is

[...] unproductive in terms of market structures and relations, and thus holds a valid potentiality, at least, of subverting or reversing the alienation of the commodity form.<sup>74</sup>

Most problematic in this construct of the ‘vernacular’ is the implication that an ‘everyday, non-commoditized cultural life’ can be derived, separate to the commodity form. It seems hard to imagine that, as late as 1987, such a cultural life could be elicited. The content of the present study shall certainly demonstrate that folk music in contemporary England is quite inalienably engaged in matters of commerce and commodification.

Throughout this work, emphasis shall be placed on the study of *instrumental* folk music; this is for a number of epistemological reasons. Firstly, and most fundamentally, this element of folk music culture in England – despite playing a vital

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<sup>74</sup> Michael Pickering and Tony Green, *Everyday Culture; Popular Song and the Vernacular Milieu* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1987) 4.

role, and despite the substantial size of its repertory – has received far less academic coverage (of any sort) than vocal music: it is therefore deserving of ethnomusicological scrutiny.<sup>75</sup> Secondly, instrumental music plays the greater role in the North East folk music culture, which is a principal focus of this thesis. Moreover, instrumental workshops and lessons make up the greatest part of Folkworks pedagogic activities, as well as playing a key role at Shooting Roots events. Thirdly, I shall demonstrate that the recent resurgence in the institutionalization of folk music in ‘England’ appears to have been accompanied by an upsurge in high-profile ‘English’ performers who – although often singers – are inalienably associated with *instrumental* performance. For these reasons, it is therefore most appropriate for my respective discussions of North East and ‘English’ folk music to concentrate on instrumental music; whilst no broad claim to generalizability is made, much of the cultural contextualization and the pedagogical processes discussed here are equally relevant to the education and performance of folk song. The specificity of the details to instrumental music is, however, acknowledged.

## **Institutions and institutionalization**

The word “institution” is used in various ways and imbued with many – often conflicting – socio-cultural connotations: its usage within this thesis is therefore deserving of some clarification. The numerous definitions of the word offered by the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* demonstrate its use to signify a concrete or abstract noun: “institution” not only refers to ‘1. a society or organization founded for a

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<sup>75</sup> The pre-existing emphasis on vocal music is discussed later in this chapter, and can be clearly seen in key texts such as Lloyd, *Folk Song in England*; Harker, *Fakesong*; Boyes, *The Imagined Village*; MacKinnon, *The British Folk Scene*; and Pickering and Green, *Everyday Culture*.



religious, educational, social or similar purpose'; it may also denote '2. an established law, practice or custom' existent within or without the institution of the first meaning.<sup>76</sup> The linking of the term "institution" to the processual development – or instantaneous establishment – of custom and tradition is particularly important, since it identifies the clear relevance of the word to the documentation and redevelopment of folk culture.

However, difficulties pertaining to the use of the phrase in socio-cultural scholarship can be inferred from the OED's definitions of the term's listed derivatives ('institutional', 'institutionalize' and 'institutionalized'). Here, negative connotations abound: the first secondary meaning of "institutional" listed reads "unappealing or unimaginative: *the rooms are rather drab and institutional*".<sup>77</sup> The implications of this fairly conversational usage are clearly subjective and aesthetic in nature. The definitions of the second and third derivation, however, are accompanied by examples and undertones more philosophical in character, and of particular relevance to the folk music scholar:

**institutionalize** (also **-ise**) ► verb [with obj.] **1** establish (something, typically a practice or activity) as a convention or norm in an organization or culture: *a system which institutionalizes bad behaviour*.  
**2** (usu. **be institutionalized**) place or keep (someone) in a residential institution.  
– DERIVATIVES **institutionalization** noun.

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<sup>76</sup> Hanks, *The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, 946.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

**institutionalized** (also –ised) ► adjective 1 established in practice or custom: *institutionalized religion* | *the danger of discrimination becoming institutionalized*.  
2 (of a person, especially a long term patient or prisoner) made apathetic and dependent after a long period in an institution.<sup>78</sup>

These definitions and examples portray the extent to which the word “institution” conjures images of imprisonment, loss of liberty and, ultimately, stagnation and dependence. Such images are most often related to people, but they can also be linked to cultural elements including, most significantly, folk and traditional music. It is clear, then, that these words – however neutral their intended meaning here – are fraught with negative allusions in common conversational usage, that must be consciously respected and negotiated during the collation and interpretation of field research data.

Perhaps the most neutral definition of the word “institution” is offered by Raymond Williams in *Keywords: a Vocabulary of Culture and Society*: ‘in C20<sup>th</sup> institution has become the normal term for any organized element of a society’.<sup>79</sup> In essence, I have taken this description as a suitably open-ended working definition for what follows: when using the word ‘institution’, I need not necessarily be referring to an organization that receives any direct form of fiscal, structural or legislative assistance – or even recognition – from the state in which it operates. Rather, I aim at a more anthropological perspective, wherein an institution is such if it is recognized as an ‘organized element’ by the members of its own culture. Of course, such a perspective is not flawlessly anthropological, since the ‘organized elements’ in question are rarely

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<sup>78</sup> Hanks, *The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, 947.

<sup>79</sup> Williams, *Keywords*, 169.



referred to as “institutions” by their members. Nonetheless, my use of the label has not, as yet, been deemed unacceptable by informants.

Perhaps more importantly, I have chosen to employ the term “institutionalization” to describe the movement to be discussed, since this word not only illustrates the process of creating an institution (which might otherwise require the use of the gerund or mass noun of the verb “to institute”, that is – rather unhelpfully – “institution”!), but also implies the intention or desire held by those involved that the result of that process should be an ‘organized element’ of their society – an *institution*.

## **England, which ‘England’?**

“England” is the one term from the title of this thesis that remains to be defined, although it would appear, at first glance, to be largely self-explanatory. The English cultural identity is agreed by those involved in its study as elusive, ambiguous and generally implicit or silently asserted. This issue shall be explored in greater detail when, in chapter 2, I consider the “English” context within which folk musics and educational institutions are to be contextualized. For the purposes of the present section, it is important to introduce relatively semantic issues relating to the identification of repertory and musical culture more generally as relates to folk music in this study.

The word “England” is used throughout this report in two very different ways, much as it is used by the members of the folk music cultures to be discussed. On the one hand, it is used to denote a single area within a distinct political boundary, bordering

the countries of Wales to the west and Scotland to the North, and making up the largest and most populated province of the United Kingdom of Great Britain. This is, of course, the most common use of the world “England” internationally, and has been subject to recent discussions of national identity, as shall be explored later in this thesis. Likewise, the term “English” is primarily used to refer to those peoples originating and/or residing within the borders of that country, and their cultural attributes and effects.

The term is, however, imbued with an alternative meaning when used with reference to folk music. A central objective of this thesis is the demonstration of an ‘English’ folk music culture distinctive from another folk music culture extant within the borders of the “England” referred to above – the North East folk music culture. This ‘England’ and ‘English’ (which will be referred to in single inverted commas to make clear the usage of the terms, and to reflect their common verbal application by members of the folk music cultures discussed) can be understood as a culturally constructed location and identity without clear geographical boundaries. Its cultural centre might be identified as within the Southern and Midland regions of England (the country, which shall be written *without* inverted commas), but it is more clearly identifiable in terms of its key characteristics. The most obvious of these is morris dancing, but the term ‘English’ will be used to refer to the instrumental repertory that accompanies and exists parallel to this dancing.

The suggestion that the North East region is, to a large extent (and in general terms), culturally distinct from the rest of England is not a particularly original one: it has been implied through the large body of literature on the subject of the North East



(commonly articulated as the “Geordie”) identity, and has been suggested most explicitly by the social historian Robert Colls in his report to the British Council entitled *South of the Border: is the North East English?*.<sup>80</sup> However, discussion of the North East cultural identity has generally existed only within the context of socio-historiography, often with only brief references to illustrations from the region’s contemporary culture (such as the Angel of the North sculpture) to support the claimed endurance of that identity. The concentration of twentieth-century folk music scholarship on the activities of Cecil Sharp and the various revivalist movements of ‘England’ has resulted in the prolific and flawed assumption of a (generally) unified music culture within the national boundaries, and the considerable distinctions between ‘English’ and North East folk music culture have been largely overlooked. This thesis shall acknowledge and attempt to characterize these music cultures, and consider the ways in which they interact at the point of educational institutionalization.

## **The institutionalization of folk music: the European context**

Despite the widespread nature of the institutionalization of “folk” or “traditional” music as a worldwide cultural phenomenon of the twentieth century, the literature on the subject is by no means comprehensive. In the vast majority of cases, the discussion of this topic falls within much broader schematics on the manipulation of “the arts” or music in general by a politically extremist ruling body; e.g., visibly state-run initiatives by fascist or communist governments. Unsurprisingly, the largest

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<sup>80</sup> Robert Colls, ‘South of the Border: is the North East English?’, *British Council; Looking into England Report*. 2000. [http://www.britishcouncil.org/studies/england/report\\_4.htm](http://www.britishcouncil.org/studies/england/report_4.htm) (6th January 2004). More literature on this subject shall be discussed in chapter 3.

proportion of this research exists as historiography of the arts under the Communist regime of the early Soviet Union and the later Soviet States. Central to these – principally historiographical – texts is the concept of folk music as a resource to be harnessed (and “artificially” enhanced) by the ruling regime, for the purposes of instilling a strong nationalist sentiment, and thereby ensuring subordination.<sup>81</sup> Outwardly, the encouragement of the folk arts could be argued as the support of a valuable alternative to the esoteric aesthetics of contemporary art music of the early twentieth century (to provide “the people” with a widely appreciable aesthetic in contradistinction to “modernist and futurist distortions of artistic taste”<sup>82</sup>). The institutionalization process was, in reality, engaged in the rigorous selection of song texts and musical forms most apt for the glorification of the “worker/peasant” construct, the “homeland” and the Party. Control of, and interest in the folk arts in this way is now a deep-seated feature of post-Communist Eastern Europe, and the endurance of state control after the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991 has, likewise, received considerable scrutiny.<sup>83</sup>

State-sanctioned institutionalization of folk music has also been a process embraced by fascist European states during the twentieth century, such as in the case of the *Ranchos Folklóricos* of Salazar’s Portugal, Nazi Germany’s *Kraft durch Freude*, or

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<sup>81</sup> For concise overviews on the control and institutionalization of folk music in the Soviet Union, see Gerald Stanton Smith, *Songs to Seven Strings; Russian Guitar Poetry and Soviet “Mass Song”* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984); Neil Edmunds, *The Soviet Proletarian Music Movement* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2000); Amy Nelson, *Music for the Revolution; Musicians and Power in Early Soviet Russia* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004).

<sup>82</sup> Kastal’skii, quoted in Nelson, *Music for the Revolution*, 32.

<sup>83</sup> See, for instance, Speranta Radulescu, ‘Traditional Musics and Ethnomusicology: Under Political Pressure; the Romanian Case’, *Anthropology Today*, 13/6 (1997), 8-12; Laura Olson, *Performing Russia: Folk Revival and Russian Identity* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004).



the Falange party's collection and dissemination projects in Franco's Spain.<sup>84</sup> It is in response to the state controlled processes of folk music institutionalization in Portugal (and to a lesser extent Spain) that a discourse distinguishing "folklore" from "folklorism" was established.<sup>85</sup> Perhaps the element of these European cases most pertinent to the present study, however, is the way in which the folk arts were encouraged in such a way as to centralize the significance of regionalism and regional identity as a more directly achievable form of cultural location: thus, each region of Salazar's Portugal was encouraged to create distinctive, directly comparable – and enduringly successful – folk arts "troupes" dubbed *Ranchos Folklóricos*, whilst the urban *casas regionales* in post-dictatorial Spain enabled immigrants to maintain ties with their provincial "homeland" through musical identification.<sup>86</sup> In the case of the latter, political ends were met through 'ethnic justification for the newly shaped administrative boundaries'. In this thesis I shall attempt to demonstrate that the encouragement of regionalism through folk and traditional music can also be offered as a political explanation of institutionalization in contemporary England. It is worth noting, however, that very little has been written on the existence – or lack of – any educational processes related to the promotion of folk music in these cases.

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<sup>84</sup> For more on these examples, see Salwa El-Shawan Castelo-Branco and Maria Manuela Toscano, "In Search of a Lost World": An Overview of Documentation and Research on the Traditional Music of Portugal', *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 20 (1988), 158-192; Salwa El-Shawan Castelo-Branco, 'Portugal §III, 6: Revival movements in traditional music', in Sadie, Stanley (ed.) *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan, 2001) Vol. 20, 199-200; Josep I Martí I Perez, 'Musical Traditions of Portugal; Traditional Music of the World Vol. 9' (CD Review). *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 30 (1998), 212-213.; Josep I Martí I Perez, 'Spain, §II, 6: Traditional and Popular Music; Contemporary Developments', in Sadie, Stanley (ed.) *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan, 2000), Vol. 24, 151-152.

<sup>85</sup> Jorge Dias calls for a distinction between "folklore" and "folklorismus". Quoted in Castelo-Branco and Toscano, "In Search of a Lost World", 167.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*; Martí, 'Spain', 152.

Possibly the most significant, recent work in which to contextualize the present study is Ramnarine's *Ilmatar's Inspirations: Nationalism, Globalization, and the Changing Soundscapes of Finnish Music*, since this text includes – arguably – the first comprehensive survey of the *educational* institutionalization of an indigenous folk music in (what Bohlman might refer to as) the “modern world”. Ramnarine's discussion of the Sibelius Academy, Helsinki, is particularly important to the ethnomusicological record for its recognition that this institution, whilst inherently engaged with the development and maintenance of a Finnish musical identity, can, nonetheless, be regarded as a potential *response* to – rather than purely a cause of – recontextualizations of folk music:

[...T]he perceived necessity for developing strategies for the transmission of folk music is linked with notions of change. Yet these are not the somewhat despairing attitudes of an earlier generation of folk enthusiasts, for whom ancient heritages seemed to be on the brink of extinction. Rather, it is the recognition that the contexts in which folk music has been transmitted have changed that has prompted initiatives in the field of state education, catering to new needs that include the training of musicians at advanced levels of performance.<sup>87</sup>

This thesis shall demonstrate that similar processes are at work in the contemporary folk music cultures of England, but that these extend beyond the changing context of musical transmission: the institutions case-studied herein can also be considered as responses to globalized constructs of aesthetic and educational consumption.

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<sup>87</sup> Ramnarine, *Ilmatar's Inspirations*, 69.



Ramnarine also provides an overview of the ‘new folk music’ of Finland as it is developing outside of, and parallel to, the state-sanctioned institutions: she reveals that the formalized pedagogy of the Finnish music education system enables ‘borrowing’ of musical stylistic elements from a range of global sources (e.g. Ireland, Senegal, Argentina, etc.):

[...T]heir concepts of contemporary folk music allow for the processes of adaptation, reinterpretation, and re-representation. These are conscious and deliberate processes.[...] Inspired by, and engaged with, a world of musical sounds available to them, musicians create, compose, and arrange “new folk music”.<sup>88</sup>

This is a highly significant recognition of the possibility for a state folk music institution to coexist with – and even instigate – an ethos that embraces experimentation with and absorption of “foreign” musical influences, whilst simultaneously and successfully maintaining a discourse of nationalism and national identity. The present study is intended to develop this concept of folk music development in order to show that, when nationalist or regionalist ideologies and motivations are less clearly articulated within an institution’s activities, the acceptable boundaries of repertorial and stylistic pluralism become wholly ambiguous: thus, it becomes a principal role of the “folk musician” to constantly negotiate these boundaries, a practice that in turn becomes so far internalized (or “institutionalized”) as to become a folk music identity in and of itself, and not necessarily manifest in ‘conscious or deliberate processes’. I shall illustrate here that, where formalized education appears in a location accustomed to cultural cross-fertilizations, the institutional and regional identities that emerge can be processual rather than

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<sup>88</sup> Ramnarine, *Ilmatar’s Inspirations*, 213.

repertorial or stylistic, founded on the favourable evaluation of musical absorption at all levels.

A key difference between Ramnarine's research and the present study is, however, the crucial establishment of the institutions (or institutionalizations) with which the former was primarily concerned. Whilst the Folk Music department at the Sibelius Academy was opened in 1983, itself mirroring the formalized educational approaches of the Folk Music Institute and other pre-existing and well-established organizations, the institutions and pedagogies on which this thesis focuses are in the earliest stages of conception and implementation. The degree course in Folk and Traditional Music at Newcastle University, a case of educational institutionalization most central to – and partially responsible for – the research reported in this thesis, had been instigated only two years prior to my period of fieldwork. This course is the first of its kind to emerge in England and, as such, represents an important moment in the development of the country's contemporary folk music cultures. Such moments of cultural initiation are rarely scrutinized by ethnomusicologists: exceptions lie in the late-twentieth century ethnomusicological record, where the ethnomusicologist has often been drawn to reflect upon cultural events (e.g. community music projects) of his/her own instigation.<sup>89</sup> The research offered here is constructed on the premise that the observation of any cultural institution's conception and reification can yield vital evidence regarding the contemporary cultural worldviews, unbound by the structures of an established order. Moreover, the commencement of a unique institution pertaining to "folk and traditional music" is particularly intriguing, since its

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<sup>89</sup> See, for a perfect example, Kay Kaufman Shelemay, 'The ethnomusicologist, ethnographic method, and the transmission of tradition', in Barz, Gregory F. and Cooley, Timothy J. (eds.), *Shadows in the Field; New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 189-204.



uniqueness necessarily represents a break with “tradition”. The research presented in the following chapters is intended not only to explain this break, but also to understand the ways in which this break is articulated and justified by those involved.

## **2. The English Context**

Before considering the educational institutions (or institutionalizations) upon which the majority of this thesis shall concentrate, it is first important to place these in a temporal context. It is worth reiterating that the key facts and personalities in English folk music of the nineteenth and early-mid twentieth century, whilst central to the vast majority of all subsequent English folk music scholarship, are becoming largely unimportant or unknown to practising folk musicians. The worth of such narratives resides not in their place as cultural capital for contemporary performers and enthusiasts, but rather in their illumination of previous contexts and textual models applied to the construction of folk music education. This chapter shall, therefore, begin by relating the details of the two periods of folk music resurgence (widely – albeit often contentiously – referred to as the two “folk revivals”) insomuch as they concern educational institutionalization, and consider the ways in which nationalism and socialism have, in their turn, shaped and reshaped the application of folk music education. This shall be followed by a brief but up-to-date report on the apparent state of flux in English nationalist sentiment, and its relationship with the social status and popular perceptions of folk music in England.

### **The first folk revival: Cecil Sharp and the “Great Men”**

The “British Folk Revivals” are by far the most widely documented and profoundly scrutinized periods in the development of British – and, in particular, *English* – folk music, song and dance. Despite this fact – and whilst often referred to as “the first and second folk revivals”, implying separate and discreet episodes in the development



of English folk music – the two periods in question remain chronologically ambiguous in the historiographical record. The academic and journalistic coverage of these periods is so widespread and in-depth as to render another – necessarily brief – reinterpretation of the facts here futile. Thus, I shall merely aim to present a few of the key facts, research foci and processes of educational institutionalization that have served to construct the context in which the contemporary folk musician now operates.

The beginnings of the “first British folk revival” are commonly linked to a frequently revisited and revered occurrence – a kind of anecdote-turned-legend – that took place in 1899. The legend is told that on Boxing Day of that year, whilst staying with his wife’s mother in the Oxfordshire village of Headington, Sharp bore witness to a team of Cotswold morris dancers.<sup>1</sup> Enthralled by what he had heard and seen, he bombarded the dancers with questions, and noted down a number of the tunes played by the concertina player – one William Kimber, who would go on to become a dancer of considerable renown, and a source of much of the material that was to sustain the early years of the ensuing revival. The legend continues that among these tunes was the now famous *Country Gardens*, which would subsequently be treated – like so much more source material “collected” during the first revival period – to reharmonization and orchestration: first, the tune was interpolated by Sharp into a string quartet; later it would be transformed into its best known, orchestral guise by Percy Grainger.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Maud Karpeles, *Cecil Sharp; His Life and Work* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), 24-5.

<sup>2</sup> Sutton, ‘England, Whose England?’.

It is generally accepted, without a great deal of question, that this momentous occasion represented the “Damascus moment”, from which sprang forth the consolidation of the first folk revival:

Cecil Sharp always pointed to the Headington incident as the beginning of the folk music revival and so indeed it was, though it was not immediately apparent, for the seed that was sown at Headington took time to germinate. His imagination had been fired by the dances, but he did not at first see what to do with them; beyond harmonizing and orchestrating the tunes he made no practical use of his discovery.<sup>3</sup>

It took a second momentous event to convince Sharp of the worth of a career collecting folk songs and dances: while staying at a friend's in Hambridge, Somerset, in 1903, he overheard the gardener, the aptly named John England, singing *The Seeds of Love* whilst mowing the lawn.<sup>4</sup> This led to a period of collection that resulted in Sharp's first publication, *Folk Songs from Somerset*, a five part work issued between 1904 and 1909.<sup>5</sup> In 1907, Sharp had published what is considered to be among the first treatises on the definition of folk music and the “folk” (*Some Conclusions*), and in 1911 he founded the English Folk Dance Society. By the end of his life in 1924, he had collected at least 4977 tunes (including many collected in the Appalachians during the first world war), publishing 1118, and composing accompaniments for 501, all of which served to secure his status as the predominant figure in folk music scholarship, both nationally and globally.<sup>6</sup> His position as the guardian of English folk music, dance and song was set in stone – literally – when, in 1929, the foundation

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<sup>3</sup> Karpeles, *Cecil Sharp*, 25.

<sup>4</sup> Frank Howes, ‘Sharp, Cecil (James)’, *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy. <http://www.grovemusic.com> (8th September, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*



stone of the English Folk Dance Society's new headquarters on Regent's Park Road, London, was laid, bearing the inscription:

This building is erected in memory of Cecil Sharp who restored to the English people the songs and dances of their country.

Midsummer Day 1929.

In 1932, the English Folk Dance Society and the Folk Song Society conjoined to form the English Folk Dance and Song Society, for which the aforementioned building, Cecil Sharp House, continues to act as headquarters.

I do not wish to labour Sharp's significance in the field of folk music collection and scholarship: there is no need to add to the sizeable body of literature that fulfils just such a brief. Certainly, his role as the individual at the head of a sizeable movement can be overstated: after all, the Folk Song Society had been in existence for over a year before Sharp had the good fortune to stumble across the Headington Quarry morris dancers; while Sharp was accidentally happening upon John England's songs, Ralph Vaughan Williams was collecting quite deliberately in Essex – documenting equally well-known songs such as *Bushes and Briars*.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, it is clear that Sharp's enthusiasm (instilled in his printed criticisms of the Society's inertia prior to his appointment to the committee in 1904)<sup>8</sup> and “missionary fervour” towards the cause of preserving and – vitally – disseminating English folk music gave a new and previously unseen impetus to the movement.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Karpeles, *Cecil Sharp*, 49.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 48.

<sup>9</sup> Howes, ‘Sharp, Cecil (James)’.

The question remains whether or not someone else (be they an individual or group) may have injected such impetus had Sharp not met Kimber or England. By the turn of the twentieth century, late-colonial multiculturalism was fast becoming a reality, and nationalism was growing in the face of an ever increasing artistic, political and – ultimately – military threat from Germany. Since the phrase-coining work of Johann Gottfried von Herder in the late eighteenth century, the collection of folk song had become a well established practice among academics and artists both – ironically – in Germany, and across Western Europe. The conditions were clearly right for such a surge in folk music scholarship in Edwardian England and, as with all intellectual movements, leadership was necessary and inevitable. Sharp appears to have been the right personality in the right place at the right time, and the assassination of his character – via the unsympathetic examination of his motives and methods – has become something of a popular pass-time for contemporary folk music scholars.<sup>10</sup>

Most important to the present study is not the extent, innovativeness or significance of Sharp's intentions and deeds, but the fact that his legendary stature betrays an academic preoccupation with documenting the individual that has permeated – and continues to permeate – discourse on the subject. An extraordinarily large proportion of the extensive research into the English folk revivals has taken the form of biography, collectively forming a corpus covering the lives and works of a considerable number of the key collectors of the English folk repertory. In general, each study of this kind has sought to enhance, restate or in some way redefine its subject's role and significance within their respective movement. Within this form

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<sup>10</sup> See John Francmanis, 'National music to national redeemer: the consolidation of a 'folk-song' construct in Edwardian England', *Popular Music*, 21/1 (2002), 1-25; Harker, *Fakesong*.



works are, again, split into two types: on the one hand, there are biographies of significant collectors, and leading personalities within the central organizations of the revival periods. These biographies are particularly prevalent in reference – and reverence – to those “great” men and women of the first revival movement who’s works best characterized folk music scholarship between 1900 and 1940. Certainly the vast majority of these are devoted to the life and work of Cecil Sharp, but biographies of varying depth on other key figures such as Percy Grainger, Mary Neale, Frank Kidson and Anne Geddes Gilchrist exist in no small number.<sup>11</sup>

With the search for – and documenting of – the illustrious and heroic figures of revivalism playing such a central role in English folk music scholarship, it is perhaps not surprising that less has been written on the second folk revival period (widely accepted to have occurred roughly between the years 1950-1970). This is because the second revival is perhaps more difficult to identify in terms of personalities – no one person stands out as a signifier of the period’s cultural doctrine in the way Sharp does for the first revival. However, in *Fakesong*, Harker singles out Albert Lancaster Lloyd (1908-1982) as a key representative of this second phase, not least of all because his working class background and Communist Party-sanctioned, pseudo-Marxist ideology contrasts so starkly with the background and ideologies of Sharp (although, as Harker takes great pains to demonstrate, it can be argued that the

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<sup>11</sup> For examples of biography on Sharp see Karpeles, *Cecil Sharp*; Harker, *Fakesong*; Sutton, ‘England, Whose England?’. For biographies of other such figures, see Michael Yates, ‘Percy Grainger and the Impact of the Phonograph’, *Folk Music Journal*, 4/3 (1982), 265-275; Gwilym Davies, ‘Percy Grainger’s Folk Music Research in Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire 1907-1909’, *Folk Music Journal*, 6/3 (1992), 339-58; Francmanis, ‘National music to national redeemer’; Roy Judge, ‘Mary Neale and the Espérance Morris’, *Folk Music Journal*, 5/5 (1989), 20-28; Lyn A. Wolz, ‘Resources in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library; the Anne Geddes Gilchrist Manuscript Collection’, *Folk Music Journal*, 8/5 (2005), 619-639.

underlying motivations and methods of the two men were remarkably similar).<sup>12</sup> Lloyd was also a significant figure of the post war period due to his reappraisal of Sharp's definitions of folk music and the "folk" (see page 38), and for his literary output, which was presented at the time as a new scholarly contribution, but has since received much criticism for its lack of substantial evidential grounding.<sup>13</sup> In this respect he is a notable individual, since the emphasis on scholarship and theoretical publication of Sharp's revival had been to a large extent replaced by a new practical orientation, supported by an underlying intention to recontextualize folk music: effort was made to liberate folk music from the bourgeois clutches of the concert hall, and return it to its rightful home, at the worker's hearthside and the informal social gathering.<sup>14</sup> This underlying objective gave rise to the reinforcement and development of the folk club as a performance venue.<sup>15</sup>

It is perhaps unsurprising that the scope of literature celebrating the individual within folk revival has, in recent times, expanded to include the biographies of a number of "source" singers and musicians who provided the collectors of these periods of folk revival with the largest proportions of their output. This trend can be understood as the result of two factors in English folk music scholarship: on the one hand, the literature has begun to reach a saturation point, in which no new facts relating to the "great" men and women are being unearthed; few original, and clearly oppositional

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<sup>12</sup> Harker, *Fakesong*, 231-232. The argument is also supported by Boyes, *The Imagined Village*, 241.

<sup>13</sup> Dave Arthur, 'Lloyd, A(lbert) L(ancaster)', *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy, <http://www.grovemusic.com> (14th September, 2005).

<sup>14</sup> Boyes, *The Imagined Village*, 237-238; Frith, 'Review: "The Imagined Village"; "The British Folk Scene"; "Transforming Tradition"', 349.

<sup>15</sup> Harker, *Fakesong*, 236. Ultimately an icon of this post war period of revival, the folk club persists as the main bastion of English folk *song*, although instrumental music has generally developed outside of the club, and now resides most comfortably in the "folk session" context, a less pronounced form of the segregation to be found in Irish and Scottish folk and traditional music: Keegan-Phipps, *The Pub Session in Durham*. This shall be discussed in greater detail in chapter 5.



interpretations have been possible subsequent to Marxist, neo-Marxist and feminist approaches such as those offered by Harker and Boyes, respectively (although these have, indeed, been preceded by studies of lesser impact or smaller scale). On the other hand, the specific political requirements of the socialist perspectives upheld by these authors makes the emancipation of the exploited masses, the “little people” or even “the folk”, historiographically necessary, and epistemologically inevitable. Thus, figures of this kind have also begun to achieve legendary status: the lives of source musicians of the first revival (e.g. William Kimber, John England, Harry Cox, etc)<sup>16</sup> have been researched in some depth, as have the lives and works of latter-day “folk” such as Fred Jordan and Bob Copper.<sup>17</sup> These biographical studies have developed – and have been assimilated into – the “Great Man” orientation of English folk music scholarship. The reverence of individuals as an important cultural factor in English folk music is also betrayed through memorial-assignation: within the walls of the *Cecil Sharp* House resides the *Vaughan Williams* Memorial Library; the Devonshire town of Okehampton plays host to the yearly *Baring-Gould* Folk Festival, named after the collector Sabine Baring-Gould (1834-1924).

This emphasis on personality within English folk music scholarship of the twentieth century has crystallized contradictions inherent within these revivalist movements – contradictions that, I will argue, have borne serious repercussions for the folk music

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<sup>16</sup> E.g. C. J. Bearman, ‘Who Were the Folk? The Demography of Cecil Sharp’s Somerset Singers’, *Historical Journal*, 43/3 (2000), 751-775; Christopher Heppa, ‘Harry Cox and his friends; song transmission in an East Norfolk singing community c. 1896-1960’, *Folk Music Journal*, 8/5 (2005), 569-593.

<sup>17</sup> See Andrew King, ‘A Toast to Bob’, *English Dance and Song*, (Summer 2005), 26-27; English Folk Dance and Song Society [Author Unknown], ‘Fred Jordan Sculpture Unveiling’, *English Dance and Song*, (Summer 2005), 27.

culture of this country more generally, and have a particularly problematic epistemological impact on educational enterprises within the revivalist periods.

## **The folk revivals and educational institutionalization**

### *Cecil Sharp and Mary Neal*

The first period of folk revival was ultimately a tool for the promotion of nationalistic sentiment, during a period in which ‘chilly breezes were rippling the surface of imperial complacency’.<sup>18</sup> The role of folk music and dance in the creation of a sorely needed national identity at this time is made clearest in Sharp’s article of 1910 entitled *Morris and Country Dances*, in which he claims that

in order that a boy or girl may become a good Englishman, or a good Englishwoman, training in English characteristics must be a prominent feature in education – English History, English games, English ideals are of the utmost importance. A wholly national and, at the same time, a wholly spontaneous expression is found in folk-dances and songs.<sup>19</sup>

The role of educational endeavour as a motivation – and manifestation – of the crystallization and reinforcement of such “Englishness” was considerable. Sharp, himself a teacher by trade, regarded the dissemination of the material collected by himself and his colleagues in the FSS and the EFDS as no less important than the content of the material itself. In fact, the publication (in its widest sense) of folk songs and music – especially for the consumption of England’s youth – could be said

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<sup>18</sup> Sutton, ‘England, Whose England?’

<sup>19</sup> Sharp, quoted in Anne Bloomfield, ‘The quickening of the national spirit: Cecil Sharp and the pioneers of the folk-dance revival in English state schools (1900-26)’, *History of Education*, 30/1 (2001), 59-75 (60).



to have taken priority over music and texts, acting as justification for much that was added, edited and omitted in Sharp's output, along with the output of many other collectors of the time. His contemporary, and author of his standard biography, A. H. Fox Strangeways later rationalized harmonization as a necessary evil, required 'in order to get the songs sung'. Whilst the alterations made and condoned by Sharp reflected his being a product of his time, the methods employed were not universally accepted – Francmanis explains the collector Frank Kidson's unease:

Whilst folk-song for children had been Sharp's point of departure and integral to all his subsequent schemes, Kidson's principal concern was that folk-song largely dealt with matters that were, or at least should be, above a child's comprehension. This 'unpleasant savour' could only be overcome by the extensive use of omissions and alterations: but since this would at the same time remove their essential character as 'folk songs', they could no longer properly be described as such.<sup>20</sup>

The majority of Sharp's work in the field of folk song and folk music was mainly made manifest in printed publications rather than in practical educational activities and events. The first such tome in Sharp's illustrious publication record was the *Book of British Song for Home and School* in 1902. The book itself contained a mixture of folk songs (collected by others – Sharp wouldn't begin to collect himself for another year), and national songs of more recent composition.<sup>21</sup> The collection in no way adheres to the purist principles and definitions of his later treatises, notably those specified in *Some Conclusions*, but its title and early existence serves to demonstrate the import Sharp sought to place on educational promulgation. Indeed, three years

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<sup>20</sup> Francmanis, 'National music to national redeemer', 12-13.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 3.

later, he would publish *English Folk Songs for Schools* with Baring-Gould, and would eventually produce three separate collections specifically aimed at children, and a further two works discussing the folk arts in the educational context.<sup>22</sup> Sharp's intentions regarding the employment of English folk song were, of course, two fold: whilst their use in a – relatively – untreated state for educating and instilling nationalistic sentiment in the country's children was high on Sharp's personal agenda (and that of the revivalist movement as a whole), the reassignment of folk music and song to the nation's contemporary art music was also a key motivation in the collection of material. It was accepted that the two were necessarily interrelated:

Please allow us to teach the children to know and to love what we believe to be the natural and spontaneous music of our ancestors. Then we may hope (with Mr. Cecil Sharp) to have in the future Griegs and Glinkas of our own to do for English music what these patriotic musicians did for the music of their own countries.<sup>23</sup>

Nonetheless, such composers already existed and played an important role in the collection of their 'raw material' – notable examples being Ralph Vaughan Williams, George Butterworth, and Percy Grainger.

Traditional English dance forms, however, did not offer such immediate distractions to divert attention and resources away from the educational cause: there were no concerted attempts being made to rework the dances within an alternative artistic genre (Granville Barker's 1914 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* notwithstanding, for which Sharp provided dances, as well as songs).<sup>24</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>22</sup> Howes, 'Sharp, Cecil (James)'.

<sup>23</sup> J. Heywood, quoted in Francmanis, 'National music to national redeemer', 13.

<sup>24</sup> Howes, 'Sharp, Cecil (James)'.



unlike folk songs, morris dance was not (and is not) generally so imbued with overtly sexual – or otherwise subversive – connotations or explicit content, and was therefore considerably less problematic for mediation in to the Edwardian English school curriculum. It is not surprising, therefore, that folk dance was the principal emphasis of Sharp’s educationally orientated activities. Finally, Sharp saw that it was essential that folk dance, as with folk music and song, was carried out in an “accurate” manner: whilst much folk music and song had been printed for the masses in an acceptably prescriptive way, dance had to be presented within the physio-visual, interactive framework of the demonstration and class (to all intents and purposes, an early incarnation of the now ubiquitous “workshop”).

The chronology of events surrounding folk music and dance within education demonstrates that the English folk arts have enjoyed particularly strong links with adult education: the first examples of teaching morris dance during the early twentieth century were centred around instruction in the activity for adults, rather than children. One such instance was Mary Neal’s Esperance Working Girls Club, an organization that sought to offer its members a form of pastorally inflected rehabilitation from the everyday life of London’s industrialized slums. In 1906, Neal contacted Sharp, who furnished her with Kimber’s details, the latter subsequently travelling to the club to introduce and demonstrate some morris dances.<sup>25</sup> Neal was inspired by what she had witnessed and quickly went on to become a key figure in the dissemination of morris dancing. The emphasis on adult training within early educational institutionalization was inevitable in the first stages of the revival, since the dance form had to be appreciated, accepted and understood by adults – and especially by educated,

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<sup>25</sup> Bloomfield, ‘The quickening of the national spirit’, 62; Sutton, ‘England, Whose England?’.

politically dominant middle-class adults – before it could hope to be regarded as worthy of inclusion in school curricula.

By 1909, morris dance had reached such a status, and received official recognition from the Board of Education in its revision of the syllabus for Physical Exercises (an achievement with which Sharp is generally accredited).<sup>26</sup> At this point, the role of adult education within folk dance was certainly assured, since programmes of demonstration and dissemination were required in order to produce a generation of teachers that could successfully execute such a curriculum. The criteria by which the prospective “success” of folk dance in schools would be judged was already set by Sharp, and so maximum success could only be achieved if he himself had the highest possible level of involvement in the teachers’ training:

It had not originally been Cecil Sharp’s intention to play an active part in the teaching of the dances, but he had under-rated the difficulties and dangers of popularization. He now realized that it would be impossible to safeguard the tradition unless he himself had direct control over the teachers.<sup>27</sup>

More specifically, Sharp needed direct – and complete – control over what the teachers taught. In this matter his views were predominant, but by no means unanimous: Neal was an outspoken critic of Sharp’s elitist and pedantic treatment of morris dancing, and the exchanges between the two in many ways represents the first fully documented and explored debate pertaining to *educational* practice within folk music and dance. Neal, keen to encourage the largest possible mass interest in the

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<sup>26</sup> Karpeles, *Cecil Sharp*, 75.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*



activity – and in the shortest possible time – wished to embrace the considerable spontaneity and sense of empowering spiritual energy that she passionately believed to be the foremost ingredients of the dance. Sharp, however, refused to accept that the promotion of an art so critical to the desired growth of nationalist sentiment could reasonably be left to large numbers of ill-trained, over zealous enthusiasts with a disturbing lack of interest in the accuracy of the performance. In the first instance, these enthusiasts were Neal’s girls, who quickly began giving public demonstrations, and to travel the country teaching classes to other such clubs. Both Neal and Sharp were incensed by the other’s views: of course, it was essential that Sharp continued to argue the vital role of the “expert”, since such an argument ensured that folk dances were only taught either by himself, or by teachers whom he had rigorously trained (or – one might contend – indoctrinated). In response to this, Neal told the morning post that “it seems as unreasonable to talk about an expert in morris dances as to talk about an expert in making people happy”.<sup>28</sup> Neal attempted to ground her position within Sharp’s own academic writings and theoretical framework:

As the folk music and dance and drama are communal in their origin and the work of no one individual, and have come from the heart of the unlettered folk, so the handing on of them and the development should be left in the hands of the simple-minded and of those musically unlettered and ignorant of all technique.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, Sharp was in such a position of strength by this stage in the debate (April 1910), that he was never really required to answer satisfactorily these specific matters of theory and definition, although the exchanges did not cease. Following the

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<sup>28</sup> Neal, quoted in Karpeles, *Cecil Sharp*, 80.

<sup>29</sup> Neal, quoted in *ibid*, 79-80.

Esperance Guild holding a popular summer school in Stratford-on-Avon as part of the Shakespeare Festival in the summer of that year, the two were forced to compete head-to-head for the position of director of future schools. Sharp's supremacy was confirmed: in June of 1911 his became the official programme of the Festival, and in the following month he was awarded a civil list pension of £100 per annum for his services to the collection and preservation of English folk songs.<sup>30</sup> The righteousness of Sharp's pedagogy was thus accepted by general consensus. Neal failed to achieve the popular, rehabilitating mass movement she had envisaged, and the revival continued as 'a recreational activity for the art-crafty wing of the intelligentsia'.<sup>31</sup>

### *Post-Sharp: the "second revival"*

Education as an aspect of the second revival period has been less documented, lower key, and primarily taken up by adults wishing to engage in the musical – and usually vocal – expressions of post-war socialism and protest (particularly anti-apartheid) that formed the basis of the folk club repertory, much of which was inherited from the American folk movement. Many of those involved in this movement had grown up singing songs from Sharp's publications at school, but were aware of the inauthentic nature of the material's performance and presentation.<sup>32</sup> They sought to make the music accessible to all, by positing it within a small, informal, local space.

Nonetheless, quantitative data such as that collected by Niall MacKinnon suggests that the majority of clubs have been, in fact, accessible to a small minority – the middle-aged middle classes – and comparison to the exclusively *instrumental* pub

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<sup>30</sup> Karpeles, *Cecil Sharp*, 84; 82.

<sup>31</sup> Sutton, 'England, Whose England?'

<sup>32</sup> Sandra Kerr, interview, 19<sup>th</sup> Jan 2005.



“session” most commonly found in Ireland, Scotland and the North East of England would suggest that they were – and continue to be – often anything but informal.<sup>33</sup> It could be argued that it was during the 1960’s and 70’s that the workshop as a cultural concept and educational tool within English folk music was developed and fully established: “study groups” (primarily populated by young, educated, middle-class adults) were established, both within the folk club context, and beyond. Perhaps the group with the highest profile was Ewan MacColl’s *Critics Group*, which began in 1963, and was clearly rooted in a pedagogical framework, as one of its better-known members, Sandra Kerr, remembers:

[It] was ostensibly a group of young singers, to whom Ewan acted as guru and mentor and educator and all the rest of it. So, that lasted for nine years, and during that time we made loads of records, and we travelled all over the world, and we did lots of folk theatre, and we wrote new songs, and we listened and listened and listened to source singers and tried to assimilate style, and understand style and articulate style.<sup>34</sup>

During this period, folk music and dance enjoyed a modest role in school education, as enlightened, newly-qualified teachers, encouraged by the EFDSS’s strengthened links with the BBC, sought to employ the society’s recordings in the classroom, and to attend EFDSS run folk dance courses.<sup>35</sup> The result appears to have been a subsequent generation of young people who grew up observing folk only in the confines of the classroom, and therefore feeling content in leaving it there when they

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<sup>33</sup> MacKinnon, *The British Folk Scene*; Keegan-Phipps, *The Pub Session in Durham*. This point shall be demonstrated and explored in chapters 3 and 5.

<sup>34</sup> Sandra Kerr, interview, 19<sup>th</sup> Jan 2005.

<sup>35</sup> Brocken, *The British Folk Revival*, 46.

left school. As MacKinnon demonstrates, only a relatively small number would return to it, usually upon reaching middle-age.<sup>36</sup>

## **The trouble with folk and formal education**

Educational practice within each period of revival was bound within specific, tangible theoretical and sociological frameworks, neither of which were actually conducive to the educational institutionalization of folk music. Neither “revival” can be said to have wholly failed in initiating educational systems within folk music – much of the contemporary activity that shall be discussed in this thesis owes its existence, at least in part, to the featuring in post-war schooling of collections of songs instigated by Sharp. However, a key objective of any educational undertaking is to effect an internalization of a cultural act within the learner, thus ensuring that the practice becomes a behavioural norm within the society’s culture. Karpeles refers to this function when discussing folk dance in the army during the First World War:

Not many of the men actually joined the Society after they had been demobilized, but the introduction of folk dancing into the army contributed to its general acceptance as a normal activity by helping to dispel the idea that it was merely a pastime for cranks.<sup>37</sup>

In fact, ‘a pastime for cranks’ has been, and continues to be by far the predominating view of English folk dance, along with most other aspects of the English folk arts. In

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<sup>36</sup> Mackinnon, *The British Folk Scene*, 85.

<sup>37</sup> Karpeles, *Cecil Sharp*, 173. It is perhaps not surprising that the popularity of folk dance among the men was short lived: Karpeles seems unable to appreciate that the troops’ embracing of the activity may have been a desperate – and relatively indiscriminate – desire to engage with a form of national (and, therefore, nationalistic) entertainment and, in the case of many wounded soldiers, a relatively enjoyable form of badly needed rehabilitation.



his essay *England, Whose England?*, Mike Sutton highlights the “joke” status of English folk music:

Today, English folk music remains a minority interest, often scorned by the cultural establishment. (An attitude summed up by the famous legend that Sir Thomas Beecham advised “try everything once, except incest and folk-dancing” - to which a critic allegedly replied “what’s so bad about incest?”).<sup>38</sup>

The social status of folk music in England will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. For now I would like to concentrate on my assertion that the attempts of two periods of revival to organize the educational element of the folk music culture (to use Williams’ terms) have failed to normalize folk music as cultural behaviour, or to instil a sense of national pride in its repertory: the resultant institutions have enjoyed relatively meagre and often short-lived successes. I shall proceed by offering some possible explanations for this apparent “failure”, which can be arrived at by positing the educational institutionalizations of folk music outlined above within respective theoretical contexts.

Education, at a basic sociological level, can be characterised as a top-down process, inasmuch as information must be “passed down” from above.<sup>39</sup> Distinctions can be made between educational and social/socio-economic hierarchies, but the two are often closely linked: the strong class structures that have played such important roles in the history of British society have generally maintained the relative synonymy of

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<sup>38</sup> Sutton, ‘England, Whose England?’.

<sup>39</sup> Of course, processes of experiential learning (such as those employed by the organisation Shooting Roots – discussed later in this study) might appear to counter this premise. However, “learning by doing” still requires a degree of direction at a fundamental level, and such direction invariably comes from one who has learnt/done.

the educational and social orders.<sup>40</sup> After all, the basis of all educative practice is the notion that information be passed down from those with specific knowledge and skills, to those without.<sup>41</sup> In the vast majority of cases, the British social class system has decreed that the former group be made up by representatives of the affluent middle classes – that is, those for whom the highest levels of conventional education have been both physically (and economically) available and culturally accessible.

Perhaps it has been this equation of pedagogical and socio-economic hierarchies that has hitherto hindered the widespread popularity and long-term success of an educational institution for folk music in England. The culturally instilled attitudes of folk revivalists in the earlier part of the twentieth century, under the direction of Cecil Sharp, denied the possibility of a pedagogical hierarchy that failed to adhere to the social one. Thus, for folk music to become the subject of educational institutions without challenging norms of social class, the relevant information would first need to be amassed or “collected” – never “learned” – by these representatives of the educated middle classes, and then passed down to those unskilled or unknowledgeable in the subject (both children and adults). Whilst a small number of “true” folk musicians and singers – or “sources” – such as William Kimber were able to carve out a profession for themselves in the wake of the first revival, issues of educational standardization and curricula remained in the hands of Sharp, Fox-Strangeways and

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<sup>40</sup> Indeed, such hierarchies have been, over the last century, generally accepted as characteristic of modern society, and implied by any attempt to link early critical theory to educational models, (e.g. Marxist instrumentalism; Kantian notions of autonomy and self-realization) such as that made by Nigel Blake and Jan Masschelein, ‘Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy’, in Blake, Nigel, Smeyers, Paul, Smith, Richard and Standish, Paul (eds.), *Philosophy of Education* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2003), 38-56.

<sup>41</sup> Whilst it is certainly true that a “teacher” may choose to take on the role of facilitator in order to offer the learner a less directed, experiential development opportunity, it is fair to say that this rarely happens without the teacher already having some or all of the experiences and skills that they hope to enable or instil in their pupils.



the EFDSS membership, predominantly made up of middle class antiquarians and folklorists.

However, it was this very group who maintained with such ferocity Sharp's unambiguous definition of the "folk" as the 'unlettered' classes (as discussed in the opening chapter).<sup>42</sup> This notion of the "true" folk musician (that is, the source of "authentic" material) as one 'whose faculties have undergone no formal training' on the one hand, and the insistence upon a pedagogy constructed on a sociological hierarchy on the other, were ultimately mutually exclusive, and whilst nationalist ideologies of the time required that the two be maintained simultaneously, a retrospective analysis would appear to demonstrate that no amount of top-down imposition was likely to result in a truly successful educational institutionalization.

During England's earlier period of folk revival, the educationalists, antiquarians and folklorists who had taken upon themselves the duty of re-educating the nation regarding its musical heritage did not generally attempt to identify themselves as "folk musicians", and certainly showed no desire to re-invent themselves as members of the "folk". However, it can be argued that key figures of the second folk revival during the 1950s, 60s and 70s were able to engage in such identification and re-invention, as a result of a dialogue between the socio-political backdrop of equal opportunities and heightened social awareness (which saw unprecedented numbers of people of "non-traditional" social backgrounds moving into higher education), and the new epistemological traits of the revival itself (which vilified Sharp's obsession with "authenticity" of material and source, and replaced it with a new quest for

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<sup>42</sup> Sharp, *Some Conclusions*, 4.

“authenticity” of musical style and social context).<sup>43</sup> The second revival’s relative disinterest in antiquity left the way open for the composition of “new” folk songs and, therefore, the creation of “new” folk singers (e.g. Vin Garbutt, Ewen MacColl, Peggy Seeger, Sandra Kerr, etc). In short, emancipation of the working classes saw the “folk” becoming educators, whilst emphasis within the revival on context and idiomatic content saw educators becoming the “folk”.

During this period, the majority of those wishing to learn about English folk music remained members of the ever-expanding educated middle classes but – due to the social changes summarized above – they were now able and willing to seek their information from “the source”; that is, from the – by now, often elderly – members of the diminishing rural working class. The information these revivalists sought now included the contextual and stylistic details that had been discarded during the first revival, and the improving communication and transport links across the country assisted many “source” singers and performers in making a career out of disseminating their knowledge, at forums such as the increasing number of festivals and competitions. This resulted, for a short time, in what could be described (at least in terms of social class) as a kind of bottom-up educative process – or, at the very least, a subconscious desire for such a process – that serves to contrast most palpably the respective educational movements of the two periods of revival.

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<sup>43</sup> Boyes, *The Imagined Village*; Frith, ‘Review, “The Imagined Village”; “The British Folk Scene”; “Transforming Tradition”’, 349.



Redhead and Street identify legitimacy, authenticity and community as constituent concepts within an all-encompassing ‘folk ideology’.<sup>44</sup> The three notions are, of course, firmly grounded in the 1980s sociologists’ preoccupation with global politics, and are heavily interrelated – a fact made all the clearer by the authors’ somewhat unsuccessful attempts to prise them apart. However, the last of these concepts can assist in our understanding of the development (or rather under-development) of the educational institutionalization of folk music in England: for instance, the integrity of the folk “community” suffers a considerable blow when pedagogical roles drive a wedge between teacher and learner; where performers are endowed with the official status of expert by “the establishment”, they are yet further elevated within – and thus further removed from – the audience with whom identification appears so critical. Within the classroom, Boyes’ ‘Imagined Village’ appears evermore unimaginable.

In this thesis, I shall attempt to demonstrate that the contemporary movement in educational institutionalization does not work against strict social or theoretical ideologies in the way that previous examples have. Rather, it locates folk music within a relatively undefined – and, therefore, epistemologically unthreatening – cultural space, without such clear social ideologies and motivations. However, before going on to discuss in depth the case studies that represent this movement, I shall first attempt to summarize the wider sociological context of folk music in *contemporary* England.

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<sup>44</sup> Steve Redhead and John Street, ‘Have I the Right? Legitimacy, Authenticity and Community in Folk’s Politics’, *Popular Music*, 8/2 (1989), 177-184.

## Contemporary England: The English “identity crisis”

Since the institutionalization of folk music has been – and continues to be – so inalienably intertwined with constructs of national identity (as has been demonstrated in this and the last chapter), it would seem pertinent to present a brief introduction to the subject of contemporary national identity in modern English society. The subject has received much attention in historical and sociological academia of the past five years, all of which appears to agree that “Englishness” is elusive, at least, more difficult to define than, say, “Irishness” or “Scottishness”.<sup>45</sup> In this section I shall attempt to demonstrate that this elusiveness is manifest in a lack of public nationalist expression, explicable within a contemporary multicultural context, and offer possible reasons for the recent raise in profile of the issue of English national identity in academia and journalism.

The issue has been summarized most concisely by Mike Sutton:

Imagine a young man, or woman, born and educated in London. He/she leaves school to work for a large corporation, and eventually gets transferred to their Edinburgh office. He or she becomes fascinated by all things Scottish, and eagerly embraces the local culture. Eventually, a colleague says: "Listen - you can eat the haggis and drink the whisky, wear the tartan and dance the strathspey, play the bagpipes and learn the works of Burns by heart - but for all that, you'll never be a Scot." I think most of us would understand. The English may sometimes resent the abrasive manner in which some Scots assert their national identity. But few of us would deny that the Scots *have* a national identity, or contest their right to assert it. However, the question of

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<sup>45</sup> For recent, comprehensive historical and sociological discussion of the subject, see Krishan Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 2003; Robert Colls, *Identity of the English* (London: Oxford University Press, 2002).



whether an *English* national identity exists - and how it should be asserted - is far more controversial.

Now imagine the experiment in reverse. A young person from Aberdeen, Armagh or Aberystwyth, moves to London, and wishes to immerse him or herself in English culture. Where would they find the local equivalent of a Burns supper, a St Patrick's night ceilidh, or an Eisteddfodd? Would any of their English colleagues know - or care? What might we recommend? A Test match at Lords? The last night of the Proms? The Notting Hill Carnival? Where does the essence of Englishness reside?<sup>46</sup>

Interestingly, in her study of the Folk-Rock movement of the 1960s and 70s, Sweers suggests that '[d]eveloping a sense of Englishness was often rather seen as a step away from the partly still prevailing negative (colonial) connotations that are associated with the term "Britain"'.<sup>47</sup> However, the development of such an identity appears to have faltered, as Sutton's rhetoric implies. The interaction between "Englishness" and "Britishness" is manifold and complex; it has been expressed and exploited by social commentators and entertainers respectively throughout the second half of the twentieth century. An example of the latter can be found in Michael Flanders' preamble to *A Song of Patriotic Prejudice*, in which he asserts:

England hasn't really got a national song – well, you know, just for England: there's plenty for Great Britain. That's quite different – you've got to be very careful how you use those terms, too. The rule is: if we've done anything good, it's "another triumph for Great Britain"; if we haven't it's "England loses again"! [...] What English national song have we got? *Jerusalem!* *There'll Always Be an England* – well, that's not saying much, is it? There'll always be a North Pole, if some dangerous clown doesn't go and melt it...!<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Sutton, 'England, Whose England?'

<sup>47</sup> Sweers, *Electric Folk*, 236.

<sup>48</sup> Michael Flanders and Donald Swan, 'Slow Train', *At the Drop of Another Hat*. (EMI Records, 1964).

This statement, made by Flanders in 1964, probably hints at the echoes of an imperial confidence that was already waning off stage, but it serves to demonstrate that, if the negative connotations of imperial “Britain” had made the development of an “English” identity more acceptable, this acceptability was comparatively short lived.<sup>49</sup> By the end of the twentieth century, the lack of a tangible English national identity is again, a source of scholarly and journalistic debate. Sutton continues:

Of course, all national identities are problematic. But Englishness seems to be particularly anomalous. (For example, at sporting contests, the Scots sing *Flower of Scotland*, and the Welsh, *Land of my Fathers*, but we use *God Save the Queen* - theoretically the anthem of all the British nations.) Over the past few months, the puzzles and paradoxes of Englishness have attracted increasing attention from academics and journalists. Bernard Crick discussed ‘The English Problem: National Identity and Citizenship’, in his George Orwell Memorial Lecture in November 1999. ‘What’s Wrong With England?’ was the theme of an issue of the *Spectator* in 1 April 2000. Even *fROOTS* (the publication formerly known as *Folk Roots*) gave it an airing in the editorial column of its April 2000 issue.<sup>50</sup>

It is a testimony to the significance of music in the creation, reinforcement and expression of national identity that the issue of national song is a recurring one: around the time at which Sutton wrote his article, the song writer and social commentator Billy Bragg was interviewed on BBC radio 2 about his search for a national song for England. He asserted that *God Save the Queen* was severely inadequate to the task, since it only made direct reference to the two things about which the majority of English people care least: Christianity and the monarchy.

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<sup>49</sup> It could, of course, be argued that the acceptable development of Englishness through the folk rock movement of the 1960s and 70s affected only a small proportion of the population, as an identifying alternative to the “British” polemics of anti-immigration politicians of the period, such as Enoch Powell.

<sup>50</sup> Sutton, ‘England, Whose England?’.



### *The preventative to English nationalism: ethnicity*

Ironically, the assertion of a distinct English identity has been most seriously hampered by colonialism's antitheses – immigration and multiculturalism. I shall first attempt to qualify this statement by means of two anecdotal illustrations.

1. In 2003, I was told of a shopkeeper in Kent being accosted by a member of the public for continuing to hang the flag of St. George in his shop window a little while after the football World Cup. The shopkeeper was told, in no uncertain terms, that the flag had racist connotations, and even that it implied allegiance to the British Nationalist Party. The shopkeeper walked the customer out in to the street, pointed to the church across the road, noting that the same flag was also flying from the church tower, and asked if that meant that the church was also affiliated to the BNP. The customer backed down.

2. One informant told me of a primary school just outside Durham. In 2001, a Chinese family moved to the area and enrolled their two children at the school. At the time, the other children at this school were studying projects based on the theme “tradition”, and teachers quickly hit on the idea that, by way of welcoming the newcomers, the class could study and perform dances traditional to the Chinese New Year celebrations. This the children did with great success. However, when a parent suggested that the children could study and take part in morris dancing on May Day (as a traditional part of the English culture), they were told that the school thought this inappropriate, since there were now two Chinese children in the class.

Anecdotes like these are ethnographically valuable, whether they be wholly accurate or not: they demonstrate that any kind of overtly nationalistic action is perceived in various sectors of contemporary English culture to be “inappropriate”. This is to be anticipated, since the issue of ethnicity – made manifest in the political debate over international asylum and immigration – has become an increasingly volatile subject in England: July 2001 saw violent clashes between white and Asian communities in Bradford;<sup>51</sup> the liberal “middle-England” was astounded by the election of right-wing British Nationalist Party members to local council seats in Burnley the following year.<sup>52</sup> Such tensions were exacerbated considerably by the New York terrorist attack of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, which appeared to have been carried out in a divisive attempt to split the world into Muslims and non-Muslims, a split that has been successfully sustained by the following military campaigns of the allied West in Afghanistan and Iraq. With the fear of international terrorism reaching fever pitch, far-right nationalist movement in Britain appears to be increasing in popularity, particularly in areas with large ethnic minorities, or affected by a large influx of immigrants seeking asylum. After the local elections of June 2004, the BNP now have 16 elected councillors, from Burnley and Bradford in the North to Thurrock, Essex, in the South.<sup>53</sup>

Scholars such as Harker and Boyes have demonstrated unequivocally the central role played by the educated, middle-aged middle classes in the maintenance of English

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<sup>51</sup> West Yorkshire Police, ‘Bradford Riots- 7th July 2001’, *West Yorkshire Police*. <http://www.westyorkshire.police.uk> (3rd June, 2003).

<sup>52</sup> D. Ward, ‘BNP in Big Poll Drive for Wider Support’, *The Guardian*. [www.guardian.co.uk/guardianpolitics/story/0,,927729,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/guardianpolitics/story/0,,927729,00.html) (2nd April, 2003). In the 2001 general election, the BNP won 16% of the vote in the constituency of Oldham. Despite this, the party has thus far failed to win a seat on the town’s council. Helen Carter, ‘Mixed results a surprise for BNP’, *The Guardian*. [www.guardian.co.uk/guardianpolitics/story/0,,1236989,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/guardianpolitics/story/0,,1236989,00.html) (2nd June, 2004).

<sup>53</sup> Naomi Byron and Clare James, ‘Neo-Nazi BNP win 13 council seats; joint statement from YRE and ISR’, *Youth against Racism Europe & International Socialist Resistance*. [www.yre.org.uk/election020503.html](http://www.yre.org.uk/election020503.html) (1st October, 2004).



folk music. Since this social group is also necessarily the most politically liberal and powerful, with – arguably – the most to lose by social unrest, it is perhaps not surprising that the issues of racial tension and multiculturalism mentioned here have the potential to effectively mute any attempt by the white indigenous population to assert their national identity. It could be argued that the white, middle classes of Middle England, who have been self-appointed guardians of English folk music over the last two centuries, are now unprepared to “rock the boat” of ethnic cohabitation by affirming a specifically national self, for fear of its construal as an act of socially divisive aggression.

The subtle interactions between indigenous folk arts and ethnic differentiation in contemporary England have become more explicitly expressed in recent years, with the advent of a debate surrounding the phenomenon of “blacking up”. The most high-profile case in this debate is that of the “Darkie Days” festival in Padstow, Cornwall. The festival, held on Boxing Day of every year, is characterized by large numbers of local residents blacking their faces and parading through the town, playing music and singing ‘minstrel-style’ songs.<sup>54</sup> The date of the festival’s origin is unclear, although photographic evidence dates back to the turn of the twentieth century; it is commonly believed to have existed at least since the slave trade, and very possibly related to the much older West Country tradition of “guising”, which essentially involved “blacking up” to prevent identification when singing for alms.<sup>55</sup> Prior to Boxing Day of 2004, however, an organization calling itself the “Cornwall Racial Equality Council” made

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<sup>54</sup> Richard Savill, ‘“Blacking up” festival-goers face police race enquiry’, *The Daily Telegraph*, (25th February 2005), 3. See also Simon de Bruxelles, ‘Police race inquiry could end Cornish Darkie Day’, *The Times*, (25th February 2005), 4; Derek Schofield, ‘A black and white issue?’ *English Dance and Song*, (Summer 2005), 12-14.

<sup>55</sup> de Bruxelles, ‘Police race inquiry’, 4.

complaints to the local police, resulting in a surveillance operation, the footage of which was passed to the Crown Prosecution Service. The CPS did not act upon allegations that the festival was inciting racial hatred, but the debate highlighted the racially problematic practice of “blacking up”, which is a key feature of many forms of morris dancing (including the Border morris tradition with which I, myself, am most closely involved). Derek Schofield, editor of *English Dance and Song*, found cause to ask whether “here is a feature of morris dancing that is past its sell-by date?”.<sup>56</sup> In response to his article, various people were asked to give their views on the subject and, although very much in the minority, the argument against the practice is represented:

I have watched many different dance groups around the country, and on certain occasions I have seen dancers black up to perform. As a mixed race man I do find this tradition offensive because I see it as a parody mocking people of colour. I would imagine that the people who perform these dances are not racists, and on some levels the people involved have not even thought about the implications these dances might have to people of colour.<sup>57</sup>

Nonetheless, the argument in favour of blacking up as a traditional form of disguise, and for generally visual impact, is predictably overriding in the responses. Ian Anderson points out that the notion of blacking up to “ward off evil spirits”, whilst a whimsical and unlikely reason for the practice, provides an interesting parallel, since his daughter’s Malagasy compatriots colour their faces white for just such purposes. Whilst not explicitly rehearsed in this exchange, the implication that British authorities are ready to engage with seemingly arbitrary repression of indigenous

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<sup>56</sup> Schofield, ‘A black and white issue?’, 12.

<sup>57</sup> Nigel Hogg, a dance caller quoted in Schofield, ‘A black and white issue?’, 12.



traditional culture in order to appease the racial-political sensibilities of the nation's ethnic minorities remains an overriding belief among those who continue to engage with the English folk arts. Participators in English folk dance and song feel that their activities have been hit the hardest by "political correctness" and its perceived descent into insanity.

### *The catalyst to English nationalism: British politics*

"Political correctness gone mad", and the fear of ethnic division and unrest upon which its justification is based, appear to be prevailing forces in the shaping and – ultimately – the subconscious suppression of an English national identity. However, the recent development of devolved government in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland since the coming to power of Tony Blair's Labour government in 1997 has injected new impetus to the issue: the increased powers of the Welsh and Scottish national assemblies over the past decade have instilled a feeling of resentment among a large proportion of the politically literate English middle class, who now see themselves as both culturally and politically impotent. The "West Lothian question", the debate surrounding the fact that Scottish politicians are able to affect legislation on health and education in England, whilst English politicians are unable to affect the equivalent legislation in Scotland, was made clear by William Rees-Mogg in an article in *The Times* days after the 2005 general election, in which he claims that 'The people of the UK's biggest, richest country won't accept second-class status much longer'.<sup>58</sup> He goes on:

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<sup>58</sup> William Rees-Mogg, 'The battle for England', *The Times*, (9th May 2005), 20.

After 1997 Tony Blair introduced devolution to Scotland and Wales; Northern Ireland had had devolution at Stormont since the 1920s, though the system has changed over time. There has been no devolution for England and that has thrown the constitution out of balance.

[...] The English question is not going to leave politicians alone. Sooner or later Labour will be left with a majority of seats in Wales and Scotland but not in England. That may or may not give it an overall commons majority. From that point on, the English will be claiming their share of self-government.

After all, even Welsh devolution, which does not include power of primary legislation, covers most of the policies with which the voter is personally concerned. Health and education are issues than can decide elections.<sup>59</sup>

This issue, coupled with the Euro-sceptic belief that sovereignty is being gradually – and undemocratically – surrendered to the European Union, has the potential to become (if it has not already done so) a significant – albeit subconscious – motivating factor behind any resurgence in folk music, song and dance as a signifier of national political distinction. In short, the political requisite of declaring “Englishness” in the face of waning electoral powers may override concern to avoid ethnic division within the multicultural society, a concern that appears to have hitherto succeeded in superseding any vigorous assertion of English national identity.

At the time that this research has been carried out, however, folk music is very much a minority interest over the country as a whole. England as a (mediated) nation is not proud of its folk music culture, and (as shall be shown in chapter 5) is first to treat it as a figure of amusement. As has been the case across Europe, folk music in this

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<sup>59</sup> Rees-Mogg, ‘The battle for England’, 20.



country has been used over the course of the twentieth century to meet the nationalist requirements of both sides of the political divide. Thus, contemporary resurgences in folk music are inalienably linked to a political and social ideological heritage – a factor central to folk music’s comical – and even controversial – status within contemporary English society. Nonetheless, a methodology embracing the consideration of folk music in terms of nationalism is flawed where it assumes that a “nation” as a politically – or even culturally – delimited space is habitat to a single, unified folk music culture, as shall be made clear in the following chapter.

### **3. Folkworks and The Sage Gateshead**

The most significant instances of educational institutionalization to be discussed in this thesis are the features and developments of an organization entitled Folkworks, based in the administrative centre of the North East region of England – the twin cities of Newcastle and Gateshead (now widely referred to as “NewcastleGateshead”). Folkworks, as an institution, is expansive in its activities, offering educational opportunities that range from workshops for beginners to master classes with well-known professionals and courses for fellow music educators. The texts of Folkworks’ pedagogy are various, including Northumbrian, Irish, Scottish, Swedish and East-European repertoires. This chapter shall begin by contextualizing the organization within a region which exhibits an unusually fervent but multicultural identity, and shall go on to provide a brief overview of the numerous traditional music repertoires that are most central to the folk music culture of the North East. This shall be followed by a more detailed and specific ethnography of Folkworks’ origins, activities and practices in order to consider the ways in which that context is reflected in the institutionalization process.

#### **Folk Music in the North East**

The North East region of England is, in most pragmatic senses, a fully integrated part of the national whole. As a geographically delimited area of the country (see Figure 1), the people of the contemporary North East are – on the whole – in receipt of the same mass media, with equal access to the same range of cultural consumables. They are subject (or subjected) to the same media-constructed cultural identities, discursive



figures and stereotypes as the rest of England, such as those mentioned in the previous chapter and discussed further in chapter 5. Furthermore, when given the opportunity to achieve a governing assembly partially devolved and independent from the central authorities of Westminster, the people of the North East region voted resoundingly against the scheme. These points could be put forward to suggest that any sense of regional identity in the North East, whilst a certain and strong social factor in earlier periods of English history, now wanes along with the industrial prosperity through which it originated, only to be disproportionately exaggerated by the Labour government – the political party whose success once relied on such identity, and on the industrial solidarity with which it was so closely linked. In the following section, however, I shall attempt to demonstrate that the economic and linguistic history of the North East *has* resulted in a very strong regional identity, facilitated by the social construction and maintenance of the “Geordie” image.<sup>1</sup> I shall seek to offer some brief explanations as to how such an identity has come about, and to begin to explore the relationship between the region’s cultural unity and its folk music culture.

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<sup>1</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the development of the “Geordie” image and identity, see Robert Colls and Bill Lancaster (eds.), *Geordies; Roots of Regionalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992).

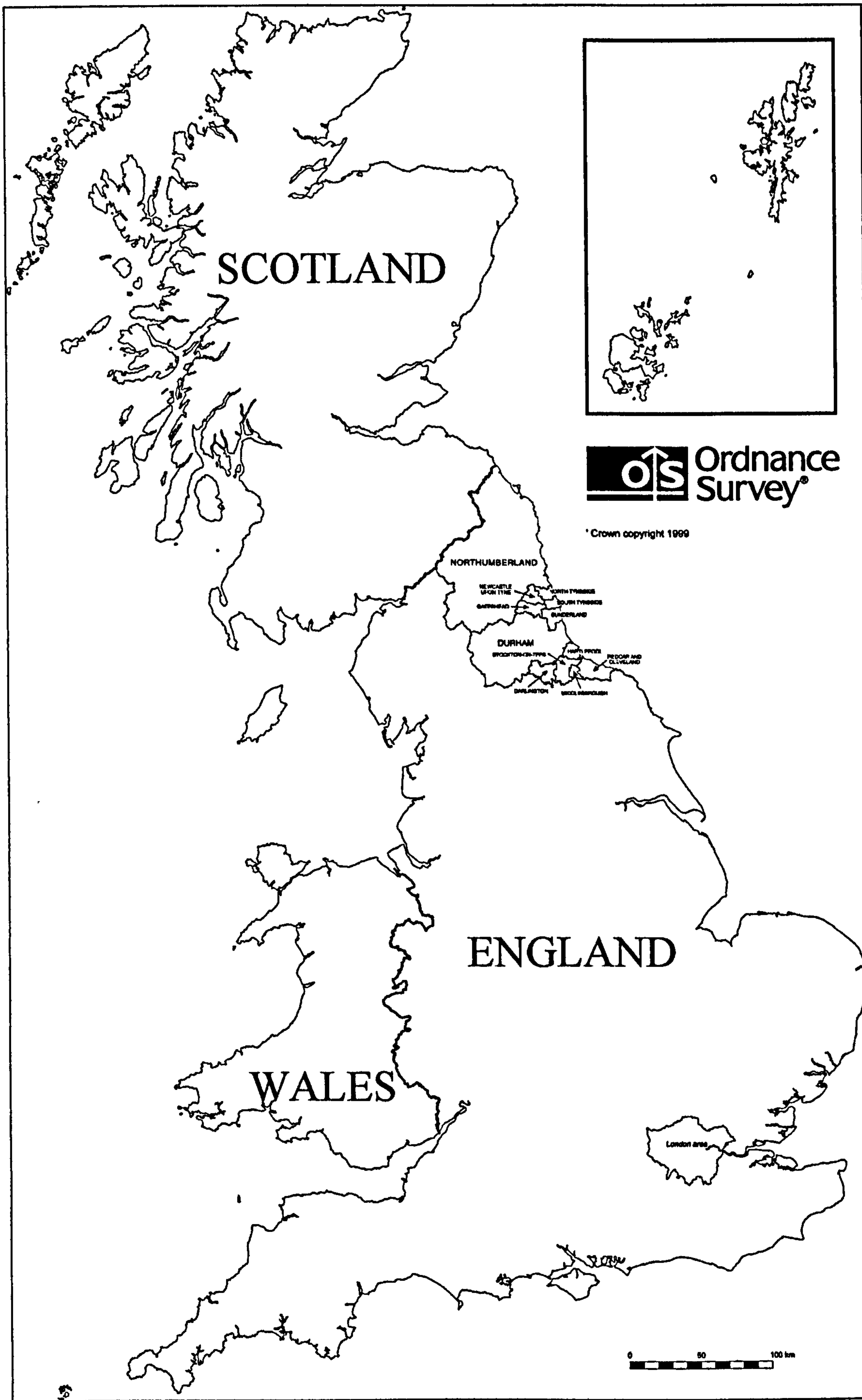


Figure 1: The North East of England, located within Great Britain



## Geordie identity: economics, politics and linguistics

The website of the pro-regional assembly campaign, claimed triumphantly that:

The North East has a strong and unique identity as a region. Our history and culture stretches back through the centuries. From the Christian heritage of the Venerable Bede, the Lindisfarne Gospels, St Cuthbert and Durham Cathedral to the industrial revolution and the shipbuilding and coal industries the North East has been a major player on the world scene.<sup>2</sup>

It is difficult to understand exactly what it meant here by a ‘unique identity’: the use of the term ‘unique’ may refer to the nature of the identity (which, in itself, is an unremarkable feature, since contradistinction must necessarily be a key component of any identity), or to the identity’s very existence (i.e. implying that no other equivalent geographic areas of the country have such an identity). Of course, the statement is designed to be emotive: it is hard to think of any group of people who’s history and culture do not stretch ‘back through the centuries’! Nonetheless, this insistence on such a unique identity is widespread across the region, and must surely be taken by cultural anthropologists to be (at least in part) a demonstration of such an identity’s existence. Such literature, prepared on behalf of the government for the [www.northeastassembly.gov](http://www.northeastassembly.gov) website represents the ultimately incorrect anticipation of a regional assembly. Those publications herein accredited to the North East Assembly must therefore be regarded as part of an ultimately unsuccessful pro-devolution campaign sanctioned by the central government. However, the documentary value of this website – and websites like it – must not be

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<sup>2</sup> North East Assembly, ‘The Voice For The Region’, *The North East Assembly*. <http://www.northeastassembly.gov.uk> (21st November, 2003).

underestimated: such emotive claims of regional identity and solidarity would be unsubstantiated in any other region of this scale.

In his comparison of Scottish nationalism and North East regionalism, D. U. Brett identifies a number of factors that have resulted in (and from) the latter:

[...] Nineteenth Century industrialisation, the flight of the upper classes, the development of an essentially working class popular culture and a feeling of toughness and superiority over an effete South, extreme hardship during the Depression and, since the war, the growing realisation that the region is lagging behind an increasingly prosperous nation [...] <sup>3</sup>

The emphasis here is on class-based economic and physical hardship of the past. Certainly the reliance of the region's economy on heavy industry – in particular coal mining, steel milling and ship building – has been exceptional within England. However, it is the current economic disparity between the North East and other regions of the country (in particular, the South East) as a result of the huge decline in these industries that continues to play an important role in the maintenance of this regional identity. The Campaign For the English Regions (CFER) demonstrated this point to support their call for a democratically elected assembly in the North East:

At a global level London and the South East are performing as well as the top ten most competitive nations, such as Singapore, Switzerland and Denmark. At the lower end of the scale Wales, the North East and Yorkshire and the Humber are ranked alongside nations such as Chile, Hungary and Israel. <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> D. U. Brett, *Aspects of Nationalism and Regionalism: The Cases of Scotland and the North East* (Durham: University of Durham, 1976), 43.

<sup>4</sup> Campaign For the English Regions, 'Policy Statement', *CFER*. <http://www.cfer.org.uk/library> (10th December, 2002).



The organization goes on to show that, of the twelve British regions (including Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland), the North East has the lowest ranking for indices relating to regional competitiveness, Gross Domestic Product and disposable household income, whilst having the highest rates of unemployment and mortality.

It is primarily this perception that the North East is distanced from the South East-based central government economically as well as geographically (along with the belief that the economic situation in the North East has been a result of political neglect by Westminster) that has resulted in the move towards the North East Assembly for which the CFER has campaigned.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the proposal for a devolved authority in the North East has been flatly rejected by the region's electorate in a referendum, leaving the reification of a North East assembly highly unlikely in the foreseeable future.<sup>6</sup> However, it would appear that the referendum result simply demonstrates a lack of confidence in governmental initiatives, a dissatisfaction at the notion of creating more MPs, and a considerable fear of an increase in council taxes to pay for the required restructuring of local authorities, rather than serving as an indictment of the regional identity claims presented here. The very fact that the debate on regional devolution began in the North East, and that the first referendum on the subject was held there, is undeniably significant. Nonetheless, the results of the referendum have been misinterpreted by some commentators (notably from

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<sup>5</sup> Campaign For the English Regions, 'Policy Statement'; Campaign For a North East Assembly, *Listening to Sedgfield* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Campaign For a North East Assembly, 21st January 2001), 1.

<sup>6</sup> On the 4<sup>th</sup> November 2004, in a referendum with a 48% turnout, only 22% voted in favour of a regional assembly, with 78% voting against; Hélène Mulholland, 'North-East Voters Reject Regional Assembly', *The Guardian*, [http://talk.workunlimited.co.uk/uk\\_news/story/0,3604,1343800,00.html](http://talk.workunlimited.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,3604,1343800,00.html) (6th November, 2004).

outside the region) as an indication that North East regional identity is a fictional notion, conjured up by the Labour government, in an attempt to break the country up ‘into artificial regions with no real historic identity’<sup>7</sup>

The debate over an assembly has not only been fuelled by the economic situation of the North East region, but can also be regarded as an acknowledgement of that ‘unique identity’, and the rather tautological statement that the region’s ‘history and culture stretches back through the centuries’ can be seen as an attempt to reassert and maintain this regional identity. Of course, the issues of economic hardship and regional identity outlined here are inalienably interrelated, since various sociological studies of the area have shown how local solidarities are constructed around shared lifestyles and experiences.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, other – equally interrelated – factors have also played an important role in the maintenance of regionalist sentiment.

One such factor is the linguistic and dialectical character of the region. The North East is made up of a number of dialects, including the Wearside dialect, the Teeside dialect, the Ashington dialect and – perhaps most significantly – the Geordie dialect of Tyneside. Local historians, such as David Simpson, have devoted much of their research to the study of these dialects, their linguistic characteristics and origins.<sup>9</sup> Whilst these dialects share considerable lexical and accent-based similarities with each other, the Geordie dialect, in particular, contains vocabulary quite foreign to the Standard English language: the combined vocabulary and strong accent of a born-and-

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<sup>7</sup> Rees-Mogg, ‘The battle for England’, 20.

<sup>8</sup> Brett, *Aspects of Nationalism and Regionalism*; C. C. Taylor and A. R. Townsend, *Sense of Place and Local Identity in the North-East of England* (Durham: University of Durham, 1974).

<sup>9</sup> See David Simpson, *Northern Roots: Who We Are, Where We Came From, and Why We Speak the Way We Do* (Sunderland: Business Education Publishers Ltd, 2002).



bred Geordie can result in a dialect quite incomprehensible to a person from the South.<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that Geordies take great pride in their dialect, and the numerous, light-hearted “Geordie Dictionaries” available in bookshops play an important role in the tourist trade of the region.

Although the Geordie dialect is thought to originate from the northern banks of the Tyne (Specifically, North Shields), Taylor and Townsend demonstrate that, by 1974, it was regarded by people across the North East as an attribute of Tyneside in general: there is even a suggestion that ‘theoretically at least, it may be possible to construct a series of phonetic isolines radiating out from the mouth of the Tyne’.<sup>11</sup> More importantly for the purposes of this study, Taylor and Townsend found that people ‘said they were Geordies in much of the territorial area of the Industrial North-East’ (by which they refer to Tyne & Wear and Eastern County Durham), demonstrating the growth of a perceived *regional* identity.<sup>12</sup> Other terms exist within the vernaculars of the area to identify a person’s sub-regional origins, such as “Mackem” – the term given to identify a person from Sunderland or Wearside. However, these definitions are seemingly becoming less significant, and certainly no such sub-regional distinctions are made by people from outside the North East.

Clearly, then, economic history and linguistic distinction are key to the cyclical development and reassertion of regional identity in the North East, and this identity continues to be rearticulated in the context of contemporary political debate. The way

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<sup>10</sup> As is mentioned in the *Introduction* to this thesis, anecdotal evidence from informers would suggest that the full vocabulary of the Geordie dialect would be far more comprehensible to a Dane or Norwegian, a suggestion that betrays the origins of the dialect.

<sup>11</sup> Taylor and Townsend, *Sense of Place and Local Identity*, 386.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 385.

in which the strong sense of identity discussed here actually frames the highly liberal musical practices and underlying attitudes of the region's folk musicians belies the conservatism normally associated with such assertions of cultural alterity: the regional contradistinction does not denote an exclusivity of traditional-musical content based on any regionally orientated notion of authenticity. The following section shall provide an overview of the three main genres of traditional music that play significant roles in the instrumental repertoires of the North East of England (Northumbrian, Irish and Scottish). The section shall also discuss the ways in which these repertoires can be seen not only as the result of historical, multiple affiliations to non-English national identities – in particular, the pan-Celtic identity – but also as the constituent elements of a geographically delineated whole that is, by virtue of its internalized predisposition to cultural diversity and absorption, now largely distinct from all other zones of traditional music in Britain.

### *The session: a “grass-roots” context*

Instrumental folk music is by far the highest profile form of repertory in the region: the majority of those current performers most strongly associated with the North East (the Kathryn Tickell band; Alistair Anderson) are very clearly identifiable as instrumentalists. This is not only true of most of the North East's current high-profile performers, but also of the more “legendary” figures of previous generations: Anderson's late colleagues, Willy Taylor (fiddle), Will Atkinson (harmonica) and Joe Hutton (small pipes); Billy Pigg (1902-1968; small pipes); the 19<sup>th</sup> century Tyneside tunesmith James Hill (fiddle); and even the 16<sup>th</sup> century legendary figure, Jimmy Allen (small pipes). Instrumental music and song in the North East (at least at a “grass roots” level) are subject to a degree of cultural compartmentalization, tending



as they do to occupy separate performance spheres: the vast majority of ‘sessions’ are accommodating only to instrumental music, whilst singing tends to take place only in the confines of the ‘singaround’ or in the form of ‘floor spots’ at a folk club. As has been discussed in the introductory chapter, it is instrumental music that forms the basis of analysis and discussion in this work.

In the North East, the instrumental session is generally characterized by a lack of explicit structure: instrumentalists are expected to begin (or ‘lead’) a tune, or set of tunes, at any “appropriate” opportunity – i.e. at a time when no other musician is playing, and after sufficient time has elapsed following the last tune for the other instrumentalists to have a rest from playing, perhaps take a mouthful of drink, or possibly talk to one another briefly about the tunes within the preceding set.<sup>13</sup> The ability to judge these parameters (along with the ability to recognize what repertory of tunes will be most appreciated by the other attendees) are defining features of a successful session participant in the North East folk music culture, but such success also relies particularly heavily on the self-confidence of each individual musician. At smaller scale, more intimate sessions, core musicians may often verbally invite a new attendee to play a tune (out of politeness rather than explicitly rehearsed protocol), but ultimately it is down to each individual to select a suitable moment to begin a tune. This is particularly important in those sessions for which background noise (such as the talking of other pub patrons) is very loud: in such a situation, one must be prepared to start a tune very confidently (i.e. stridently) in order to avoid the

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<sup>13</sup> For a detailed discussion of the North East pub session, see Keegan-Phipps, *The Pub Session in Durham*.

confusion of other participants being unaware that a tune has been started, and commencing their own.

This (Celtic-associated) scenario is based on a structure in which there are no officially recognized – or explicitly pronounced – “leaders”; instead each participant has an equal *right* to start a tune at any appropriate moment. Egalitarianism is tempered in other ways, here: hierarchies are very much in existence, but are largely tacit, based on musical status within the subculture of the session; cultural success is reliant on the individual’s considerable self confidence in the acceptability of his/her performance, his/her repertorial and stylistic selections, and the propriety of his/her timing. A communal environment in which music creation is governed by such a subtle system of unspoken rules and conventions is not *immediately* accessible to instrumentalists in the earlier stages of learning, since these individuals are usually (and necessarily) those with the least self confidence in the matters listed above, whilst also being the least technically able, preventing them from successfully “playing along” with, or “picking up” (i.e. assimilating) tunes that are unfamiliar to them. A novice instrumentalist in the North East must either internalize the governing principles of the particular session very swiftly, or else quickly develop methods of successfully joining in with the sets played by the other, more experienced players.

It is with this feature of the North East session culture in mind that, in the programme for the 2005 *Fiddles On Fire* festival, Folkworks’ David Oliver offered a workshop for beginners entitled ‘Feeling Comfortable in a Session. How to relax and increase your confidence to join in informal sessions’. The workshop was fully subscribed by the novice instrumentalists for whom it was designed, but its existence met with an



interesting response by more experienced North East folk musicians: one such individual, upon hearing the description of the workshop quoted above, turned to me and said in a derogatory tone, ‘well, that’s just survival of the fittest, isn’t it?’. Whilst only a brief utterance, this response betrays underlying value-systems by which the North East folk music culture can be seen to operate. The implications of this statement are manifold: the first of these is that gaining the confidence to participate successfully in a session is a basic rite of passage, which serves to sort the capable from the incapable. Secondly, it can be inferred from the emotive incredulity of the remark that the undermining of this process of “natural selection” is potentially damaging to the folk music culture. In other words, this experienced folk musician of the North East folk music culture is indirectly voicing a concern that removal of such a barrier of accessibility may have the potential to reduce the *quality* of the musical experience encapsulated within their session culture, by raising the expectance of inexperienced, novice instrumentalists to participate at an earlier stage in their musical development.

### Repertory

Before describing the detailed elements of the specific repertoires central to the North East folk music culture, I should first like to provide some general notes on the instrumental folk music of Ireland, Scotland, Northumbria and ‘England’, and the ways in which this music is represented and transcribed in this thesis.

The first point to be made is that the vast majority of British instrumental folk tunes share the format of at least two phrases, referred to as ‘the A part’, ‘the B part’, and so on. In the vast majority of cases, each phrase, or ‘part’ is either four or eight bars in

length and is repeated, resulting in a format AABB(CCDD etc.). This full exposition of the tune is then repeated an unspecified number of times – usually two, three or four times but in the case of thirty-two bar Celtic tunes, almost always three times – and is normally performed in a ‘set’ with – usually one, two or three – other tunes of the same time signature.



Tune taxonomies are largely constructed upon distinction of time signatures: it is therefore acceptable to begin the categorization of tunes across the British Isles by making the division between those in simple- and compound-time. The most popular simple-time tunes within the Scottish, Irish and Shetland repertoires are reels, which are predominated by quaver movement, written in 4/4 and played at speeds of between  $\text{♩} = 200$  and  $\text{♩} = 280$ . Reels are often played with varying degrees of ‘swing’ – where the first of each pair of quavers is emphasized to the extent that it becomes longer than the second: indeed the amount of ‘swing’ employed by a performer has been seen to become an identifying feature of regional ‘style’ within Celtic – and, particularly, Irish – repertory.<sup>14</sup> In almost all cases, however, these tunes are written as ‘straight’, a convention which is followed in the transcriptions of this thesis. Other simple-time tune forms include Northumbrian rants, which are constructed predominantly of ‘straight’ quavers, and played at around  $\text{♩} = 200$ ; and Irish and ‘English’ Polkas, both of which are characterized by prevalent crotchet movement, and played at approximately  $\text{♩} = 240$ . Polkas are the single greatest element of the ‘English’ folk music repertory but are, however, fairly uncommon in the North East folk music culture. More prevalent in the North East are 3/2 hornpipes, played with

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<sup>14</sup> Niall Keegan, pers. comm. 21st October 2003.



'straight' quavers at a tempo of between  $\text{♩} = 120$  and  $\text{♩} = 150$ .  $3/2$  hornpipes are also becoming evermore popular in the south of England, since a recent return to early manuscripts in the 'English' folk music culture has resulted in the rediscovery of many such tunes.

By far the most popular form of compound-time tune is the jig, which is written in  $6/8$ , and played at a speed of between  $\text{♩} = 120$  and  $\text{♩} = 140$ . These are present throughout the British Isles, although not quite so central to the southern 'English' repertory. The hornpipe, also found across the British Isles, can be classed as compound since, although often written in  $4/4$ , pairs of quavers in this form are usually realized as somewhere between  and . The hornpipe can be seen written down with straight quavers, alternate dotted quavers and semiquavers, or in  $12/8$  using alternate crotchets and quavers. In this thesis I have subscribed to the convention of transcribing hornpipes as in  $4/4$  with dotted quaver-semi quaver patterns, in order that tune taxonomy is immediately apparent. Hornpipes are generally played at a speed of around  $\text{♩} = 120$ .

In this thesis, and unless otherwise specified, I have not provided a detailed transcription of any one specific *performance* of a tune, since this would not be the most useful method of representing the various repertorial content performed in the North East or in 'England'. Instead, what is shown is the *basic* tune: all such foundations are open to improvised ornamentation and embellishment, the nature and extent of which is largely dependent upon the creative tendencies and expertise of the individual performer. It is beyond the scope of the present study to list and provide

specific details of each form of ornamentation: not only has this been done in numerous previous texts – particularly those on Irish and Scottish traditional music – but also, in the cases of ‘England’ and the North East, labels for such ornaments (e.g. “cuts”, “rolls”, etc) are not essential as cultural capital, and are used only by a minority with a specific knowledge of – mainly Irish – traditional music technique.

### Northumbrian traditional music

The strong local identity that has been explained here in terms of economic and linguistic history, and shown to be reflected in contemporary politics, is also both strengthened by, and gives reinforcement to, a clearly identifiable indigenous traditional music repertory. North Eastern, or “Northumbrian” music<sup>15</sup> is distinct from those core repertories of its neighbouring musical provinces (Scotland and the rest of England), not only in terms of the various, predominating melodic characteristics, but also in terms of instrumentation, since it lays claim to its “own” instrument – the Northumbrian small pipes. In this respect, the North East is distinct from every other sub-national region not only of England, but of all four of the nations of the United Kingdom.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The term “Northumbrian”, when used in reference to traditional music, is problematic, since the area of “Northumbria” is, strictly speaking, the land “North of the Humber” – and generally refers to the counties of Cleveland, County Durham, Tyneside and Northumberland. However, when used in reference to traditional music of the “Northumbrian” small pipes or of the “Northumbrian” fiddle tradition, the term most commonly refers to music only from Northumberland and, to a lesser extent Tyneside.

<sup>16</sup> A possible exception to this is the Highland pipes but these have, for some time, been an accepted icon of Scottish nationalism as a whole, in a way that Northumbrian small pipes have had no real association with English nationalist sentiment, playing – as they did – no noticeable role in Sharp’s revivalist movement. Other minority instruments may be seen as contenders, such as the Scottish “Lowland” pipes, but these do not receive anywhere near the same levels of public acknowledgement or recognition as the Northumbrian small pipes; the Lowland pipes are also frequently referred to as the “Border” pipes, since they have been – and remain – linked to sizeable areas on both sides of the political-geographic divide. Paul Martin, pers. comm., 4<sup>th</sup> May 2004.



The music of which the Northumbrian traditional repertory comprises is, however, clearly related to that of its neighbouring folk music cultures. The music is predominantly centred on the diatonic major scales and the Aeolian and Dorian modes, in the same way as the majority of ‘English’ traditional instrumental music.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps most noticeable in Northumbrian traditional music is the role of the “theme and variation” form in the structuring of tunes. This is particularly true of tunes in the Northumbrian piping repertory, where the first eight-bar phrase (or ‘A part’) will often be followed by three or four variations. Variations are primarily constructed around arpeggios and *nota cambiata*,<sup>18</sup> are consistent in harmonic implication with the theme, and generally increase in quaver movement. An example of this structure is the two part tune, *The Black Cock of Wickham* (see Example 1; CD Track 1), whilst a less subtle variation structure can be seen in the tune *Small Coals and Little Money* (Example 2).



Example 1: *The Black Cock of Whickham*

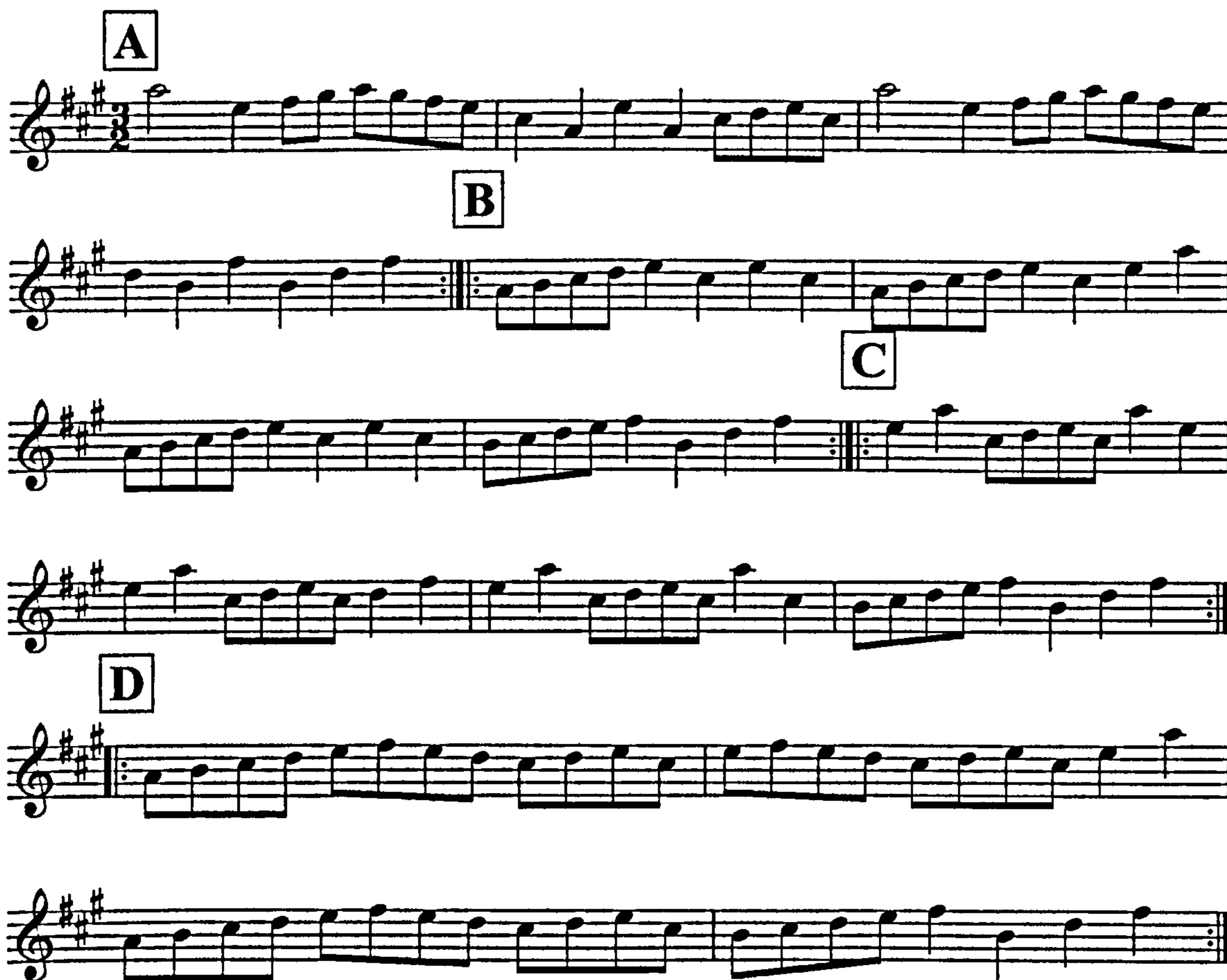
<sup>17</sup> For more on the nature of Northumbrian traditional music, see Keegan-Phipps, *The Pub Session in Durham*, 34-40; Matt Seattle (ed.), *The Master Piper, or Nine Notes that Shook the World*, (Newcastle, Dragonfly Music, 1995); J. Collingwood Bruce and John Stokoe (ed.), *Northumbrian Minstrelsy; a collection of the ballads, melodies, and small-pipe tunes of Northumbria*. (Pennsylvania; Folklore Associates, 1965).

<sup>18</sup> A form of written ornamentation based around the subject note and (usually) the two notes directly above and below in the scale, in which each note is of duration equal to the tune’s standard unit (in most cases, quavers). I resort, here, to Western musicological terminology, since no clear equivalent terminology exists within the folk music culture being studied for mid-scale compositional devices (unlike in the case of small-scale ornamentation).



**Example 2:** *Small Coals and Little Money*

Another, more popular example of this theme-and-variation structure is the Northumbrian small pipe tune, *Lads of Alnwick* (see Example 3).



**Example 3:** *Lads of Alnwick*



*Lads of Alnwick* is also a clear example of a genre that distinguishes this repertory from Irish and Scottish traditional music – the 3/2 hornpipe. This time signature is imbued with a certain degree of “ancient” association, and is particularly prevalent in the repertory of the Border pipes, an open-fingered instrument which predates the modern small pipes.<sup>19</sup> Another suggestion that the border pipes’ repertory is the likely origin of many such tunes is made by the restricted melodic range: the open fingered Border pipes are restricted to nine notes in the Mixolydian mode (in ascending order: G♭, A, B, C♯, D, E, F♯, G♭, A). This is in stark contradistinction to the modern standard Northumbrian small pipes, which have been capable of at least two, fully chromatic octaves throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, Example 3 demonstrates how the modal nature of the Border pipes repertory has been eroded to suit both the diatonic tendencies of the small pipes, and the musical tastes of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: when played on the Border pipes, the G♯s in *Lads of Alnwick* as shown in Example 3 (bars 1 and 3) are played as G♭s.<sup>20</sup>

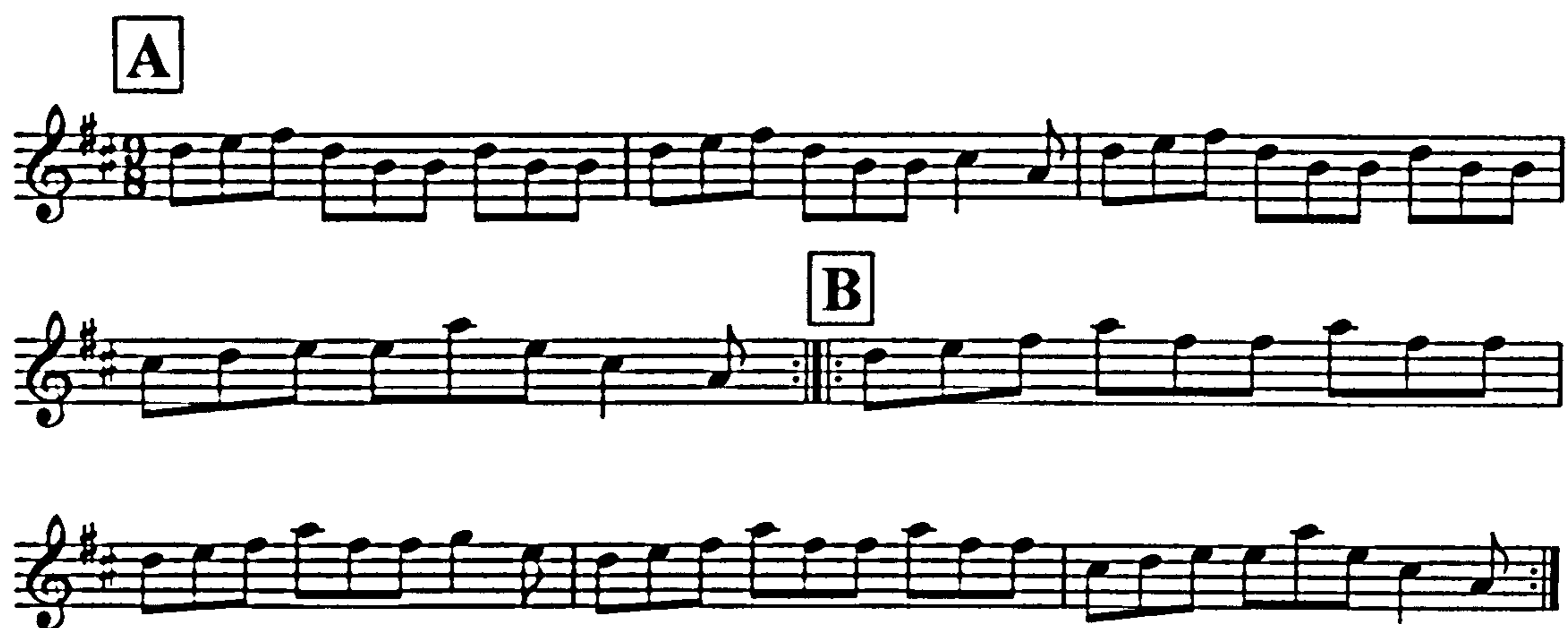
An inversion of this “diatonicization” process can be seen in the case of *Peacock Followed the Hen* (Example 4). The Border pipe version of this tune is arranged such that the ‘B part’ is diatonically grounded in D major.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> For instance see Seattle, *Master Piper*, 3-4 .

<sup>20</sup> An example of this modal version is provided by the performance of Paul Martin on Horseplay, ‘Cuckold Come Out the Amery/Lads of Alnwick/Jack’s Gone A-Shearing’ *Roughshod* (Independent, 2006). The diatonic version can be heard on Nancy Kerr and James Fagan ‘Lads of Alnwick’ *Strands of Gold* (Fellside Recordings, 2005).

<sup>21</sup> Seattle, *Master Piper*, 18.




**Example 4: *Peacock Followed the Hen***

However, the tune is most often heard played in Northumbrian sessions with the inclusion of G#s or, more precisely, *one* G# in the second bar of the B part; played in this way, the tune effectively takes on the key signature of A major. Thus, the tune has been transferred from an instrument that is intrinsically (Mixolydian) “modal” to instruments that are fundamentally diatonic, and in being so, has perversely taken on new (Lydian) *modal* characteristics; the G# is all the more noticeable and significant since it falls on an emphasized beat, and is one of only four crotchets in the whole tune. Matt Seattle’s discussion of the Border pipe repertory makes clear that the chronology of such variants is often ambiguous. However, in the wider Northumbrian repertory, the use of a G# within a tune restricted to nine or fewer notes would certainly appear to predate the use of a G# within the same tune.

This argument is supported by the prevalence of diatonicism in the later-emerging Tyneside instrumental repertories of the nineteenth century. The repertory with the highest profile in this category is the fiddle hornpipe repertory, of which the fiddler and composer James Hill (c.1811-1853) is the best known figure. Tunes of this type



embrace a near-Classical diatonicism, characterized by regular modulations to the dominant (see Example 5, *The Wonder Hornpipe*, a tune closely associated with Hill, although its authorship appears uncertain).<sup>22</sup> Here we see the rejection of a “theme and variation” structure, in favour of two, harmonically contrasting phrases. The hornpipe genre has played a particularly vital role in the accompaniment of North East clog dancing and, as with hornpipes in other British traditions, can be written in straight or dotted quavers, although the realization of the quavers is usually somewhere between a dotted rhythm and a swung  rhythm.



**Example 5: *The Wonder Hornpipe***

The output of James Hill and his contemporaries is still subject to considerable reverence (Hill was the focus of both a concert and a workshop at the *2005 Fiddles*

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<sup>22</sup> Philip Heath-Coleman ‘Stephen Baldwin – “Here’s one you’ll like, I think”’, *Musical Traditions*. July 2005. <http://www.mustrad.org.uk/articles/baldwin.htm> (15th November 2005).

*On Fire Festival*), and the stylistic elements of the Tyneside hornpipe have continued in the works of contemporary musicians such as Alistair Anderson. Anderson's well known dedication to the now late harmonica player Will Atkinson – *Ninety Three Not Out* (Example 6; CD Track 2) – written on the occasion of Atkinson's ninety-third birthday, shares many of the key elements of a Hill hornpipe: although the tune is actually a jig (in 6/8 time – incidentally, a staple tune form of the other key dance style in the North East, Rapper dancing) it includes the dominant features of the nineteenth century Tyneside tunes, such as the quick arpeggio movements, and strong sense of diatonicism, emphasized here by an implied circle of fifths in the B part.

**Example 6: *Ninety Three Not Out* (A. Anderson)**

A recent distancing from the pseudo-classical diatonicism of the nineteenth century can be seen in the works of contemporary Northumbrian musicians, such as Kathryn Tickell. The slow waltz *Our Kate* (Example 7) provides an example of this: the A part represents a return to composition in the Mixolydian mode (although the range



exceeds that of the Border pipes), whilst the B part can be seen as a dialogue between the Mixolydian mode and the more common and enduring Dorian mode.

The image shows a musical score for 'Our Kate' by K. Tickell. It is written in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The score is divided into two parts, A and B. Part A consists of two staves of music. Part B also consists of two staves, with the first staff containing first and second endings. The notation includes various note values, rests, and repeat signs.

Example 7: *Our Kate* (K. Tickell)<sup>23</sup>

Other traditional categories of tunes include the ‘rant’, a label for tunes originally designed to accompany the communal dance form of the same name. In most cases these would appear to date from the late eighteenth century onwards. The musical form is identified by the prevalence of swift quaver movement, and by the equal duration of each quaver (unlike the “swung” attribute of the Irish reel). As in the case of the hornpipes and jigs of nineteenth century Tyneside, rants tend to cover a considerable range of at least a twelfth, and are primarily constructed of alternating arpeggios and scale passages. See, for example, *The Morpeth Rant* (Example 8; CD Track 3).

<sup>23</sup> Kathryn Tickell, ‘Our Kate’, *Debateable Lands* (Park Records, 1999).



**Example 8: *The Morpeth Rant***

As in this case, the names of tunes often make reference to specific places across the region (e.g. *The Durham Rangers*; *The Hexham Races*) ; whilst these cannot necessarily be taken as an indication of a tune's place of origin, it would appear to suggest a spreading *either* of musical stylistic trends across the North East, *or* – at the very least – of a regional musical identity. Such references in tune titles certainly serve to strengthen the suggestion of a regional identity within today's Northumbrian folk music culture – reinforcing the implication that the tunes' origins are cemented within the (ancient) physical geography of the region. This relation of repertory to geography will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

### *Irish traditional music*

Despite the broad celebration and documentation of these distinctive and numerous repertoires within the Northumbrian musical tradition, Irish traditional music also plays a central part in the folk music culture of the North East of England. In fact,



Irish traditional music is so prevalent in the North that pubs such as the Cumberland Arms in Byker, Newcastle, are regular host to a music session entitled “the ABI session”, where ABI is an abbreviation of the phrase “Anything But Irish”, providing those exponents of other repertoires (namely Northumbrian, Scottish and occasionally ‘English’) with a space in which to play their chosen tunes, to the exclusion of the otherwise ubiquitous Irish jigs and reels. In the first instance, this commonality of Irish music can be explained in terms of the region’s migratory history: during the 1840s and 50s, thousands of Irish families migrated to the industrial areas of the North East of England, fleeing famine in Ireland. The extent of the immigration is difficult to quantify, although the growth of the Roman Catholic church in the region at that time provides church records that have led historians such as Simpson to suggest that a fifth of Tyneside’s population in 1851 were Irish born.<sup>24</sup> When attempting to estimate the extent of Irish cultural influence, it is also worth bearing in mind that the religious beliefs (and cultural norms) of most Irish immigrants will have led to their having families much larger than those of their native counterparts. All this considered, it is probable that Irish descendants now make up a sizeable proportion of the total population of the North East.


The Irish heritage, culture and traditions are kept very much alive in the North East by organizations such as the Tyneside Irish Centre, in Gateshead. This centre offers not only Irish related entertainment for the Irish community of Tyneside, but also free support and advice from a full-time Welfare Officer. The centre’s obituary of a local folk musician provides considerable information regarding the centre’s definition of

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<sup>24</sup> Simpson, *Northern Roots*, 111. For more on the extent of Irish immigration to the North East, see also J. M. Tweedy, ‘Irish Immigrant Mobility and Religious Practice in Nineteenth Century Durham.’ *Northern Catholic History*, 11 (1980); 25-32; R. J. Cooter, ‘On Calculating the Nineteenth Century Irish Population of Durham and Newcastle.’ *Northern Catholic History*, 2 (1975); 16-25.

the term “Irish”: John Doonan, a folk musician from Hebburn, near Gateshead, who died in 2002, is fondly remembered by the centre as an ‘Irish musician’.<sup>25</sup> He was clearly regarded as a member of an ‘Irish’ community – the community for which the centre provides – but was only fourth-generation Irish (that is, his Great Grandfather was Irish-born). Clearly, the fact that he played predominantly Irish folk music will have strengthened his position within such a community, but his obituary nonetheless demonstrates that the Irish cultural identity has been maintained long after the demise of the nineteenth century expatriates.

The tunes within the Irish traditional repertory in the North East of England are fundamentally not dissimilar to those performed in Ireland itself.<sup>26</sup> The principal musical forms of this repertory are reels and jigs. Reels are in duple meter, although usually written in 4/4, with the quaver as the predominant note duration: in Irish reels, the quavers are generally – apart from some rare exceptions – played in a “swung”

rhythm (  ) (see *Drowsy Maggie*, Example 9; CD Track 4). As is the case with most traditional dance tunes across the British Isles, the majority of Irish reels played in the North East are made up of two parts, each repeated, and – usually – each eight bars in length (Example 9 shows an example of the less usual four-bar phrased tunes).

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<sup>25</sup> The Tyneside Irish Centre, ‘John Doonan (Irish musician) 1922-2002’, *Tyneside Irish Centre*. <http://www.tynesideirish.com/news> (4th January, 2003).

<sup>26</sup> See Dorothea E. Hast and Stanley Scott, *Music in Ireland; Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 64-70.





**Example 9: *Drowsy Maggie***

It is worth pointing out that, whilst reels are the most popular tune form in Ireland,<sup>27</sup> and continue to have the highest status among the most dedicated of Irish traditional musicians outside of Ireland (including those in the North East), they feature no more regularly than jigs in those generic instrumental sessions across the North East not specifically labelled as “Irish”. Jigs are in 6/8 time, often played with an accent on the first and third of each group of three quavers (see Example 10, *Out on the Ocean*, for an example of a popular jig in North East instrumental sessions).

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<sup>27</sup> Hast and Scott, *Music in Ireland*, 67.

**A**

**B**

**Example 10: *Out on the Ocean***

*Out on the Ocean* is also an excellent example of pentatonicism within Irish traditional tunes. The tune is very closely based around the pentatonic scale [G,A,B,D,E], with only occasional F#s; it is important to notice that these do not fall on the emphasized first or fourth quaver of the bar. This form of pentatonic scale, constructed from the sequence of semitone intervals (starting from the tonic) [2,2,3,2,3] is fundamental to a substantial proportion of “major key” Irish tunes.<sup>28</sup> Alternatively, those tunes in a “minor key” are generally constructed around the pentatonic scale of intervals [2,3,2,3,2], such as the predominant melodic structure of [E,F#,A,B,D] in *Morrison’s Jig* (Example 11; CD Track 5). Here, however, we see in the penultimate bar of the A part, and in the last four bars of the B part, that this modality is in coexistence with diatonicism, manifest in implied modulations to the relative major (G), a note which does not otherwise appear on a stressed beat. The

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<sup>28</sup> This pentatonicism is rarely discussed or acknowledged by the musicians, who generally regard tunes as either in a “minor key” or “major key”. It is worth pointing out that these labels are assigned according entirely to the nature of the third note in ascent from the tonic, rather than in reference to sixths or sevenths.



pentatonicism, meanwhile, is strengthened by the repeated F#s and As in the B part (marked (a) and (b)), which are harmonically extraneous: although falling on accented beats within the bars, the notes are not structural, and would normally be played over a simple E minor chord.

The image displays a musical score for 'Morrison's Jig' in treble clef, 6/8 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The score is divided into two main sections, A and B. Section A consists of two staves of music. The first staff of A is marked with a box containing the letter 'A'. The second staff of A includes first and second endings, indicated by '1.' and '2.' above the staff. Section B consists of five staves of music. The first staff of B is marked with a box containing the letter 'B'. Within this section, two specific notes are highlighted with boxes and labeled '(a)' and '(b)'. Note (a) is an F# on the second beat of the first staff, and note (b) is an A on the second beat of the second staff. The rest of the score for B continues with a series of eighth and sixteenth notes.

**Example 11: Morrison's Jig**

The use of these pentatonic sequences remains central to the construction of contemporary Irish traditional compositions, such as the reel *Trip to Herves*, by the celebrated Irish flautist, Michael McGoldrick (Example 12). Here, as in *Out on the Ocean*, the notes outside of the pentatonic scale (the fourth and seventh of the major scale, G and C#), occur very infrequently, and then only as appoggiaturas and passing notes.

**A**

**B**

**Example 12: *Trip to Herves* (M. McGoldrick)**

Another Irish tune form is the Slip-jig. This is a tune in 9/8 time, but all other musical attributes are shared with the standard jig. Slip-jigs are much less common in the North East folk music repertory than those other forms discussed above.

### Scottish traditional music

Many of the musical traits described above in relation to Irish traditional tunes are shared with Scottish tunes. This is perhaps unsurprising, since much of the Irish repertoire is believed to have originated in Scotland and arrived in Ireland in the



eighteenth century.<sup>29</sup> When asked whether a tune of ambiguous origin is Irish or Scottish, musicians' responses can vary, depending on factors such as where they first heard the tune, who they have heard play it, and what other tunes they associate with it. The result is often a "Pan-Celtic" mix of tunes and, consequently, a generic Celtic musical identity amongst many traditional musicians in the North East, which goes largely unqualified in national terms. The study of Celtic music as a global phenomenon has received recent ethnomusicological attention in the form of the book *Celtic Modern: Music at the Global Fringe*.<sup>30</sup> Here Celtic musics are discussed in various global contexts (generally those abroad from the spaces of their origins), and are not generally documented as an amorphous conglomeration of Irish *and* Scottish repertory. For example, in his discussion of Irish traditional music in Australia, Graeme Smith uses the terms 'Celtic' and 'Irish' interchangeably;<sup>31</sup> here, Smith refers to the process of 'Celticization', but what he actually describes is something more akin to "*Irishization*".<sup>32</sup> The North East, on the other hand, offers a much clearer example of a "Celtic" melting pot extant at the very centre of a folk music culture's repertorical systems.

Scottish tunes generally fall into the same categories of jigs and reels, and are often performed with similar rhythmic emphases and with a similar repertory of ornamentations. Aside from the two categories of jigs and reels, however, one can also distinguish those tunes that fall within the range of the Mixolydian pipes: such

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<sup>29</sup> Hast and Scott, *Music in Ireland*, 67. The view is contentious amongst Irish traditional musicians, although the immigrant nature of the Irish repertory is acknowledged by high-profile musicians such as Niall Keegan.

<sup>30</sup> Martin Stokes and Philip V. Bohlman, (eds.) *Celtic Modern: Music at the Global Fringe* (Oxford: Scarecrow, 2003).

<sup>31</sup> Graeme Smith, 'Celtic Australia: bush bands, Irish music, and the new nationalism'. In Stokes and Bohlman (eds.), *Celtic Modern: Music at the Global Fringe* (Oxford: Scarecrow, 2003) 73-91.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

tunes are often derived from the repertory of the Highland pipes (which are effectively in the Mixolydian mode starting on B $\flat$ , with an ascending range of A $\flat$ , B $\flat$ , C, D, E $\flat$ , F, G, A $\flat$ , B $\flat$ ), and transposed down a semitone to A, in order to fit with the capabilities of practically all session instruments (see *Lexy McAskill*, Example 13; CD Track 6).

The image displays four staves of musical notation, each representing a variation of a single tune. The staves are labeled A, B, C, and D from top to bottom. Each staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is pentatonic, consisting of the notes A, B, C, D, and E. Variation A starts on A4, B on B4, C on C5, and D on D5. Each variation is a single line of music on a treble clef staff, starting with a repeat sign. The melody is pentatonic, using only the notes A, B, C, D, E.

**Example 13:** *Lexy McAskill* (Dr. J. McAskill).


This tune shows links to Irish traditional music, through its strict pentatonicism, whilst the structure is identical to the variation sets of the Northumbrian and border piping traditions. An example of this structure in the context of a more (although not totally) diatonic tune, is the popular session jig, the *Athol Highlanders* (Example 14).

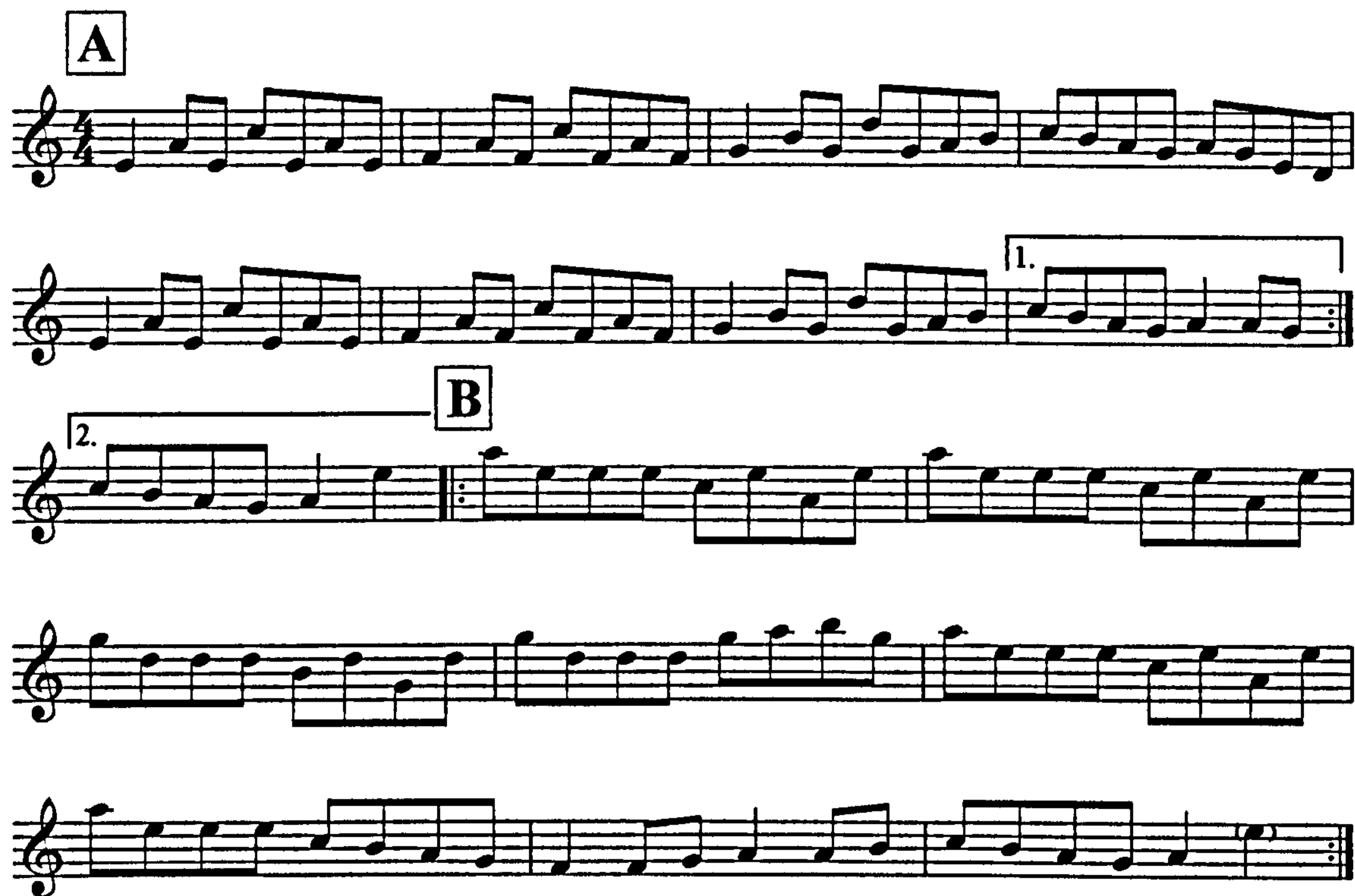


**Example 14: *The Athol Highlanders***

One key indicator of a Scottish tune (particularly a tune from the Scottish fiddle repertory) is the use of the Aeolian mode in a “minor” tune, i.e. the appearance of the flattened 6th. An example of this is the featuring of emphasized F♮s in the common reel, *Tam Lin* (Example 15; CD Track 4). Other distinguishing features of a Scottish reel may include the use of a less swung quaver rhythm in the playing of reels.

However, such subtleties are likely to differ from one performance to the next, and from one performer to the next: they cannot be regarded as the grounds on which to

base assumptions regarding a tune's origin, or a performer's stylistic background. In the Scottish fiddle repertory writ-large, Strathspeys (characterized by the predomination of the dotted  rhythm) are also a key point of distinction, but these are less commonly heard in the North East instrumental traditional music repertory.



The musical score for 'Tam Lin' is presented in five staves of music. The first staff begins with a boxed letter 'A' above it. The second staff concludes with a first ending bracket labeled '1.'. The third staff begins with a boxed letter 'B' above it and a second ending bracket labeled '2.'. The fourth and fifth staves continue the melodic line. The music is written in treble clef with a 4/4 time signature.

**Example 15: *Tam Lin***

By presenting this extremely brief overview of the instrumental repertoires extant within the North East folk music culture, I have attempted to demonstrate the close textual relationships between the musical forms: the “theme-and-variation” structure common in Northumbrian tunes is also a central element of much of the Scottish repertory apparent in the North East. These two instrumental traditions also share a central element of open-fingered pipes, meaning that substantial proportions of both repertoires are characterized by limited range and Mixolydian modality (or, at least, perceptible origins within Mixolydian modality). Perhaps the most popular repertory



across the North East, Irish traditional music, shares both a tendency towards pentatonicism and its predominant categorical forms (e.g. jigs and reels) with its fellow “Celtic” (i.e. Scottish) cohabitant repertory, to such an extent that the two are often indistinguishable when played, side-by-side, in a session.

This blurring of the boundaries between the key elements of the North East folk music culture’s musical content has assisted in maintaining the region as a musical “melting-pot”. However, this mixing of traditions should not be read as a *lack* of North-Eastern musical identity – far from it: such liberal embracing of multiple repertories is what makes this region’s folk music culture quite distinctive from those of its neighbouring traditional music cultures (Scotland, Ireland and also ‘England’, the repertory of which features more rarely in the North East, and shall be discussed in detail in chapter 5). Unlike in these – and most – other folk music cultures, where clear boundaries are drawn between that which is “local” and that which is “foreign” – and where “foreign” tunes are often appreciated but seldom absorbed into the “local” canon – few such margins exist in the cultural systems of North East folk music. It is in the context of such repertorial ambiguity and cultural absorption that I shall now go on to discuss the most central and representative organization within the folk music culture of the North East of England – Folkworks.

## **Folkworks: a history of recontextualization**

Folkworks was founded by Ros Rigby and Alistair Anderson in 1987, as the Folk Development Agency for Northern England.<sup>33</sup> The combination of Rigby's acumen for arts administration and cultural development and Anderson's musical pre-eminence and regional celebrity has raised the organization's status and public recognition to national levels: Folkworks, a registered charity, is now unmistakably the largest and most successful single promoter of folk music performance and education within the national boundaries of England. Whilst regularly concerned with arranging national and international tours and festivals, the majority of the institution's educational events continue to occur in the North East, although larger-scale events – such as their residential youth and adult summer schools – draw an intake from right across the country. In 2001, Folkworks joined the company (and registered charity) North Music Trust as a key founder member of The Sage Gateshead, alongside the Northern Sinfonia. “The Sage, Gateshead” is often used to refer to the multifaceted umbrella-organization – Music Centre Gateshead – of which Folkworks is a large part, but the organization takes its name from the seventy million pound Norman Foster building in which it is based (see Figures 2, 3 and 4).<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> The Sage Gateshead, 'Folkworks', *The Sage Gateshead*.  
<http://www.thesagegateshead.org/folkworks/index.aspx#> (5th February, 2004).

<sup>34</sup> The Sage Gateshead, 'About the Sage', *The Sage Gateshead*.  
<http://www.thesagegateshead.org/about/index.aspx> (5th February, 2004).





**Figure 2: The Sage Gateshead (right), and the Millenium Bridge (far left) and The Baltic art gallery (centre left).<sup>35</sup>**



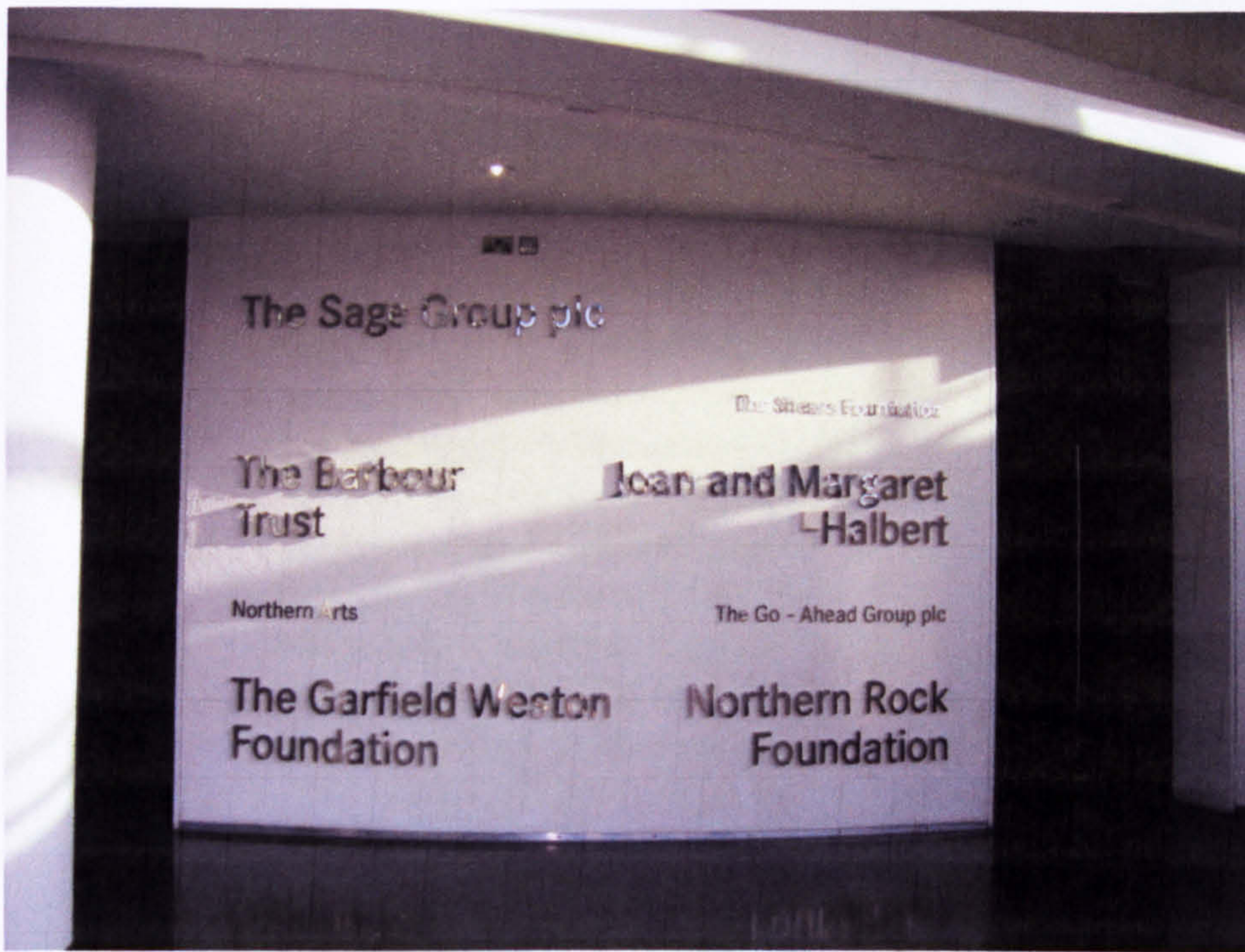
**Figure 3: The interior of The Sage Gateshead.<sup>36</sup>**

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<sup>35</sup> Photograph by S Keegan-Phipps, 2007.

<sup>36</sup> Photograph by S Keegan-Phipps, 2007.





**Figure 4: A display on an internal wall of The Sage Gateshead listing the organisation's principal donors.**<sup>37</sup>

Anderson cites his experiences during his early career as an internationally touring performer as the earliest motivations for his development of folk music education in the North East of England:

In the States, although there is a folk scene, and I used to play that (usually slightly more concertly than England), there was this whole other scene: there was the university arts scene and there was the general arts scene. A lot of small colleges in the States are the major arts providers for small towns, and that's where I first came across this sort of idea of a subscription series, where people would buy tickets for six concerts [...] and it would be string quartet, small jazz ensemble... I remember one that was a string quartet, a small jazz ensemble, the New Ink Spots, me, another classical thing and a blues thing. And then, of course, you got a lot of audience with not the *faintest* notion of what you were going to do. And I found that very exciting, and found their reaction to the music very exciting because I would end up with 200 people on the

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<sup>37</sup> Photograph by S Keegan-Phipps, 2007.



stage at the interval, looking at the instruments and asking questions, and then the second half taking off in a completely different way. And you sort of became aware that, actually, although the folk scene was doing a tremendous amount of good, its profile was below the threshold of visibility for a lot of people. If you were in the know, then its means of communication, which was mainly small, volunteer-run magazines, which were picked up either free or for ten pence or something on the door of a club – they told you what was on in the neighbouring clubs and the festivals. If you wanted to stop going, of course, you dropped out of that, the clubs weren't in a position to advertise more widely than that because the financial base was restricted. But it worked absolutely fine as long as you were on the inside.

So I was gathering this idea that 'Hey, there's potential for more people'. And then also I, in the States – and to an extent in Europe and to a lesser extent but occasionally in England – would be asked to do things in schools. And again you get this fantastic reaction, you know, you get kids strapped into sets of pipes and stuff and 'Oh, I just love this' and like the music, and get them dancing or get them singing or whatever. And you're starting to think 'Oh, God, there's some mileage in this'. But that was all just, sort of, churning away in the background, and I was just gigging and writing and performing and doing what gigging musicians do.<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps one of the most important developments for Anderson in his early career as an arts promoter came when he was approached to run a series of concerts for the South Bank Summer Music Festival in 1983. Anderson makes clear that the maximization of audience *demographics* (in the cultural and subcultural sense) and the introduction of new audiences were key to his motivations in programming for the series:

We put on this week of events at the Purcell and the Queen Elizabeth hall, and [...] I was *very* careful in who we would aim it at. We had plans for the evenings and

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<sup>38</sup> Alistair Anderson, interview, 11th March 2005.

the days of “the folk diehards”; the “folk fringies”; classical people who had classical guitar – and perhaps a Radoni Ensemble LP – in their collection, various strands of that who we thought might hit them; what we called the “yellow anorak brigade” which was young, European travelling students. And we thought about, and sat down and sorted them, very carefully about how we were going to sell all this to the various different strands, and took a very modern – for those days – approach to the publicity and, you know, had a proper publicity budget, and talked to an actual PR person. And the result was that, again, everything sold. And for three years that built up very substantially, and we put on a lot of hard core stuff: so we had a fiddle night, with great fiddle players from all over the place, you didn’t need to know who [they were] to say ‘Oh yes that sounds interesting’.

[...] At this time, the Boys of Lough were starting to do the arts scene, but even then there was only the odd arts centre that would take them, and basically everything else was within the folk scene. So here we were, starting to show that, actually, this stuff can quite happily live out with... and you don’t have to compromise – as I said, we had some very [...] hard-line stuff, some less so – and we’re getting great audiences and great reviews and people enjoying it, a lot of people fresh to it, a lot of the core audience who, much as they loved being in a muddy field on a summer’s afternoon, [were] actually quite liking it in a different place.<sup>39</sup>

This extract, taken from my first interview with Anderson, establishes a number of important trends in his narrative of the periods of his professional development leading up to the construction of Folkworks. Perhaps most important is the full acceptance of the recontextualization of folk music: not only has the majority of his own performing success been acted out on the concert stage, the presentation of all folk musics upon such a platform has been central to his early promotional activities. Anderson speaks of this movement of folk musicians from the ‘folk scene’ to the ‘arts

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<sup>39</sup> Alistair Anderson, interview, 11th March 2005.



scene' as a very positive development, enabling wider audiences and higher profiles for folk and traditional music and musicians of all varieties; he volunteers no concerns of classicization or popularization of the content of such concert series, stating categorically that 'you don't have to compromise'. His earliest experiences of the concert circuit in America had shown him that the music could 'quite happily live' alongside jazz and classical music, and it seems a strong motivation for Anderson to push for similar cohabitation of the concert stage in England.

The other very important point to be made regarding Anderson's narrative of this period is the emphasis and pride afforded to his commercial instincts and his abilities to successfully market to the widest possible folk music consumer base: he relates his achievements in identifying subcultural audiences – at which to direct elements of concert series programming – with a considerable degree of satisfaction. His ability in marketing, his recognition of "niche" market requirements and his ability to attract external funding for projects are strong threads throughout his narrative of the pre-Folkworks period, and imply a clear acknowledgement of economic matters as being crucial to his (and, therefore, his organization's) successes. Having been asked the question "How did Folkworks come about?", Anderson spoke uninterrupted and unquestioned for an hour. Over half of this time was spent relating the specifics of concert and festival ticket sales, the attraction of funding and the drawing up of business plans. The positioning of Folkworks within the folk music market is fundamental to an understanding of its cultural success and development, as shall be demonstrated throughout this and the following chapter.

Anderson's successes in London not only succeeded in raising the profile of folk and traditional music of various forms: it also achieved a considerable raise in his own profile as a performer and promoter of folk music. He explains, comparing his efforts with the less successful and more audience-restrictive activities of the only folk music institution in England at the time, the EFDSS:

Doing that in London, the Arts Council had noticed 'who is this crazy guy, coming to London and running this thing' – a few people in London had tried over the years to have a London folk festival, and other than the old EFDSS ones, [which] were pretty well entirely for the membership – very large, very, very large. They used to take the Albert Hall for a weekend and two or three of the concerts where schools bussed in, where the teachers who had come through the training of the 20s, 30s and 40s were still in schools and would fill a bus load of kids and go and see this show which was mainly a dance show: some fairly naff items, some quite good. They used to get some foreign teams that were really quite good; I remember they had those Basques that dance on wine glasses [...], but a lot of it a bit on the naff side.

But that was fading out. They used to fill the Albert Hall, three or four times over a weekend, but it was entirely built around their membership. So the evening concerts were their membership, the daytime concerts were members who were teachers, dragooning a bus load of kids. [...] So the Arts Council had noticed Alistair Anderson.<sup>40</sup>

Opportunity to act on his early enthusiasm for folk music education in schools therefore arrived when, towards the end of 1985, he was offered a residency as a musician at an arts centre in the North East, with roles that included going to work in various schools around the region. Rather than accepting the post, however, Anderson returned to Northern Arts (the regional office of the Arts Council at that

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<sup>40</sup> Alistair Anderson, interview, 11th March 2005.



time) with an alternative, motivated partly by a concern that young people were not entering folk clubs, and partly by experiences in both America and Denmark:

[...O]ver Christmas in '85, I just thought 'no, this isn't right – this isn't the way to do it. We need something that is more of a gear shift than this'. Because the folk scene, by then, in fact even by the early eighties, was seriously concerned about young people coming in; about the profile of the audience. [...] Brocken and a woman from Cheshire, who's name I can't remember, had set up a little talking shop/ mailing list/group. 'Perform' was what it was called. They were chivying, saying 'let's get young people in to the clubs' and, to be honest, they were more concerned about the health of the clubs: they were saying 'oh clubs are closing everywhere'. To me, the clubs actually looked still pretty healthy. They were more concerned than I was about the state of the clubs. Some areas they were dipping and diving, some areas they were diving and dipping. So there was this awareness, and by '85, I was starting to think 'perhaps they're right, perhaps things aren't that healthy'.

The way I paid for Steel Skies [Anderson's highly acclaimed album of 1982 ...] - I did various tours, but the big one that made a difference was I spent three weeks in Denmark doing 3 schools concerts and an evening concert every day. And that was, you know, a big chunk of money. But it was interesting how effective the schools concerts were. All ages, at different times of the day, some of them were kids with just no interest at all, and the older kids, whose interest was better than mine! And all that stuff just said 'God, you know, these kids are really responding to this'. But the English kids, the Northumbrian kids get no bloody chance to know this stuff exists. So it's one of those things going round in my mind, and there's somebody asking me to do something, but they're just thinking of this little corner and that little corner. So I went back to them and says 'no, what we need, what we need is something which, like we did in the South Bank, establishes the potential of this music at a different level than it is at the moment. Absolutely not to

undermine the level that it is at the moment, just to show that it can exist at another level as well.’<sup>41</sup>

Here, Anderson articulates, explicitly, his positivist acceptance of the recontextualization of folk music in terms of taking the music to ‘a different level’ (e.g. an arts centre audience), without undermining its coexistence within the ‘folk scene’. His views on the latter can be inferred from the proceeding description of his proposal to Northern Arts:

So I said ‘what we’re going to do is: we want a tour of something which we know will work, we want it to go to *all* the arts centres in the Northern Arts region (and by then there were starting to be more), we want it to look like the late Twentieth century; look like the eighties, so we want the best designers. And then we want that tour to also go to schools and [...] the idea would be that we were going to hit new audiences, because we’re going to present it to them in a different way, in different places, so that you don’t have to know where the back room of the “xyz” pub is. You know, it’s your local visible venue, come along. Now the idea is we put on something that’s good enough to inspire people that some of them will want to do it. And we will have, in place, workshops that will start *the next week*.’

[...] So I went round, and persuaded all the arts centres, and you know, if they didn’t have an arts centre, put it in a big school hall or something. Make the thing happen – and we did over thirteen or fourteen days, you know, evenings and school concerts. The Newcastle one, Len Young was the advisor then, and he says ‘right, let’s go with this. We’ll put that in to the city hall for the kids’. That was great. So we did that. And then I’d gone round *all* the local education authorities and said ‘you get a concert, but for us, you put on a series of workshops that starts the next Wednesday, and runs for at least two terms, or whatever it was. There’s one of them that’s effectively still running [...]. Several

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<sup>41</sup> Alistair Anderson, interview, 11th March 2005.



of them ran for four or five years, some of them just ran for that length of time.<sup>42</sup>

With this tour, already dubbed 'Folkworks', Anderson was once again able to maximize and maintain his consumer-base through market research:

What happened was that we realized the potential: all the concerts went incredibly well; by the end of it I had a mailing list of three thousand names, because I just put a free raffle [on], you know, you filled in this form, just name and address, do you play anything? Do you dance? Would you be willing to come to some workshopy things? A few tick boxes, hand them in at the end, and we'll draw them at the end of the thing. Good prizes: there was three prizes of about six LPs [...], so they felt like they were getting something. [...] And the schools' reaction had been phenomenal, to the school concerts, and the workshops started to be really taken up. But here was only me doing one day a week or something, out of the corner of a desk in Northern Arts.<sup>43</sup>

However, he goes on to explain that issues pertaining to the acquisition of funding were the main catalyst for the transference of these activities from one-off, Northern Arts funded projects to a single, autonomous institution able to administer long-term schemes.

[...] And I put together another tour, which was Capercaillie, who were just starting, Kathryn [Tickell], who was just starting, and some young Scottish dancers, who were in to Highland dance and contemporary dance. So the whole thing was very interesting, very new. And all the arts centres said yeah, that's great. And I had to have the 'OK' for some funding from Northern Arts, who said 'yeah that'll be fine – fill in some application forms'. And I'm sitting

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<sup>42</sup> Alistair Anderson, interview, 11th March 2005.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

there, within the building, while it's going through, and we got to the copy deadlines for all these arts centres, and Northern Arts hadn't processed this thing. Now, knowing what I know now, I would have just gone ahead, but at that time, [...] I pulled it. And I realized at that point that it had to be a separate organization, with annual funding that was awarded sufficiently far in advance that you could take, you know, the same as small theatre companies. It had to be an independent, autonomous thing. So [I] went round it with Northern Arts: various discussions, and letters and stuff; and I put on smaller tours, [...] and did the schools things, and again, we went into primary and infants schools, and then did evening things. And I made that break even by getting slightly more from the arts centres, and charging the schools less [...]. But I could see that what we needed was something separate.<sup>44</sup>

It was around the time of the first Folkworks tour that Anderson and Ros Rigby worked together: Rigby was working for the Library and Arts provision – a separate local authority initiative – which had become responsible for administering the first tour and workshops for Gateshead. She was looking to move out of local authority work at around the time that Anderson had convinced Northern Arts funders that an independent organization was the necessary next step, and joined the company as co-director, thus enabling Anderson to continue working as a performing musician.

So we set up, and we were co-directors. I said I wanted to stay two days a week, because I wanted to be a musician, and Ros was full time. And we set it up as a company limited by a guarantee, and all that, and got a good board – took a while getting a good board, I knew some quite good people from the business community, people like the guy who used to run John Lewis, quite high-level [people] who had an *interest* in music rather than being... Quite often when people put together boards, they get people who are mad keen on the music, who've got *some* external experiences. We went the

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<sup>44</sup> Alistair Anderson, interview, 11th March 2005.



other way, we wanted people who would really bring strengths to the board, and who had an interest[...].

I'd done a couple of these "workout days", as we'd called them: the first one was all for kids, who'd been involved in these various workshops that we'd set up; just so that they could come together so they could see that there were other people elsewhere in the region doing stuff. And then we had workouts with adults and the sort of thing that we started doing later on. So we set up [...] some tours to inspire, and then opportunities to learn and participate. And right from the word "go", the idea that those two sides [...] that idea that the two were absolutely equally important, in our eyes, in the way we presented it to the public, in the way we sought the funding, and in the way we spent the funding, was [...] absolutely central, from when Ros joined in '88.

With most arts organizations, by the mid to late eighties, they all had education units, but they were – in the vast majority of cases – very, very secondary to the main aim.<sup>45</sup>

Along with further emphasis of business matters relating to the initiation of the organization, Anderson also offers a working ethos behind the running practices of the institution. This is based upon a chronological development of provision from "inspiration" to "participation". In this context, the "inspiration" is provided in the form of tours; concerts, affording audiences first hand experience of world-class performers. This performance/participation dichotomy is now – theoretically – a fairly standard structure for arts activities across the nation, not least of all because participation is the strongest method for a performance-based cultural institution to demonstrate "outreach"-style engagement with (and benefiting of) the local community, a point which is becoming more and more vital to the successful attraction of state funding. However, Anderson's wording here betrays the possibility that, rather than an equality of the two elements, the educational component is

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<sup>45</sup> Alistair Anderson, interview, 11th March 2005.

actually the more central: where concert performances are designed to ‘inspire’, they are not merely integral to a wider cultural strategy, but are purposefully programmed to *promote* participation and educational activities.<sup>46</sup> The provision of learning opportunities is not to be seen simply as a method by which Folkworks can attract Arts Council funding, then; nor can it be regarded as a disparate element of equal weighting to the programming of performances; rather, education can be seen as the principal *raison d’être* of this institution.

Anderson’s discussion of his methods for presenting and promoting folk music in schools at the beginning of Folkworks’ existence offers an implied re-evaluation of context within musical tradition. Having established his contentment with the recontextualization of folk music from homes, sessions and clubs to the concert stage (from the ‘folk scene’ to the ‘arts scene’), Anderson goes on to emphasize the role of context – and, in fact, of an “authentic” context – in the encouragement of folk music amongst young people:

With this Gateshead school, [...] I was going in, persuading one teacher that it’s worth a try, getting a bunch of kids and saying ‘we’ve got a ceilidh in ten weeks time and you’re the band!’

‘What’s a ceilidh sir?!’

And then building on that. Interesting, you see. That was one of the first things we did, and [...] that’s precisely the words I used. The significant difference between that and the sort of thing that happened in the ‘20s and ‘30s was what is the first thing that’s going to happen? The first thing that’s going to happen is a *social* event. You’re going to see, as soon as you possibly can, this music work in a social context. And there’s going to be a bar that the PTA will organize,

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<sup>46</sup> It is worth noting that “Learning and Participation” is now a discreetly prescribed component of The Sage Gateshead’s cultural provisions that enjoys separate administration and publicity.



there're going to be posters that your art department will organize, other kids'll make the food, and whatever. This is going to be a *proper* gig. And it was – it was as good a gig as you'll get anywhere.

[...]My personal feeling is 'you should learn this because it fucking works and it's good fun'. It works now, exactly as it used to work, because actually you've got the same arms and legs, you still like talking to people, you still like to leap about and then sitting down and having a chat [...].<sup>47</sup>

Here, Anderson grounds the significance of a 'social context' within a discourse of tradition, where a cultural activity whose origins are located in the indefinite past remains both relevant and unifying in the present. Thus, the emergent cultural construct of "context" within the North East folk music culture – of which Anderson is now so publicly representative – is complex and, often, seemingly paradoxical. On the one hand, great efforts are made to "elevate" the *performance* of folk music to the context of the concert stage (a context of socially accepted artistic worth), in order that it may rise in profile, status and its ability to attract funding; simultaneously, a strong case is promoted for the maintenance of folk music's "grass roots" social context as an essential arena for early introduction to – and *education* in – the genre.

Folkworks' roles and intentions in the contextualization and recontextualization of folk and traditional music can be understood as a negotiation of cultural dichotomies: an economically knowledgeable recognition of contemporary status indicators, tempered by a fierce acknowledgement of the "traditional", social context; a deconstruction of activity into performing and teaching, where both elements are, at a philosophical level, educationally motivated; a financially motivated service provision

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<sup>47</sup> Alistair Anderson, interview, 11th March 2005.

to a carefully researched consumer base, packaged within a discourse of cultural philanthropy. In the sections that follow, I shall go on to consider how these negotiations are played out in the working practices and materials that make up the most common points of contact between the educational institution and the learning/consuming public.

## **Workshops as education**

Whether it be as a part of a regular calendar of events such as that offered by Folkworks, or as a handful of instalments in the itinerary of an annual gathering or festival, the workshop exists as the principal educational context within England's folk and traditional music cultures. What follows is a short analysis of the workshop from repertorial, economic and pedagogical perspectives, that seeks to identify those ways in which this educational milieu can be seen to reflect the cultural attitudes of the participant group it serves.

The workshop is generally "given" or "run" – as a lesson may be – by an individual, or more rarely a small group of individuals (e.g. a performing act). The number of participants attending such an event varies according to the popularity of both the individual or act by whom it is run and of the overall context in which it is set (for instance, as part of a festival programme) but numbers present at Folkworks workshops tend to exceed five, and are usually restricted to an approximate maximum of twenty. In larger contexts – and certainly within the strongly education-orientated Folkworks events – workshops are generally labelled according to the desired ability of the intake (beginner, intermediate or advanced) in order that learners form groups



of a similar standard, thus enabling each individual benefit from the appropriate level and focus of direction. Whilst Folkworks holds events specifically for young people and segregates workshop programmes to enable young people to work together within the workshop context, such as the children's programme within the annual Durham Summer School, ability remains the central factor in admission. On that basis, it is perfectly common to find one's self in a workshop seated between a man in his late fifties and a fourteen year old girl, the two being united by a broadly categorized level of musical proficiency – usually expressed on a common instrument.

Depending on the focus of the greater context in which workshops are programmed, they can be run for the benefit of either instrumental musicians or singers and can be most commonly categorized as falling into one of three forms: those that are directed towards technical development on a specific instrument/voice or group of instruments (e.g. a melodeon workshop; a workshop for mandolin and tenor banjo); those designed to introduce a broader musical genre or traditional repertory (e.g. an early-music workshop); and those that are intended to explore issues or techniques pertaining to a particular instrument within a specific genre or traditional repertory (e.g. an old-time fiddle workshop; an Irish flute workshop). The latter of these categories is a combination of the former two, and the category into which the majority of workshops fall. However, the specificity of genre or repertory within this format is most usually not made explicit: prospective participants are generally aware of the genre to be expected through a prior awareness of the key repertory (as well as stylistic inclinations) of the "tutor". This is due to the fact that, in the vast majority of cases, the musician running the workshop is a practising performer, with a degree of public profile. Furthermore, access to the internet has made the discovery and

confirmation of a less well known performer's influences and style a very quick and easy process.

One of the key roles of the workshop in the folk music cultures of contemporary England (and Britain) is as an extension and reinforcement of oral/aural transmission as the principal method of repertorial dissemination. The usual – informal – scenario in which folk and traditional music is spread from one musician to another individual (or very small group) occurs over a number of session-based encounters, in which the “learner’s” familiarity with the tune or song progresses from a state of vague recognition to one of free recall and confident proficiency (dependent, of course, on the competence of the learner as a musician). The workshop exists in stark contradistinction to this “natural” process, since it places as large a group of musicians as can be encouraged to attend – and as can be accommodated – in a situation of which the learning of at least one tune is almost always an essential part. Particularly in contexts where the participants are advanced instrumentalists or vocalists, it is very often the case that a considerable number of musicians will leave the workshop having not only learnt the basic features, but also mastered the very minutiae of a new tune or song. Also, both tutors and learners can expect to have travelled some distance to arrive at the setting for the workshop, (although this is less so in the case of those regular activities now occurring at The Sage Gateshead). The workshop context, then, can be shown to represent a focussed learning exercise, in which the regular participant’s aural skills are necessarily honed<sup>48</sup>, whilst their

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<sup>48</sup> It is important to recognise that, within the context of the workshop, the process of oral/aural transmission is often supplemented by the provision of written music – the “dots” – to assist those musicians less comfortable with picking up melodies aurally, since the vast majority of folk and traditional musicians in contemporary England are notationally literate to a basic level. The dots are, however, often treated simply as aide de memoir for participants, to assist them in recalling the tune



repertory is often expanded by influences outside the “normal” limits of their own local sessions and other musical experiences.

Within these broad parameters, any single workshop can generally be located on a continuum of emphasis: at one end of this continuum are situated those workshops aimed purely at the dissemination of repertory and, to that end, all available time is given over to the teaching and learning of tunes or songs, with little or no discussion of technical or stylistic nuance; at the other end are those workshops designed to develop each participant’s technique, with little or no time spent upon the teaching or learning of specific tunes. At the latter end of this continuum, the tutor may choose to refer only to very popular, widely known and simple tunes or songs, in order to negate the need for any repertorial assimilation by his or her participants. It is worth noting that this continuum is not merely an alternative representation of those categorizations made at the beginning of this section. A technique-orientated workshop discussing improvised ornamentation in Irish traditional music may not necessarily be bound to a single instrument, whilst admission to a repertory-orientated workshop on old-time fiddle tunes will usually limit entry to fiddle players.

It is generally implied by informants that a relatively equal weighting between repertory and technique makes for a more satisfactory workshop – and certainly most workshops strive for this balance – but most informants also acknowledge that those workshops at either extreme of the spectrum play a worthwhile role in folk music education. However, it can be argued that the appropriateness of the balance of these

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after they have left the confines of the workshop. To that end, and to emphasise the importance of not relying on notation when learning folk and traditional tunes and songs, tutors will often only hand out written sources at the very end of the workshop.

two elements relates to the standard of musicianship demonstrated by the learners. Wholly repertory or technique-based workshops appear to be of most use to musicians of an advanced proficiency: such musicians may simply wish to expand their repertory within a certain genre, since their aural skills enable them to pick up stylistic and technical features of a performer's playing by listening to a recording of that performer, privately and in their own time. Likewise, an advanced musician may feel comfortable that their ability to expand their repertory by listening to recordings and reading manuscripts or tune books is sufficient, but that they wish to discuss the technical and stylistic minutiae of their instrument or repertory, or to seek a professional's advice in troubleshooting a particular technical difficulty, when few musicians in the player's own local session culture are of a high enough standard to provide such assistance.

Besides the textual emphases of the encounter, the workshop can be regarded as a – sometimes inharmonious – coming together of various educational discourses, economic solutions and performance opportunities. At the most conceptually accessible level, the workshop is to be understood as it is perceived by the majority of participants: as a classroom context, where information and skills are imparted by an individual and learnt by a group. Unlike those educational experiences encompassed within the context of the session, here the roles are clearly denoted, with learners entering the context with the express intention of partaking of an educational experience, and in order to learn *specifically* from the tutor running the workshop. The anonymity of the learners, relative to the public performance profile of the tutor, normally serves to reinforce the demarcation of such boundaries. The content of the workshop has been prepared – albeit it to a greater or lesser extent – by the tutor,



along with teaching aids, such as written notation (see note 48, page 143-4) and illustrative recordings. Indeed, the degree of preparation demonstrated by a workshop tutor is also seen to be a criteria on which the success of a workshop is commonly judged. However, it is important to remember that, within this framework, the proceedings are generally seen to be “informal”, since multidirectional interaction is an integral feature of the workshop, and many tutors will ask for instant feedback and direct their workshop according to the requests of the learners. Nonetheless, such feedback and requests are generally reserved and tentative, in keeping with the clear authoritative hierarchy at work in this context.

Whilst the workshop is one of the most represented features in the calendar of activities by which the folk and traditional music cultures of contemporary England may be identified, alternative formats for publicly attended educational activities also exist. Talks, or lectures are becoming a mainstay of large festivals. These enable a large audience to listen to and observe an individual or group discussing a specific repertory, style or issue whilst providing their own musical illustrations. Of the one hundred and six events listed in the Folkworks-run *Fiddles On Fire Festival 2005* programme, seven fall into this category. Another alternative exists in the form of the “masterclass”. Almost identical to the masterclass format so regularly used in Western art music (and, one might assume, originating from it), this scenario involves an artist (usually an individual) offering one-to-one tuition to a willing participant, whilst a larger audience observes the advice given and the short-term results of that advice. Two such events were held over the course of the Fiddles On Fire weekend.

Within the practical framework of the workshop considerable variation occurs in how the allotted time is organized, besides that regarding the concentration of technical and repertorial content. For example, one informant related to me her experience of a workshop run by the French traditional flautist, Jean-Michel Veillon, in which the time was split between the attendees, each of whom received a short one-to-one tutoring session, without any sort of audience. When a participant was not receiving tuition from Veillon, they were expected to find a space within the building to either warm up prior to the session, or to take time afterward to put his suggestions into practice. Other variations on this method of conducting a workshop are also extant: often the learners may be split into smaller groups and given a particular exercise to work on, whilst the tutor observes and advises each of the groups in turn. Of course, these methods require relatively large, segregated physical spaces in which to separate out the individuals or groups.

In the case of Veillon's method, the learner's ability to prepare and to practice the content of his teachings immediately after their tuition is very much dependent upon the availability of space within the building, and may be impossible. However, this non-directed portion of the workshop's overall time is very much a secondary consideration, and the informant relating the event to me – a very skilled and experienced flautist at the time of her attendance – was most content with the opportunity of a private audience and the intensity of directed tutoring afforded her by Veillon in the short period of time available. She also suggested that the majority of learners at the workshop appeared to be similarly satisfied by the use of time.



These alternative formats often carry with them textual requirements and usually necessitate a heavily technical orientation. In order to apply his method, Veillon must look beyond repertory, since the short time period given over to each instrumentalist (usually between five and ten minutes), is far too brief a time in which to teach a complex tune successfully; in the case of a masterclass, the audience (having normally paid for their entry) would generally take little away from observing a musician as he or she learnt a tune or song – that is, unless the masterclass was designed specifically to discuss methods of assimilating tunes or songs efficiently.

As well as a pedagogical opportunity, the workshop must also be considered in terms of a performance context, alternative to – or simply an extension of – the standard milieu of the concert stage. The significance of personality and relative celebrity in the function and popularity of the workshop is paramount: a workshop is primarily advertised and listed according to the individual or act running it, and it is commonly the reputation of the performer/s achieved through concerts and recordings that determines the nature and number of attendees.<sup>49</sup> A performer-audience dynamic runs concurrently with the teacher-learner dichotomy: many participants – as audience members – treat the workshop as an opportunity to hear and see the individual or act performing at close proximity, whilst an intent on their own personal musical development is a secondary element of their attendance. Certainly, where extremely well-known folk and traditional musicians are scheduled to give workshops – such as is the case with a large proportion of Folkworks' educational programmes – a public compulsion towards social interaction and propinquity with famous performers undoubtedly plays a considerable role in drawing participants. Furthermore, it could

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<sup>49</sup> Or prospective attendees, since numbers are often capped for popular workshops.

be argued that such an impetus is almost entirely separable from matters of musical interest. In many festival based workshop programmes, the role of this more general intrigue as a motive for attendance is made explicit by events entitled “meet the artist”. In these scenarios, generic social interaction with the performer or act supersedes – and generally eliminates – any potentially educative musical encounter.

Linked to this understanding of the workshop is its essence as an economic tool for the performer. The fiscal role of the workshop is twofold. In the first instance, the social element offered above as an analytical approach to the event is mutually advantageous to both performer and participant: whilst the participant is able to satisfy a media-fuelled interest in the performer/s conducting the proceedings, the social interaction embodied by the workshop enables the performer to develop and cultivate a fan-base. The participant – now in their role as consumer – will most likely be instilled with a renewed appreciation for the performer’s musical abilities, an appreciation liable to manifest itself in the purchasing of that performer’s merchandise and CDs, much of which will be available from the artist in question, or (in the case of festival based events) from independent stall vendors. The second of the key economic aspects of the workshop is perhaps the most obvious: the artist is almost invariably remunerated for their services by the organizer of the overall event. Such payment will, of course, vary from artist to artist and is normally dependent on such factors as the magnitude of the event and the public profile of the performer. Meanwhile, the participants’ role as consumer is made clearer by the fact that he or she has invariably paid, either directly – for their admittance to the workshop – or indirectly – for their admission to the larger affair (such as a festival season ticket). It is in this sense that the consumer-service provider relationship is most clearly defined.



The role of the workshop as a source of income for the touring professional folk musician should not be underestimated. Whilst tutor payment is – naturally – undisclosed, examples of Folkworks’ charges for workshops are available: at the 2005 *Fiddles On Fire Festival* – where workshops were the central elements within the programme – the standard adult’s fee for a single workshop of 75 minute’s length was £6.<sup>50</sup> Of greatest ethnographic interest, however, is the considered nature of the organization’s pricing policy: ‘our flexi-buy system means that you make savings by enrolling for 3, 6, 9 or 12 events’.<sup>51</sup> The provision of this opportunity for the customer to save money by purchasing “in bulk” is demonstrative of an economically driven costing strategy designed to encourage greater participation by existing clientele, and an increased influx of new participants. The pedagogical and ethnomusicological repercussions of this economically-based encouragement will be discussed later in this chapter.

Perhaps of greatest relevance to this study is the conception of a workshop as a context for multiple, subconscious acts of participant observation on the part of the numerous participants. The workshop is, in its most basic form, an arena in which amateur musicians are able to: observe at close quarters those performers whose repertory and style best encapsulates the preferred aesthetics of the music culture they represent; observe (albeit subconsciously) the behaviour and technique of fellow participants other than the performer in charge of the workshop; and participate in an act of communal music making in order to emulate the performer, and – ultimately –

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<sup>50</sup> Folkworks [Author Unknown], *Fiddles On Fire Festival*, (Gateshead: The Sage Gateshead, 2005), 19.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

hone the practical skills required to achieve those aesthetic qualities. This approach to the workshop is, of course, closely related to the pedagogical understanding offered at the beginning of this section – the teacher-learner dichotomy most consciously accepted by those involved in the event – but is subtly different in that it places emphasis on the “observer’s” scrutiny and identification of culturally acceptable practice, implying that the processes at work are not merely educational within a specific remit (e.g. repertory or technique), but also *enculturational* within a broader anthropological framework.

This interpretation of the workshop as a cultural act is of particular pertinence to the present study, since it offers weight to existing validation of “anthropology at home” as a pursuit within the ethnographic disciplines. Rapport’s epistemological defence of such a pursuit has been quoted in the introductory chapter of this thesis but is worthy of reiteration for its specific features:

Culture is not a secret, it is something experienced – the formal medium of an experience – and its study is not an esoteric pursuit so much as an exercise in concentration and will; anthropology as a frame of mind, and as a fieldwork practice is not so much a perversion of an everyday mindset as an exaggeration of one. People are all and always anthropologists in and of their lives, to a variable degree pondering their selves, their worlds and others.<sup>52</sup>

Through this approach to the workshop, one is able to identify a primary objective for the participant – or participant-observer – as the experiencing of culture within a formalized context which is, itself, designed to focus an individual’s ‘concentration

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<sup>52</sup> Rapport, ‘Best of British’ 7.



and will'. If human beings truly are 'all and always anthropologists' – a presiding premise of the present study in "ethnomusicology at home" – then it is in the workshop that such ubiquitous acts of subconscious cultural analysis are crystallized. The significance of the workshop as an ethnomusicological context is crucial, since it is in this context that we are most able to observe musicians observing themselves and each other.

### **The Folkworks Session Collection; a case study**

Perhaps the most self-contained, complete and publicly available teaching resource offered by Folkworks is the *Folkworks Session Collection*, a series of three booklets and accompanying CDs. These packs have been created by David Oliver in his capacity as Folkworks Projects Leader, and are intended to provide the beginner and intermediate instrumentalist with a total of sixty-four tunes. In the booklets, the tunes are presented in standard notation, with chord symbols included above the stave to direct chordal accompaniment: thus, the booklets are ostensibly designed for both melody and harmony instrumentalists. The CDs that come with the booklets provide recordings of each of the tunes, played by Oliver on piano accordion, in two formats: firstly, each tune is played slowly, 'for learning' (e.g. for the early stages of aural recognition and deconstruction); secondly, the tunes are played at a faster – but 'steady' – speed, in sets of similar tempo and rhythm (as they would be in a session), 'for practising'.<sup>53</sup> What follows is an examination of this resource, taken as a whole, and the ways in which it provides an insight in to the key values and teaching methods of Folkworks and its clientele. Ultimately, the collection is understood as a

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<sup>53</sup> David Oliver, *The Folkworks Session Collection; Volume 1: Getting Started* (Gateshead: Folkworks, 2000).

privatization of folk music transmission, and an interestingly self-contradictory exercise in the commodification of the genre.

The opening two pages of each booklet offer a great deal of information regarding the motivations behind their production and their intended use. Each opens with a “mission statement” in bold type, stating the main aim of the packs: this statement is subtly different in each booklet and its development over the time in which the packs have been produced is particularly interesting. The opening statement in Volume 1 reads thus:

**This album has a single, simple purpose: to enable participants at Folkworks Summer Schools and other courses to learn a basic repertoire of tunes so that they can enjoy taking part, with some confidence, in the informal ‘sessions’ which form such a pleasurable part of our learning programme.<sup>54</sup>**

Volume 1 is dated April 2000.<sup>55</sup> By December of that year, Volume 2 had been compiled with a new opening statement:

**THE FOLKWORKS SESSION COLLECTION has a single, simple purpose: to enable participants at Folkworks Summer Schools and other courses to learn a basic repertoire of tunes so that they can enjoy taking part, with some confidence, in the informal ‘sessions’ which form such a pleasurable part of folk music courses, festivals and the folk scene generally.<sup>56</sup>**

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<sup>54</sup> Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection; Volume 1*, 1. The formatting within these quotes is as it appear on the opening pages of the three volumes.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> David Oliver, *The Folkworks Session Collection; Volume 2: Extending Your Repertoire* (Gateshead: Folkworks 2000), 1.



By the compiling of the third volume, more changes to this statement had taken place:

**THE FOLKWORKS SESSION COLLECTION has a single, simple purpose: to enable instrumentalists to learn a basic repertoire of tunes so that they can enjoy taking part, with some confidence, in the informal ‘sessions’ which form such a pleasurable part of folk music courses, festivals and the folk scene generally.<sup>57</sup>**

These three different versions of the opening statement suggest that, far from being ‘single’ and ‘simple’, the purposes of the resource are multiple and complex, having changed considerably over time: through this development of the original statement, one is able to identify a broadening of both the collection’s perceived audience – or consumer base – and of the perceived context in which that audience is to operate. At the point of conception, the intended consumer of the first volume is *specifically* a consumer of other Folkworks products or, at the very least, a partaker of explicitly educational events in folk music (i.e. ‘the Folkworks Summer Schools and other courses’).<sup>58</sup> The context in which the user is expected to find the collection most helpful is even more specific, since it is one of which Oliver – and, thus, Folkworks – asserts ownership (‘the informal ‘sessions’ which form such a pleasurable part of *our* learning programme’).<sup>59</sup>

In the statement’s second form, the consumer profile remains the same, but the context in which the collection is designed to assist is broadened to ‘the informal ‘sessions’ which form such a pleasurable part of folk music courses, festivals and the

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<sup>57</sup> David Oliver, *The Folkworks Session Collection; Volume 3: More Great Tunes* (Gateshead: Folkworks, [2001]).

<sup>58</sup> Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 1*, 1.

<sup>59</sup> Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 1*, 1: my emphasis.

folk scene generally’,<sup>60</sup> presumably an acceptance that such contexts exist beyond the realms of Folkworks’ educational activities. This could also be regarded as an unintentional acknowledgement – and even encouragement – of Folkworks influence within the wider folk music culture. However, the structured folk music education exemplified by Folkworks events remains the first item on this new list of relevant contexts. The third statement combines this expansion of applicable performance arenas with a redefinition of the potential users, who are now referred to, quite simply, as ‘instrumentalists’.<sup>61</sup> This subtle broadening of the user demographic, in conjunction with the – written – decontextualization of the packs’ use has interesting implications: the delimiting of the personal and locational parameters within which the resource is designed implies the transition of Folkworks from a distinct and clearly identifiable educational institution within the folk music culture of the region and the nation, to an inextricably embedded – almost defining – feature of that culture. The resources of the institution are – purportedly – no longer specific to Folkworks’ educative programme, but acceptable and valid tools for use across the wider culture with which the organization seeks to identify, and which it serves to represent.

It is worth noting that, alongside Oliver’s developing portrayal of the resource’s potential audience and function (and, therefore, influence), is a development of the emphasis placed on a warning against the packs’ potential for standardization. The first volume presents such a warning thus:

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<sup>60</sup> Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 2*, 1.

<sup>61</sup> Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 3*, 1.



Written notation can give the illusion that there is a 'correct' or 'standard' way of playing each tune. This is not the case. The more you listen to and play this music, the more you will realise how much of the enjoyment comes from 'bending' the tune, inventing your own variations, and discovering the infinite variety that can be found within an apparently simple sixteen-bar tune.<sup>62</sup>

In the second and third volumes, these statements are reinforced, with both formatting and the addition of a statement that links this anti-standardising ethos to the specific features of the booklets and CDs:

Written notation can give the illusion that there is a 'correct' or 'standard' way of playing each tune. This is not the case. [...] As you use the CD and booklet you will notice such variations – even though I have tried to be fairly consistent in the playing! These variations are not mistakes – they hint at the freedom with which this music must be played.<sup>63</sup>

The emphasis placed on the importance of variation is as an implied indictment of blind acceptance with regards to an authoritative or 'official' version of a tune. Although this point, taken to its logical conclusion, would appear to negate the use of written notation to any and all extents, it shows a keenness on the part of the organization to engage – in writing – with the issue of standardization, thus preempting any argument that such a publication (and such an institution) could have an homogenizing effect.

The notion that these booklets should not be regarded or adhered to as authoritative texts is strengthened by the import placed on aural transmission in these introductory

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<sup>62</sup> Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 1, 2*.

<sup>63</sup> Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 2, 2*.

notes: the suggestion that the written notation should be used only for a relatively short period, as the first item in a lengthy process of musical and technical development, is frequently rehearsed in the introductory pages of the three booklets:

Remember that there is a huge difference between 'learning the notes' and 'playing the music'. When actually played in sessions, or for dancing, these tunes will be full of energy, variety and spontaneous flexibility. I hope you have fun getting quickly to that stage.

**THE FOLKWORKS SESSION COLLECTION** is designed so that you can **learn the tunes by ear and play them from memory**. Until you are doing this you are not playing folk music.

**Notation** is provided, however, so that you can check the notes at first, or perhaps practice [sic] your sight-reading skills. Please do try, though, to play without using 'the dots': your playing will be more natural and relaxed and you will develop a much more authentic feel for this music. [...]

Use the written notation as you should use the recording – simply for reference while you are learning the notes. Then throw away the dots and start playing the music! [...]

I repeat – try as far as possible to manage without using the notation, and the sooner you can discard it altogether, the better.<sup>64</sup>

Here, one is able to observe the acknowledged contradiction inherent within this set of publications: where one can not be regarded as playing folk music until one is learning tunes by ear and playing them from memory, the notation must surely be regarded as not only conceptually extraneous, but erosive of such defining ideals, and therefore of the folk music itself. The existence of the packs must therefore be

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<sup>64</sup> Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 3*, 1-2



regarded as a “necessary evil” – required by the music culture, despite its potential for “harming” the culture’s definition of folk music as it stands. To warrant such a risk, the need must be great indeed: its nature can be inferred in the opening statements considered above. The last incarnation of these states its motivation as a desire

**... to enable instrumentalists to learn a basic repertoire of tunes so that they can enjoy taking part, with some confidence, in [...] informal ‘sessions’ ...<sup>65</sup>**

The essence of the publication’s purpose, then, is that it should serve as a beginner’s introduction both to a common repertory and to a performance context. The motivation for its compilation is based on the notion that a novice participant’s enjoyment of a session can be maximized by a premeditated familiarity with tunes that are likely to be known to more experienced peers.

The inevitable result of this process, however, must be the *creation* and reinforcement of a standardized repertory, since the collection’s earliest motivations were to enable enjoyment of sessions at Folkworks Summer Schools and other educational events where experienced instrumentalists would be considerably outnumbered by those of a beginner or intermediate level. In fact, the majority of tunes found in these booklets, whilst well known to skilled session musicians, are unlikely to be heard in self-contained sessions outside of those provided by, or affiliated to, Folkworks: they are regarded by most seasoned folk musicians in the North East as unchallenging (in some cases, childishly simple); the stigma attached to many of the tunes as a result of their endorsement by Folkworks over recent years has increased their unpopularity in

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<sup>65</sup> Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 3*, 1.

sessions. Skilled instrumentalists who are somewhat sceptical of Folkworks' activities and influence (although not wholly unsupportive) have described the repertory presented in the Folkworks Session Collection to me as 'Folkworks Approved Tunes':<sup>66</sup> the remark is flippant, but betrays an underlying cynicism towards the orchestrated nature of the organization's disseminating practices.

The actual repertory of the packs is largely representative of the North East folk music culture, since it contains a variety of Irish, Northumbrian, Scottish and English tunes. The opening pages of the first volume refer to its content as predominantly 'traditional music of Britain and Ireland', whilst volumes two and three describe the majority of their tunes as representing 'traditional music of the British Isles'.<sup>67</sup> As has been demonstrated earlier in this chapter, it is often very difficult to identify the geographic origins of a tune by musical features alone. In an attempt to characterize the tunes, I asked experienced session instrumentalists of Durham (where the Summer School is held) to say whence they believed the tunes in these booklets to have come, and their thoughts corresponded roughly with my own: of the total of sixty-four tunes featured in the booklets, one could confidently identify twenty-two as Northumbrian; twenty as Irish; seven as Scottish; five as English. Four tunes were unknown to those instrumentalists asked: the remaining six tunes are commonly described by informants as 'generic' – well known tunes that could, to their minds, come from – and are certainly played in – any part of the British Isles.

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<sup>66</sup> One informant treats the Folkworks repertory as a separate genre, which he rather disdainfully entitles 'Salmon Tails Up Jimmy Allen'.

<sup>67</sup> Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 1*, 1; Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 2*, 1; Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 3*, 1.



Most significant to a comprehensive understanding of this music culture is the fact that the vast majority of tunes are not labelled in terms of their place of origin, or grouped in geographic categories. Of the sixty-four tunes, only eight are identified in such a way: of these, four are identified incidentally by the specification of their genre ('Kerry Polkas')<sup>68</sup>; one tune is only linked to location by a footnote referring to its appearance in the *Northumbrian Pipers' Tunebook*.<sup>69</sup> Places of origin may be inferred from the titles of other tunes, but such endeavour requires a detailed knowledge of place names across the British Isles (e.g. *The Winster Gallop; Hesleyside*)<sup>70</sup>.

Once again, the presentation of repertory suggests quite emphatically that a tune's place of origin within the British Isles is of little or no importance, bearing little relation to its success within the contemporary selection process of the Folkworks music culture (and, arguably, that of the North East of England generally). Of greater importance is the accreditation of known composers, there being ten examples of such labelling throughout the three volumes. Again, an experienced folk musician may be able to infer, from the name of the composer, the region or 'tradition' to which a tune may be linked, but this requires a great deal of background knowledge – something that could hardly be expected of the relative novices for whom the packs have been produced. Within the text of this publication, then, the acknowledgement of individual creativity within the folk music culture supersedes any possible role that the repertory may be seen to fulfil for the expression or reinforcement of nationalist or regionalist identities or sentiments.

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<sup>68</sup> Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 1*, 3; Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 2*, 3.

<sup>69</sup> Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 3*, 11.

<sup>70</sup> Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 1*, 4; 5.

Two tunes for which place of origin enjoys particular scrutiny are the two Swedish Ganglåter, or ‘walking tunes’ included in the third volume. The accompanying footnote to the tunes reads:

These are two of the best examples of Ganglåter, or ‘walking tunes’, from Sweden. As this name implies, they should be played at a comfortable walking tempo, and no quicker.<sup>71</sup>

The imparting not only of a place of origin, but also of the name (and translation) of the genre and a performance direction represents a level of explanation – and, presumably, interest – not afforded to any other tune in the series of collections. This is particularly interesting, since it implies that within the folk music culture there exists a greater level of concern for factual and contextual matters regarding “foreign” forms (those originating outside of the British Isles) than for tunes indigenous to Britain and Ireland. This, in turn, could be regarded as the expression of a degree of orientalism – a fascination of the non-Western ‘other’ beyond that of the familiar British musics. Such orientalism might be considered surprising when found in the literature of an organization that presents itself as concerned primarily with the spread and support of the ‘traditions of these islands’<sup>72</sup> but is, in fact, consistent with Folkworks’ highly liberal interpretation of those parameters.

It could just as easily be suggested that, far from orientalism, the higher level of contextual information that accompanies these Swedish Ganglåter merely

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<sup>71</sup> Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 3*, 14.

<sup>72</sup> This phrase shall be examined in detail in the next chapter.



demonstrates a forgetting on Oliver's part to provide for the relatively scant background knowledge of his audience with regards to the other (British) forms of music included. The presence of the Swedish tunes in the third volume of this collection may also be said to have implications for the identification and strengthening of Folkworks' niche role: by purposefully adding tunes from outside the British Isles to the Folkworks repertory, students engaging with the organization are being introduced to genres and musics much more likely to fall outside of their own experiences. In this way, Oliver is no longer simply providing individuals with the materials to enable them to learn to play folk music, but graduates to pedagogue – actually *teaching* information about the unknown and unexperienced. The statement that 'these are two of the best examples of Ganglåter' accentuates the authoritative nature of the notes.<sup>73</sup> Thus, Folkworks reaffirms its position as educator, rather than facilitator.

In order to succeed as tunes within Folkworks' "beginners' repertory", however, the Ganglåter must fit not only within the parameters set by the limited technical capabilities of the partaking instrumentalists, but also – to a large extent – with the musical aesthetics of the wider repertory being disseminated. The two tunes fulfil both of these requirements: they are both in 4/4 time; equally phrased; in D major and G major respectively, and wholly diatonic (with the exception of an ornamental C# quaver in the B part of *Äppelbolåten*; see Figure 5). In fact, the prolific nature of arpeggios, sequences and nota cambiata in the two tunes makes them both musically indistinguishable from English polkas or rants.

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<sup>73</sup> Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 3*, 14.

The pedagogic methodologies and learning strategies presented within the three volumes are varied. A key component of the booklets as a learning resource is the use of simplification in the notation, presumably in order to maximize immediacy and accessibility for the beginning instrumentalist. Generally this simplification takes the form of small scale (e.g. one bar), reversion to the most basic variant. In some cases the simplification is made explicit, as in the case of *The Harvest Home* (see Figure 6), whilst in others, the application of a reduced variation goes unmarked. An example of this can be found in version of *The Morpeth Rant* presented in the second volume, where the fourth full bar is an abbreviated version of the tune as it is most commonly heard in sessions (see Figure 7 for the tune as it appears in the Session Collection, and Example 16 [CD Track 3] for the most popular variant).



*Gärdebylåten* (Track 19)

Musical score for *Gärdebylåten* (Track 19) in G major. The score consists of four staves of music. The first staff shows the beginning of the piece with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature. The melody is written in a simple, rhythmic style. The second staff contains two first and second endings, marked '1.' and '2.', with a repeat sign. The third and fourth staves continue the melody and include a key change to E minor at the end of the fourth staff. Chord symbols are placed below the notes: D, G, A7, D, A7, D, D, A7, D, D, A7, D, Em, E7.

*Äppelbolåten* (Track 20)

Musical score for *Äppelbolåten* (Track 20) in G major. The score consists of four staves of music. The first staff shows the beginning of the piece with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature. The melody is written in a simple, rhythmic style. The second, third, and fourth staves continue the melody. Chord symbols are placed below the notes: G, Am, C, G, D7, G, G, D7, C, G, Am, D7, G, D7, G.

These are two of the best examples of *Ganglåten*, or 'walking tunes', from Sweden. As this name implies, they should be played at a comfortable walking tempo, and no quicker.

An easy and pleasing way of joining in with the 'B' part, (second half) of *Äppelbolåten*, is simply to play a descending scale of G, one note per bar, starting on a high G. This is a good example of simplifying a tune so that you can join in even before you've fully learned it. See if you can find other simplified patterns for other tunes: it's often just a matter of playing the first or most prominent note in each bar.

Figure 5: *Ganglåten*, taken from the *Folkworks Session Collection*, Vol. 3.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Taken from Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 3*, 14.

**The Harvest Home** (Track 15) (Note the 2 different versions of bars 4 and 12 played on the recording. The simplified version is for use when first learning the tune!) **Hornpipes**  
(Track 27)

Figure 6: *The Harvest Home*.<sup>75</sup>

**Morpeth Rant** (Track 5)

Figure 7: *Morpeth Rant* (Folkworks Session Collection version).<sup>76</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Taken from Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 1*, 11.  
<sup>76</sup> Taken from Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 2*, 5.



**A**

**B**

**Example 16: *The Morpeth Rant* (common version).**

The use of prolonged simplification as a learning – and early performance – strategy is identified to the learner in the third volume, with reference to the latter of the two *Ganglåter*:

An easy and pleasing way of joining in with the ‘B’ part, (second half) of *Äppelbolåten*, is simply to play a descending scale of G, one note per bar, starting on a high G. This is a good example of simplifying a tune so that you can join in even before you’ve fully learned it. See if you can find other simplified patterns for other tunes: it’s often just a matter of playing the first most prominent note in each bar.<sup>77</sup>

Notable here is the fact that this reductionist strategy, although fundamental to the development of all folk musicians in some form, and essential to the advancement of aural perception and the ability to ‘learn [...] tunes by ear’<sup>78</sup>, is not introduced to the learning instrumentalist until the third and final volume of the collection.

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<sup>77</sup> Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 3*, 14.

<sup>78</sup> Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 1*, 1.

Although small in scale, the placement of this assisting comment has implications for one's understanding of this resource as an educational aid. The three volumes are titled in such a way as to represent a progression (*Getting Started – Extending Your Repertoire – More Great Tunes*); the assertion of such a progression is necessary, since it is demonstrative of educational efficacy. In reality, however, the booklets are simply a collection of items: learning strategies such as the one highlighted here are not apparent in any clear or considered order. Furthermore, the order of tunes within the collection does not adhere to any progressive sequence linked to the development of an individual's technical ability. Figures 8 and 9 show two tunes: the first, a Northumbrian tune entitled *Hesleyside*, appears on the fifth page of the first volume; the second tune, a slow Northumbrian air conveniently named *Sweet Hesleyside*, is taken from page nine of the third volume.

*Hesleyside* (Track 7)

Figure 8: *Hesleyside*.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Taken from Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 1*, 5.



# Sweet Hesleyside

Northumbrian Slow Air

The musical score for 'Sweet Hesleyside' is presented in ten staves. The first nine staves contain the main melody and accompaniment. The tenth staff is a Coda. The key signature is G major (one sharp). The time signature is 4/4. The music is written in treble clef. Chord symbols are placed below the notes: G, C, D, D7, A, A7, and G. The Coda is marked 'Coda' at the beginning of the staff.

This wonderful tune should be played without any rushing, but with a steady underlying beat. On the recording it is played once through. If it is played more than once through, the coda (ending) should be included only on the last time.

Figure 9: *Sweet Hesleyside*.<sup>80</sup>

By comparing the two, I mean simply to demonstrate that the order of tunes throughout the three volumes has not been pedagogically arranged. Whilst it might be argued that a slow air can be as difficult – if not more so – to perform in a sensitive

<sup>80</sup> Taken from Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 3*, 9.

and graceful manner than a quick reel (depending, of course, on the instrument), it can hardly be suggested that the relatively demanding *Hesleyside* can be the most obtainable of the two tunes for any instrumentalist who is just ‘Getting Started’ – individuals for whom sensitivity and grace of performance are subservient to accuracy of pitch and rhythm. The discrepancy between the placing of these two tunes and their respective levels of technical demand is merely one of the more obvious of many examples found throughout the collection, a point that serves to illustrate the gradation of the institution’s development from a facilitating role to one of instructive pedagogue. The booklets are including a *variety* of tune types in each booklet; double jigs and reels are inherently more difficult to play than slow airs or polkas, yet examples of each of these appear in all three volumes. Such variety is, of course, highly justifiable: it ensures that beginner instrumentalists are introduced to the different forms from the outset, that their motivation is maintained and that monotony is avoided. However, this approach demonstrates that the *pedagogy* of the Folkworks Session Collection is based not on progression through systematically raised attainment (as, for instance, in the case of Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music grade exam books), but rather through a retention of participant interest through continued stimulation.

As well as simplification, the concept of transposition also features in the collection as a strategy for learners to develop their ability to play tunes ‘by ear’. Key to the presentation of this strategy is the fact that a large number of folk instruments are either restricted to the playing of diatonic tunes in one or two keys, or are hindered by a very limited degree of chromatic capability (as in the case of the melodeon, open-fingered forms of bagpipes, and wooden “Irish” flutes and whistles). Other



instruments, whilst theoretically capable of full chromaticism, are ergonomically orientated towards the most common keys of G major and D major (such as the Northumbrian small pipes, and even – it could be argued – the fiddle, mandolin and banjo).

In the first volume of the collection, the Scottish pipe-variation tune *Athol Highlanders* is presented in both G major and A major, the latter being the most common key for the tune's performance, and is pre-empted by the following statement:

The next tune, Athol Highlanders, is played in the key of A on track 10 [on the accompanying CD], for learning, but in G on track 24. This will give you a chance to try transposing from one key to another (this is easier on some instruments than on others!). There are quite a number of tunes which, like this one, appear at sessions in a variety of keys – so be warned – and give transposing by a ear a try!!<sup>81</sup>

By contrast, in the second volume, the Northumbrian jig *Hexham Races* appears only in its common key of A major:

Apologies to D/G melodeon players, pipers and other who may have preferred to have this tune in the key of G. For fiddle, accordion, whistle, etc. I think it is a far brighter tune in A which seems to be its 'natural' key. Players of 'G' instruments could learn it by listening and then transpose it to G.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 1*, 6.

<sup>82</sup> Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 2*, 7.

The fact that the *Athol Highlanders* is provided in a “normal” key *and* an accessible key, coupled with the suggestion that instrumentalists for whom G major is more easily achievable should attempt to transpose *Hexham Races* from its “natural” key, has implications for an ethnomusicological understanding of Folkworks’ dissemination practices. It could be read as an indication that accessibility of content to individuals supersedes the “reality” of the folk sessions of the music culture existent outside of the institution: instrumentalists are given the opportunity, the encouragement, and – in the case of the *Athol Highlanders* – the means to learn a tune in whichever of two keys is easiest for them; in sessions unrelated to Folkworks, only one key is generally used (in the case of both tunes referred to here, the “correct” key is A major). Should two Folkworks-educated instrumentalists congregate at a session, a disparity in their respective choice of instrument may actually preclude them from playing the *Athol Highlanders* or *Hexham Races* together, since each has been encouraged or enabled to learn the tune in a different key, albeit from the same source! Alternative – and fairly common – ways of dealing with the differing key-orientations of different instruments are not borne out here: G/D melodeon players are not, for example, provided with countermelodies or a version of the tunes with minor alterations (such as in the case of the *Hexham Races*, where each of the unaccented G# passing notes could be replaced by a consonant E, enabling the tune to be played by instruments equipped only with notes of the G major and D major scales; see Figure 10; CD Track 7).



*Hexham Races* (Track 11)

Apologies to D/G melodeon players, pipers and others who may have preferred to have this tune in the key of G. For fiddle, accordion, whistle, etc. I think it is a far brighter tune in A which seems to be its 'natural' key. Players of 'G' instruments could learn it by listening and then transpose it to G;

Figure 10: *Hexham Races*.<sup>83</sup>

It could be argued that the suggested elements of transposition are designed to endow learners with an important skill, and to enable greater levels of aural perception and awareness. A counter argument to this, however, would be that it is perhaps more vital for a new folk musician to know in advance what the expected (or accepted) keys are for specific tunes, and how best to deal with situations where tunes are played in keys outside of their instrument's natural capabilities. By encouraging learners to transpose tunes to whichever key is easiest for them personally, the booklets emphasize not group playing in sessions, but the development of an individual repertoire in such a way that session participation may actually be inhibited. Meanwhile, the cultivation of a community of G/D melodeon players (for the sake of argument) who play *Hexham Races* in G major instead of A major, must

<sup>83</sup> Taken from Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 2, 7*.

necessarily result in an insular, self-contained folk music culture, quite separate from that outside of the institution's activities.

The final point to be made with regards to the Folkworks Session Collection is the way in which the packs utilize modern recording technology to achieve pedagogic ends. As has been mentioned, each accompanying CD is in two halves: the first half consists of each tune being 'played through once, (or in some cases, twice), on its own, at a slow speed for 'note learning'', whilst in the second half of the disc, 'the tunes are played mainly in 'sets' of two or three tunes of a similar rhythm, generally twice through each, at a quicker tempo'.<sup>84</sup> The tunes as they appear in the first half incorporate a stereo recording technique designed to enable a learner's progression from familiarization to performance (albeit private performance):

On these tracks, the 'melody' and 'accompaniment' sides of the accordion have been kept separate; using the balance control on your CD player, you will hear the melody mainly in the right channel and the accompaniment mainly in the left. You can choose how to set the balance to give you the best setting for learning the tunes. To begin with you may want to listen to the melody only (set your balance control to 'right'). As you become more familiar with the tune, you could switch over to the left channel, which will give you an accompaniment as you play the tune on your own.<sup>85</sup>

The same method of recording is used on the faster tracks, albeit to a lesser extent:

On these tracks, the melody and accompaniment are more 'naturally' balanced, but the melody is still more

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<sup>84</sup> Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 1*, 1.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.



prominent in the right channel and the accompaniment in the left.<sup>86</sup>

The conception and employment of this recording technique, although a relatively simple matter in the grand scheme of music technology, demonstrates both forethought and the intent to provide materials unavailable as part of any other folk music resource. It also emphasizes the attempt being made by Folkworks to offer educational material which is inherently equipped to encourage and facilitate the development of the instrumentalist at the *tune* level.<sup>87</sup> Perhaps most interesting, however, is the fact that this technique – although presented as a teaching and learning method – actually provides the individual folk musician with an enhanced opportunity to perform folk music by, and for, him/herself. Particularly for players of melody instruments, the left channel accompaniment provides a backing track to the solitary performance of the technically developing, lone instrumentalist. Thus, the element of community – and even of multiple performers – as a defining characteristic of the music culture becomes lessened: modern recording technology has here enabled novice folk musicians to bypass the – hitherto – extremely public elements of the session participant’s early developmental stages.

The collection, and the method of individualistic, “at-home” learning that the collection embodies is Folkworks’ method of encouraging participation through the offer of a “fast track” immediacy to a more culturally acceptable level of competence.

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<sup>86</sup> Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 1*, 1. For an example of this technique, CD Track 8 is taken as an extract from the CD – Oliver’s recording of *Hexham Races*.

<sup>87</sup> The explanation of the recording technique employed betrays the expectation that players of melody instruments will form the majority of the publications’ users: the fact that the stereo separation on the CDs also enables a harmony orientated instrumentalist – such as a guitarist or bouzouki player – to select the right channel only and accompany the tune without the distraction of the accordion’s left hand, is not mentioned.

Such immediacy furnishes the beginner instrumentalist with the option of developing the skills to perform a large number of tunes to an intermediate level *before* entering the public sphere of the folk session. Through the use of Folkworks' materials, a novice instrumentalist is theoretically able to develop the skills required to function – musically, at least - in the session context (including a familiarity with the sensation of playing with another musician – albeit a recording), without necessarily participating in that context. Within this interpretation of the packs, the act of learning to play folk music becomes a privatized pastime. Folkworks is able to allay the beginning instrumentalist's fear of embarrassment in the presence of peers, by offering a product that will provide its clientele with both textual and contextual knowledge of the session as a musical event in advance of their arrival. It can be argued that, in this way, the elements of face-to-face interpersonal – and intracultural – contact are corroded by provision of an opportunity to avoid public humiliation.

Such a potential recontextualization of the learning process must be accompanied by potential ramifications for the session context. One such possible knock-on effect is the increase in acceptable standards within the folk session context: should the earliest stages of folk music tutelage begin to take place behind closed doors, public performance at this basic level would naturally become less acceptable within the context of the session. This would be particularly ironic, bearing in mind the very interpersonally orientated discourse with which the organization presents folk music culture, and particularly the “informality” of the session context as a social gathering. Thus it could be suggested that Folkworks' motivation of granting the beginner an increased immediacy and accessibility to the session would be inevitably subverted by an overall rise in the lowest publicly acceptable level of technical proficiency. As



musical standards rise, so too must cultural norms and expectations: therefore, any attempt to make a public performance context more accessible to the novice through private means must, necessarily, be a self-defeating venture towards a paradoxical assertion of both egalitarianism and raised norms in performance technique.

The Folkworks Session Collection offers a great wealth of information. Further evidence is found here to support the assertion that the geographic origin of repertory is fundamentally non-essential information: any tune is acceptable that meets with specifically aesthetic criteria – albeit criteria specific to the beginner level for which the packs are designed. Where information is given, it can be perceived not as an assertion of repertorial boundary, but as a reinforcement of Folkworks’ educative role and authoritative status. The music is defined in other, more explicit ways through an emphasis on learning ‘by ear’ and playing ‘from memory’ in the introductory notes. Despite the obvious paradoxes inherent in the reference to these concepts, such learning and performance strategies appear to supersede even notions of community and informal social interaction as defining features: the latter are now less essential, since Folkworks provides the materials necessary to achieve an intermediate degree of instrumental proficiency from the comfort of one’s own living room. Such materials may be regarded simply as a manifestation of a larger economic trend towards the privatization of personal interests and cultural activities, (as shall be discussed in greater length in chapter 6), but the potential for the packs to increase the accessibility of the public session context for the novice would appear to be limited.

The opening two pages of each booklet offer statements that highlight the organization's need to be found engaging with the issues of authenticity, authority and standardization. Such engagements are extremely brief and prevented from becoming obtrusive to Folkworks' ultimate aims of increased ease of access in order to maximize numbers of participants and cultural status. Issues of value judgement and disproportionate influence are avoided altogether:

... compared with Volume 1, this collection also includes a few tunes which are [...] perhaps less frequently heard in sessions but which we feel could be more regularly used. No tune is included unless we think it is a great one!<sup>88</sup>

Nonetheless it could be seen as a testament to – or a contributing factor in – Folkworks' economic and marketing prowess that the institution is able to advise against over-reliance on its product, without damaging its commercial and cultural success.

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<sup>88</sup> Oliver, *Folkworks Session Collection: Volume 2*, 1.



## **4. The Folk and Traditional Music Degree**

### **Course**

The Bachelor of Music Honours degree in Folk and Traditional Music took its first year of undergraduates in September of 2001. I shall now present a descriptive report of the conceptual and administrative formulation of the course, accompanied by an analytical consideration of how its origins and development may offer a deeper understanding of the music culture that it is designed to serve. This chapter shall begin by considering the identifications of both undergraduates and lecturers on the course, paying particular attention to the ways in which the lecturers present themselves within the university context. I shall then go on to discuss, with specific reference to a single performance, the identification of repertory within the degree course, and how inherent pluralities can be understood in terms of the North East folk music culture outlined in the previous chapter. Finally, I shall go on to discuss the ways in which the degree course has been represented and discussed from without, and how it has been justified and defended from within.

The degree course is described in Folkworks' literature as having been 'developed in association with the International Centre for Music Studies at the University of Newcastle',<sup>1</sup> and is one of four different undergraduate courses available at the centre (herein referred to as ICMuS, see Figure 11). The 'folk degree', as it is commonly known, is the first degree course of its kind in England: whilst traditional music had

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<sup>1</sup> The Sage Gateshead, 'Higher Education / Folk Degree', *The Sage Gateshead*.  
[http://www.thesagegateshead.org/1\\_and\\_p/he\\_fe/he\\_folkdegree.aspx](http://www.thesagegateshead.org/1_and_p/he_fe/he_folkdegree.aspx) (5th Feb, 2004).



featured in optional modules within other undergraduate programmes, no degree had been devoted to the practice of the genre prior to the Newcastle course. Since 2001, other organizations have formalized research in this area, such as the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition at the University of Sheffield, which now offers a joint undergraduate degree course in conjunction with the university's music department.<sup>2</sup> However, it could be argued that the Sheffield course is perhaps more orientated towards a greater general understanding of English traditional culture (including those non-musical aspects) and issues within folkloristic disciplines. More distant relations to the folk degree course exist in the form of the numerous undergraduate programmes in “popular music”, “world music” etc., whilst postgraduate studies in the area are possible at numerous universities and conservatoires.



**Figure 11: The International Centre for Music Studies, University of Newcastle upon Tyne.<sup>3</sup>**

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<sup>2</sup> The University of Sheffield, ‘BA in Traditional Musics with Folklore Studies’, *National Centre for English Cultural Tradition*. <http://www.shef.ac.uk/natcect/prospectiveug/bamusfolk.html> (13th March, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Photograph by S Keegan-Phipps, 2007.



The call for the creation of the folk degree came from within the now considerable group of young people who had, for some years prior to 2001, attended the Folkworks Summer Schools, and other Folkworks events. Anderson explains this demand amongst Folkworks students as key to the development of the undergraduate degree course:

Having been running the summer school for however many years – and it started off with a lot of really quite youngsters: 12, 13, 14 year olds with a very moderate awareness of music – by the time those kids were hitting eighteen some of them were substantial musicians, and they'd decided that this was the area of music that they really wanted to work on. Several of the students, I remember Robert Harbron particularly coming and saying “Look, if I was interested in classical music, if I was interested in jazz, even if I was interested in rock music I could find a degree course to go on. There isn't anything for traditional music”. He and David Oliver [a Folkworks tutor, later Folkworks Programme Leader at The Sage Gateshead] actually did a trawl through all the universities, and found the odd module here and there but, right enough, there was nothing that came close. And even the odd module was mainly aimed at people who didn't know anything about it, and sort of, you know, were basically introductory ones. And over the next two or three years, more and more kids were hitting eighteen, and were asking the same questions.<sup>4</sup>

The ethnomusicological implications for an economic, “market-forces” interpretation of the folk degree's origination shall be discussed in greater length later in this chapter. For the primarily narrative purposes of this introductory section, it is sufficient to outline the originality of the course's focus within the national context, and to highlight that the formulation of the course was as a direct result of Folkworks' earlier educational programmes. One might reasonably read such a development as a

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<sup>4</sup> Alistair Anderson, interview, 12<sup>th</sup> April 2005.

manifestation of the organization's resounding success not only in introducing and normalising folk and traditional music within young people but also in maintaining such an enthusiasm within those students as to result in the expression of continued educational aspiration.

As has been discussed in chapter 1 of this thesis, large numbers of courses of an equivalent academic level exist elsewhere across the globe. Perhaps most influential to the creation of the Newcastle folk degree have been those courses in traditional musics offered in countries of a relatively close geographic proximity: Eire (e.g. the University of Limerick's Irish World Academy of Music and Dance); Scotland (the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow); Sweden (e.g. the Royal College of Music in Stockholm) and Finland (the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki). Research into these organizations and their respective approaches to the subject of folk and traditional music was carried by Anderson and Oliver in anticipation of the course at Newcastle:

So I went to Helsinki, to the Sibelius Academy, and spent three or four days there, doing some teaching, or just talking and observing, and did a very substantial report on that. David Oliver went to Cork, and to Limerick which just had a Masters at the time, and then I went to Stockholm. [The course in] Glasgow must have just started when we started to think about it, because I'd been up there to do a bit of teaching, and I'd talked to Jo Miller when she was putting her plans together.<sup>5</sup>

The way in which these research trips coincided comfortably with peripatetic teaching commitments on the courses being considered serves to reinforce a sense of the

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<sup>5</sup> Alistair Anderson, interview, 12<sup>th</sup> April 2005.



respective attitudes of these institutions, characterized by the combination of local and national sense of musical identity with a degree of internationally contextualising pluralism. Throughout the existence of the Newcastle course, visiting tutors from outside the country have played a central role in the teaching and performance of a large variety of repertoires and styles – a matter to be discussed in a later section of this chapter. It could certainly be argued that the two-way pedagogical trade manifest in the research trips made by Anderson and Oliver prior to the establishment of the Folkworks folk degree is indicative of an accepted process of transnational cultural exchange on a much larger scale between the various educational institutions of the British Isles and Scandinavia. Manifestation of this exchange will be examined in the music performed and composed by folk degree students, later in this chapter.

Having examined equivalent courses in neighbouring nations, a subsequent step in the conception of a Folkworks run degree in England was the selection of both a suitable location and, more specifically, a university by which the qualification would be conferred. Since the North East of England was the administrative and cultural “home” of Folkworks, which was by this time a well established organization, it was perhaps natural (and most pragmatic) that the degree course should be based in the region. Plans for The Sage Gateshead were in the development process, with the prospective building seeming to be an ideal habitat not only for Folkworks, but also for the degree course’s day-to-day teaching programme, which was expected to be predominantly practical and therefore able to benefit from the high quality of practice and performance space that The Sage was to house.

[I]t looked like – if The Sage flew – then the course could be based there [...] either completely, or to a

certain extent. We talked to various universities, and they all sort of expressed interest, but you know, [...] The first one to take a serious interest was Sunderland, and we had a lot of meetings with Sunderland, Ann Wright – who was the VC at the time – was very, very positive and she came to most of the meetings herself, so it was a very strong team that they fielded. They had very little in the way of a music department, they had sort of an education department which had some music in it. I'm not even sure if the current performing arts department was flying then: if it was it had very little music in it. So we would have been fairly autonomous within that, which had certain attractions. So we were discussing all about that, and trying to work out when to make the approach to HEFCE [...] we were trying to work out roughly what the budgets would be, and it was all going fairly constructively (as well as any of these large negotiations does) when Richard Middleton arrived at Newcastle. And Newcastle had been supportive of the idea that such a degree should exist, but hadn't really been pushing to be hosting it; but Richard decided that if he was going to expand the range of activity, then that would be a very good one to have; he knew Folkworks' work vaguely – I'd met him a few times before – and so he came very strongly and said "Alistair, I would like to talk to you because", you know, "we think it would be good to have you here", so we came and talked.<sup>6</sup>

The choice of university was deemed a particularly important one, since it could determine the short- and long-term success of the degree course by diminishing or increasing its status in the eyes of a prospective attendee's parents:

I guess there were lots of reasons why we came – the strength of the department, and one thing and another. In many ways the swing-factor was that if you were an eighteen-year-old going to your parents to say "I want to study a degree in folk music" [...] the first ones would have a fairly mixed response. We felt, and I think it was right, that it would come easier to tell your parents at eighteen, if it was Newcastle University than

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<sup>6</sup> Alistair Anderson, interview, 12<sup>th</sup> April 2005.



if it was Sunderland University. Call it snobbery, or call it whatever, [...] the combination of a non-standard course in a very established university reads very differently to a worried parent, to a non-standard course in a less established university. [...] [Also] by then, it was established that if The Sage was built, it would be in Gateshead. In fact, by then, we might even have got the money for The Sage. It was all about that same time. So, obviously from the University's point of view, it being involved in The Sage was a big positive.<sup>7</sup>

The precision with which the course was thus positioned within the folk education market is demonstrative of the very high degree of economically orientated consideration necessary to ensure maximum consumer appeal. On the basis that such deliberation indicates a significant level of cultural and commercial fluency, one is able to infer much from the cultural criteria upon which economic decisions are made. In particular, one is able to identify the consumer base to which the degree course has been directed and, thus, the demographic of the folk music culture within England as it is recognized by Folkworks: the course was located with special attention to a parent's concern for the status (or "establishment") of the university to which their child may seek entry and with a need to alleviate the cultural burden of the degree being – quite correctly – considered as 'non-standard'. For the decision to base the folk degree at Newcastle rather than Sunderland to have been founded, such a parent must necessarily be conscious of university hierarchies – relatively subtle hierarchies, since neither of the two universities being discussed by Anderson here are of great international renown beyond and outside specific realms of academia: in other words, neither have an "Oxbridge" status. Furthermore, the parent must value the positioning of universities within this hierarchical structure, thus betraying an underlying respect for higher education generally, and its importance to the post-university future of their

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

child. Meanwhile, the alleviation of the degree course's inalienable 'non-standard' status is only necessary because the parent of a prospective student is wary of 'non-standard' courses, implying a degree of traditional university training or, at the very least, a high regard for such training.

The "parent-of-a-folk-degree-student" profile can therefore be deduced as that of a member of the educated middle-classes; concerned for his or her child's educational development; affording enough respect (and possibly financial dependency) from the child to have some degree of influence over their final decision; cautious of 'non-standard' courses outside of the normal university canon; liberal enough in social views to entertain the notion of a folk degree; sympathetic to higher study of the performing arts; and aware that the application of such training will be essentially restricted to the performance and teaching of folk music itself.

It could therefore be argued that the market placement of the folk degree as a cultural product is predictably orientated towards an educated, middle class clientele similar to the demographic that has been well documented as most instrumental in the continuation and development of folk music in England over the past two hundred years. It is important to note that the choice of Newcastle's ICMuS as the department to which the folk degree has been affiliated does not necessarily *perpetuate* the predominance of the middle classes within the active folk music culture in England: the location of the degree at a well established university does not automatically preclude the application or admission of students from working class enculturational backgrounds. Such applications and admissions are far more fundamentally challenged by pre-university educational experiences (or lack of them): since the folk



degree course is – like all music courses with an element of performance – skill-specific, a prospective student is only likely to have reached the necessary standard for entry by receiving parental encouragement and financial investment, which in the vast majority of cases includes skill-based training and the purchase of one or more instruments.<sup>8</sup> Success in such a minority interest is also likely to require attendance at events and activities outside of the mainstream schooling curriculum – activities such as those provided by Folkworks. All of these educational opportunities and resources require a great deal of parental enthusiasm, time and money, albeit not a huge amount more than that required for a child's success in classical music.

In short, the course was always likely to attract students from backgrounds characterized by cultural awareness and disposable income, much as in the case of a classically orientated music course. It could be argued, however, that the reasons behind the location of the course in association with the Newcastle music department demonstrate the fact that the practical aspects of its conception reflect the expectations and attitudes of an educated middle class.

The significance of economic issues in the formulation of the folk degree goes beyond underlying questions of class-based accessibility: Anderson goes so far as to suggest that the course's being located at Newcastle rather than at Sunderland resulted in a probable reduction in the specificity and focus of the teaching programme, but that such a broadening was necessary in order to achieve the restrictive fiscal targets of the new concern.

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<sup>8</sup> Specific to folk and traditional music is the fact that the instruments involved are very much specialist instruments, often handmade or assembled by hand. The price of a fair quality free-reed instrument, for example (such as might be played by a budding professional) is certain to start in four figures.

S: You mentioned the issue of autonomy at Sunderland – the fact that it looked like you would have a certain degree of that; that would have been more than here [Newcastle]?

A: Yes, more than here: I mean, we have the advantage here that there are lecturers who can lecture in subjects that our core team wouldn't be able to or would feel less confident about lecturing in, so you can have a slightly different mix of educational experiences. Because some of those lectures are therefore delivered to a student body of fifty, sixty, seventy students at once is a considerable cost saving. And, of course, [...] in Sunderland our core team would have been delivering everything, and therefore there would have been no requirement to tailor any bits for other students, so it is possible that it could have been more focussed [...] <sup>9</sup>

However, epistemological support for that reduced level of autonomy inherent in the course's affiliation with the ICMuS at Newcastle is quickly affirmed:

[...] so it is possible that it could have been more focussed; *or*, that it would have been more narrow. I think generally speaking, the balance between those areas which I feel are essential to somebody studying our sort of music and those areas which are very useful for people studying any sort of music are fairly well in balance. <sup>10</sup>

## **The teachers and learners**

The key lecturers providing tuition on the folk and traditional music degree course during the period of fieldwork represent an interesting combination. Teaching

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<sup>9</sup> Alistair Anderson, interview, 12<sup>th</sup> April 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.



alongside Alistair Anderson (best known – beyond his capacity within Folkworks – as a performer of the English concertina and Northumbrian smallpipes), is the Northumbrian smallpiper and “Scottish” fiddler Kathryn Tickell. Tickell, also from rural Northumberland, rose to acclaim as a young performer (under the tutelage and promotion of Anderson) during the 1980s, and continues to be particularly popular among younger audiences. Also teaching on the degree is the singer and English concertina player Sandra Kerr, who became a high-profile singer during the second revival period of the 1960s and 70s. Kerr is from southern England, but is very closely associated with the location and song repertory of the North East folk music culture. Finally, the Shetland fiddler Catriona MacDonald lectures on the course. MacDonald is a performer of Tickell’s generation, and also more popular amongst younger listeners and concert goers.

Thus, the core teaching force is made up of a “united front” of older and younger lecturers: two are of the older, revivalist generation, whilst two are younger performers, and both began their career as “young prodigies”. This point probably assists in the achievement of student interest from all generations (the degree course has been particularly successful at obtaining a sizeable proportion of intake in mature students). Fundamentally, however, all are performers first and foremost, and have not obtained lecturership status through the more common (postgraduate and postdoctoral) university routes. Therefore, I shall now go on to discuss the ways in which these individuals represent themselves within the academic context of their university online profiles. I shall then continue by considering the brief biographical and degree course-based experiences of a folk degree undergraduate, entering the course from outside the North East folk music culture.

### Lecturer profiles: self-portrayal in the university context

From the ICMuS website, members of the public – including, presumably, prospective students – are offered access to what are referred to as ‘lecturer profiles’. Such profiles are a common feature of any university department’s website, where each individual member of teaching staff is given the opportunity to upload a photograph, short biography and list of research interests. Common headings used for this purpose include: Background; Roles and Responsibilities; Qualifications; Previous Positions; Languages; Research Interests; Current Work; Research Roles; Postgraduate Supervision; Selected Publications; Undergraduate Teaching; Postgraduate Teaching; and Esteem Indicators. The profiles on the Newcastle ICMuS website are approximately between 300 and 1000 words in length, and each is accompanied by a photograph of the individual. The photographs are generally informal pictures of the lecturer in question, ranging from passport photographs to holiday snaps, although the staple picture remains that of the individual in their office – usually at their desk/piano – as taken by a colleague.<sup>11</sup>

In considering the ways in which the core teaching staff involved with the folk degree present themselves within the academic context of the course, such resources represent an essential element of the ethnomusicologist’s contemporary, Western field: the profiles act not only as a curriculum vitae and advertisement for the individuals themselves but also, by association, for the department and – in the case of

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<sup>11</sup> In the case of ICMuS – and apart from the folk degree lecturers, whose profiles are to be discussed herein – a noticeable exception to this rule is the profile of jazz saxophonist Tim Garland, who’s photograph takes the form of the cover from one of his CDs.



the folk degree lecturers – the undergraduate degree course to which their respective roles are tied. One can assume that the profiles are designed to be successful in attracting prospective student interest, and that they must necessarily seek to reflect the attitudes of the music culture to which they speak. Simultaneously, the brief, autobiographical profiles offer a great deal of ethnographic insight into both the representation of, and attitudes towards, the folk music genre within the context of the – Western art music dominated – academic field. What follows, therefore, is a textual analysis of these individual’s lecturer profiles as they appear on Newcastle University’s ICMuS website; I shall show how research targets and uncertainty of the status of folk music as an intellectually rigorous pursuit have resulted in an emphasis among the lectures on cross-cultural collaborations and recontextualizations of folk music.

From the course’s conception, and throughout the period of field research conducted here, the great majority of the staff teaching on the folk degree have been well established British folk music performers in their own right.<sup>12</sup> It is, therefore, unsurprising that the each of the four core teachers’ profiles open with the relation of their respective performance histories. Also predictable within these histories is the degree of emphasis placed upon international activity and reputation:

Alistair Anderson has been at the forefront of traditional music for 30 years. Internationally acknowledged as the master of the English Concertina, he has taken the music of Northumberland to new

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<sup>12</sup> An exception to this would be the ethnomusicologist Goffredo Plastino, whose modules on World Music at the ICMUS are compulsory for folk degree students. Fieldwork was mainly carried out between 2003 and 2005; since that period, management of the course has been taken over by newly appointed senior lecturer, Vic Gammon, and a second new lecturer has also been appointed to teach on the course – Irish flute player, Desi Wilkinson.

audiences around the world, touring extensively throughout Europe and has no less than 35 tours of America to his credit.<sup>13</sup>

Of particular interest is the emphasis placed on the individuals' identification with their region's spaces and people. Tickell's profile juxtaposes evidence of local and global activity (and celebrity) to achieve this emphasis, and goes to great lengths to posit the performer within the regional community context:

She has performed in venues ranging from small village halls to the Edinburgh Festival, Carnegie Hall, The South Bank Centre, The Barbican and at the European Parliament.

[...] In 1997 Kathryn founded the "Young Musicians' Fund", which is managed by The Community Foundation. To date some £98,000 has been raised to help young people in the North East to realise their musical potential. Kathryn is very involved with initiatives to use historical culture to support regional regeneration. She is involved with the campaign for the return of the Lindisfarne Gospels. She is also involved with her local community and has a group of local young people who she teaches and helps with their knowledge and skills of traditional music.<sup>14</sup>

This highlighting of local activity is a considerable departure from the usual content of the lecturer profiles given on the university website, and can be read as the revelation of a need to temper celebrity status with an image of accessibility. This image is certainly necessary if prospective students are not to be put off by the daunting notion of receiving tutelage from a high concentration of internationally acclaimed practitioners in the field of folk and traditional music. Tickell's profile is,

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<sup>13</sup> The University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, 'Mr. Alistair Anderson; Lecturer', *Arts & Cultures; Staff*. <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/sacs/staff/profile/a.m.anderson> (20th June 2005).

<sup>14</sup> The University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, 'Ms. Kathryn Tickell; Lecturer', *Arts & Cultures; Staff*. <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/sacs/staff/profile/k.d.tickell> (20th June 2005).



however, open to more culturally profound readings. This identification with “grass roots” activities and, in particular, the stark comparison of the village hall context with that of The Barbican, constructs a performer identity imbued with mediatory qualities: here, Tickell is portrayed as a physical link between global and local, musically and culturally; a bridging of sub-regional and international performance spaces. The spanning of this divide might be seen as speaking to the aspirations towards a similar level of national and international acclaim undoubtedly held by many of the folk degree students, but this understanding can only be partially correct: the connection depicted in this profile is not a teleological passage from local stage to global arena. Here, Tickell is simultaneously international performer and local activist, a point which demonstrates the central role of concepts such as location and community in the construction of the contemporary folk music identity. The significance of these concepts is echoed in the profile of Catriona MacDonald:

Catriona's commitment to the promotion of her island's heritage through education is also an important part of her work; [...] helping in 1987 to negotiate for the inclusion of Shetland Traditional Fiddle Music into the Scottish Certificate 'O' Grade Music [...]. Catriona also teaches Shetland fiddle at [...] her own Fiddle School in Vementry, Shetland [...].<sup>15</sup>

Anderson does not make such emphasized reference to locality in his profile – which concentrates more on composition and Folkworks – but does not fail to posit himself firmly within the region:

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<sup>15</sup> The University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, ‘Ms Catriona MacDonald; Lecturer’, *Arts & Cultures; Staff*. <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/sacs/staff/profile/catriona.macdonald> (20th June 2005).

Internationally acknowledged as the master of the English Concertina, he has taken the music of Northumberland to new audiences around the world [...]. As well as championing the traditional music and musicians of the area, Anderson has a growing reputation as a composer of new music rooted in the local traditions. His first major composition *Steel Skies* was described by the Guardian as "the finest recent original contribution to the tradition of English music", while *On Cheviot Hills*, a suite for strings and concertina commissioned by leading classical string quartet The Lindsays, was described as "one of the years musical highlights" by the magazine *Rock and Reel*.

His championing of the music of Northumberland is here reinforced quite adequately by the listing of his composition 'On Cheviot Hills', along with references to 'the music and musicians of the area' and 'the local traditions'. It could be argued that Anderson's celebrity status as a *personality* rather than merely a performer within the region means that it is less important for him to stress or illustrate his regional and grass-roots grounding to the extent observed in the case of Tickell's profile: he appears at so many cultural events throughout the North East, musical and non-musical, often introducing acts, welcoming attendees to concerts and workshops, and otherwise fulfilling highly visible roles as a figure-head representative for Northumbrian culture. Conversely, whilst Tickell is very clearly identifiable with a regional and local cultural schema, her overriding public image remains that of a performing musician rather than a more generic and ubiquitous signifier of regional identity.

Most interestingly, Kerr's profile makes no reference of any kind to location or space, concentrating instead on her work in the national media and in educational projects.

She may, however, represent an anomaly among her colleagues, since she is very



much less defined in terms of regional grounding: much of her output is clearly identifiable as originating from the North East of England, and her links with the region are reinforced by her daughter, Nancy's clearer identification with the North East;<sup>16</sup> however, Sandra herself originates from the South East, speaks with received pronunciation, and is regarded as an active teacher and performer across the country. Her history of composing and performing in the – essentially centralized – English and British national media also dilutes any geographic element to Sandra Kerr's musical and professional identity.

The absent and reduced levels of locating references in the respective profiles of Kerr and Anderson may, however, be more simply interpreted: Kerr and Anderson are older, better established in chronological terms, and perhaps less inclined to go to great lengths to assert cultural identities or reinforce public images in this, their most recent of many autobiographical contexts. It is certainly worth noting that the profiles of these “older generation” lecturers are each approximately a third of the length of those offered by Tickell and MacDonald.

Other more tangible features can be observed recurring within these profiles.

Especially noticeable is the prominence afforded to the respective compositional experience and achievement of the lecturers. In the cases of Anderson and Tickell, the amount of text devoted to the individual's career as a composer outweighs that recounting his/her experience and prowess as a performer:

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<sup>16</sup> Sandra Kerr and Nancy Kerr, *Neat and Complete* (Fellside, 1996); Sandra Kerr, Nancy Kerr and James Fagan, *Scalene* (Fellside, 1999).

As well as championing the traditional music and musicians of the area, Anderson has a growing reputation as a composer of new music rooted in the local traditions. His first major composition *Steel Skies* was described by the *Guardian* as "the finest recent original contribution to the tradition of English music", while *On Cheviot Hills*, a suite for strings and concertina commissioned by leading classical string quartet *The Lindsays*, was described as "one of the years musical highlights" by the magazine *Rock and Reel*. His most recent work, a joint composition with jazz trombonist Annie Whitehead, has been chosen by the Arts Council Contemporary Touring Network to tour the country early in 2003.<sup>17</sup>

Kathryn has been very involved with composition throughout her career. Initially it was with tunes in the Northumbrian, English and Scots folk tradition. This extended into work with Asian and Irish elements, and into longer descriptive pieces. She has also composed for two Live Theatre productions by playwright Tom Hadaway. In 1995 Kathryn composed music for the Channel 4 TV documentary "Ten Years On". This was a considerable departure from traditional form. In 1998 she was Gateshead's Composer in Education working with schools and youth groups. As part of this project she composed a piece for, and worked extensively with the Gateshead Youth Orchestra. In 1999 Kathryn was awarded a bursary from the Britten-Pears Foundation to study composition with Judith Weir at Dartington International Summer School. In 2000 "Lordenshaws" her piece for pipes and small ensemble was premiered, toured and broadcast. She collaborated with jazz saxophonist Andy Sheppard to create a multi-media work for the opening of the Gateshead Millennium Bridge in September 2001.<sup>18</sup>

The significance attributed to composition here should certainly play an important role in our understanding and reassessment of the contemporary folk music culture.

The implication is that new composition – including cross-genre, cross cultural

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<sup>17</sup> The University of Newcastle, 'Mr. Alistair Anderson'.

<sup>18</sup> The University of Newcastle, 'Ms. Kathryn Tickell'.



collaboration – represents not only an acceptable, but a *central* aspect of the modern folk musician's career.

The centrality of compositional development and credentials to the profile of the musician within the folk music culture is certainly mirrored – and, of course, reinforced – by the prolific nature of creative-skills based modules offered by the degree course. Students on the course have the option of choosing the content of their studies in such a way that up to 140 credits (over one year's worth out of the four) may be made up of modules on composition and improvisation.<sup>19</sup> Such options include programmes ranging from the very specific (e.g. 'Arranging and composing in traditional music') to the more generic (e.g. 'Contemporary compositional techniques'; 'Collective free improvisation'). Within those modules not explicitly concerned with compositional training, creative practices remain the central thrust, a point made clear by the remarks of a third year undergraduate, Nikki Williamson, in an interview about the course:

Ensemble is a module, which you're assessed [for], and which you get a group mark for and an individual mark for. And what happens with that is that you get two lessons a week: one is like a guided lesson, and one you're left completely by your selves. And in your guided lesson you have somebody coming in, giving you a project like "do something that relates to the sea", and they go away, and you think about it, and you talk about it, and then he comes back and you say, "well we've got this, and we're going to put it with this tune, which is called 'so-and-so of the sea'". The guidance you get, really, I think the more self motivated you are the less guidance you're given. They very, very

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<sup>19</sup> International Centre for Music Studies, *Undergraduate Music Programmes Handbook 2004-2005* (Newcastle upon Tyne: University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 2004), 36-40; International Centre for Music Studies, *Undergraduate Music Programmes Handbook 2005-2006* (Newcastle upon Tyne: University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 2005), 36-40.

infrequently suggest things “well, how about you take a bass line here?”, but that kind of thing doesn’t often happen.

You’re not taught really – I don’t think you can be taught, though, how to work as a group, to make an arrangement. I don’t know how that could happen. They do do that a little bit in Creative Approaches [a Stage 1 module] which, when I did that course, Kathryn took it, and she would get us ... split the class in half and have like seminars of about ten people, and then, would get you working on exercises like riffs: creating riffs, developing riffs, putting them with stuff, and just giving you sort of more tools to approach arranging with. But that, I would think is the most tuition you would get in doing it. Otherwise, it’s just guidance, and listening to what you’ve, sort of, amassed and then sometimes being a little critical of it – sometimes going “well, why didn’t you consider separating the two and having a harmony”, and you know, just suggestions, but it’s always, like, it’s always from what you’ve produced yourself that you get extra stuff.<sup>20</sup>

The collation and combination of tunes, arrangement, harmonization and voicing (or ‘orchestration’ as it would be described outside of the folk music culture) are all key elements within the overall pedagogy of the course, whether under the banner of compositional or more generic performance-based modules.

However, within the context of the university lecturer profiles, another reading of the emphasis on composition may be considered. Composition is a standard practice within university music departments: it is an accepted part of *academic* activities within musical study; it is submissible to the Research Assessment Exercise as practice-based research. This notion of composition as “practice-based research” is very important, since it suggests that the stress placed upon composition in the lecturer profiles plays an important role in the assertion of equal status with

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<sup>20</sup> Nikki Williamson, Interview, 15th October 2005.



departmental colleagues. Individuals lecturing on the 'non-standard' folk degree course do not all necessarily hold the academic (graduate and postgraduate) qualifications and other credentials that constitute the culturally accepted support for their position of authority in the department: therefore, if they are to achieve a level of acceptance within – and cohesion with – a classically focussed university music department, emphasis must inevitably be placed on those elements within the lecturer's curriculum vitae that meet with the 'standard' expectations and norms of academia.

Ultimately, this element of the profiles may be read as an attempt by the individuals in question to identify and give prominence to those features of their careers that can be regarded as associated with contemporary academic music research; to forge associations with the practices and cultural values of their colleagues. Tickell's profile illustrates this reading most successfully:

She has worked with a wide range of musicians from all types and styles including Evelyn Glennie, John Surman, Andy Sheppard and Sting.

[...]She has recently been liasing with Sir Peter Maxwell Davis who intends writing a chamber work for Kathryn and the small-pipes.

[...]Personal long-term aims can be divided into two main areas: 1) to continue to develop, research, record, perform and champion the traditional music and song of Northumberland, Tyneside and the Borders. 2) to extend the repertoire of the Northumbrian smallpipes outside the tradition (particularly towards the Contemporary Classical field of music) and to challenge people's perceptions of the instrument and its boundaries. This would include the strong possibility of future collaborative work with Andy Sheppard. It also includes the Maxwell-Davies commission as well as other pieces of new music specially commissioned for

the Northumbrian pipes. Kathryn has commissioned a chamber piece for the pipes from Scottish composer and cellist Ron Shaw. There is also a new piece being written for pipes and (probably!) marimba, commissioned by Evelyn Glennie [...].<sup>21</sup>

Most noticeable here is the fact that the best known of the collaborators listed – Global popular music icon, Sting – is given only a brief, undeveloped mention. Less well known figures of the classical music world such as Glennie, Shaw and Maxwell-Davies are given much greater emphasis, along with repeated reference to Andy Sheppard, a relative unknown to those who are not jazz enthusiasts. Contrastingly, no reference is made throughout the (lengthy) profile to any of the numerous and illustrious folk and traditional musicians that she has worked with during her long career in the field. Clearly, the lecturer's departmental profile is not the time or place for such a biography: the 'village hall' context is essentially forgotten; the academic milieu demands, instead, that greater attention be paid to one's involvement with musical genres of a higher socio-cultural status.

### *Undergraduate folk*

It is perhaps unsurprising that levels of access to demographic information, along with opportunities for prolonged periods of participant observation, interaction and interviews, are most elevated in the case of students attending The Sage Gateshead's folk degree; individuals on the degree are based in the locality of Newcastle and Gateshead for prolonged periods, regularly present in the ICMuS and readily accessible for interviews and discussion. Of course, it would be wrong to suggest that the particulars and cultural attitudes of these students should be regarded as

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<sup>21</sup> University of Newcastle, 'Ms. Kathryn Tickell'.



generalizable to the intake of Folkworks' numerous and various educational activities writ large: the thoughts, intentions, and cultural values of an individual attending a two-hour, weekly evening class on a folk instrument can hardly be extrapolated, whole-sale, from those of one who has chosen to spend four years studying the subject of folk and traditional music in order to be awarded a degree. However, it is important to recognize that the course has originated out of – and remains closely affiliated to – the broader Folkworks music culture. The two hypothetical individuals referred to here are engaging in two very different elements of the same cultural experience (learning – and learning *about* – folk music), an experience that is provided for and orchestrated by the Folkworks institution.

This ethnography shall now engage in a brief discussion of the main biographical elements of a single individual – disclosed in interview – by way of a case study. I shall then consider possible ways in which these elements (combined with generic attitudes) may enable a broader understanding of those experiences that can result in the eventual ascension to what is ostensibly the highest available level of folk music education in England. What follows is not intended as an 'ethnomusicology of the individual' (to use Stock's phrase), since the scope of the present study does not allow for a truly profound exploration of the lives and developments of relevant individuals. However, it is presented as an adequate illustration of the possible experiences of a folk musician in contemporary England, and of a folk degree student, that can further an ethnomusicological understanding not only of the educative process in folk music, but also of the existence and articulation of repertorial and cultural schism at a national level.



Nikki Williamson (Figure 12) is a fiddler in her mid-thirties from the North of England. She enrolled on the BMus degree in Folk and Traditional Music at Newcastle in 2003, and now lives permanently in the North East, in a village situated west of the city of Durham and south west of Gateshead. At the time of the interview on which this account is based, she was coming to the completion of her second year as an undergraduate.



**Figure 12: Nikki Williamson at the Dun Cow Session, Durham.<sup>22</sup>**

Nikki's musical experiences, and life as a practising musician began at what could be described as a typically early stage in her education, although she depicts her upbringing as occurring within an extended family of only moderate musicianship:

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<sup>22</sup> Photograph by S Keegan-Phipps, 2006.



N: I played the violin when I was at school: I started at about nine [years old] and had classical lessons in the school, and then gave it up when I was about sixteen, after I'd done Grade 5 and stuff like that. And then I just left alone completely, and had no interest in music – in playing it [...].

S: Do you come from a musical family?

N: One side of the family is musical, the other side isn't at all. My brother played the trumpet at the same sort of age – eight or nine, something like that.

S: But there's no sort of folk music in the family?

N: There's no folk music: people in my family hadn't heard of folk music except my dad, who listened to the Dubliners.<sup>23</sup>

Most notable then is the apparent lack of exposure to 'folk music' undergone by Nikki during her musical development: it is worth pointing out that the reference made here to the Dubliners is imbued with a degree of irony, since the outmoded commercial aesthetic and the revivalist epoch the band is seen to represent calls into question its classification as 'folk music' by the "younger" generation of folk musicians. Nikki's introduction to folk music came at a surprisingly late stage:

But I made friends with somebody who was asking me what my tastes were in music, and they were so kind of eclectic that he said 'well have you listened to this? Have you listened to that?' and they were actually things I hadn't listened to. And how it started was he did a recording of Fairport [Convention] which was a fairly instrumental album, and I was kind of really blown away by it [...] And I was really excited by that, and then I got a chance to go and see them at a millennium concert. So I went to see them, and I came away just saying 'I want to do that, I want to do that!'. That was 2000. [...] I just kind of thought 'yeah, I want to do that; they're up there, they're smiling, it looks

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<sup>23</sup> Nikki Williamson, Interview, 15th October 2005.

good, it sounds fantastic and I do have a fiddle somewhere. So I did, and I started on the first of January, and that was it. It started because it was a thing that I wanted to do to see if I could, and then the more I got into it, the more areas I realized there were to have a look at: folk-rock wasn't the thing that I wanted to do but it had come from something else which was actually more in line with what I wanted to do.<sup>24</sup>

Nikki presents both her introduction to the genre and her subsequent development as a folk musician as occurring over a very short space of time (her aspirations to become a folk musician originated only three years before taking up a place on the folk degree), and as being primarily fuelled by the element of chance – or fate. She portrays her induction to folk music at the millennium concert and her eventual enrolment on to the folk degree course as essentially accidental:

S: So when did you decide to go on and apply for the folk degree?

N: That was an accident as well. [...] I was quite happy learning the fiddle, and I'd found a session where I was living, which was in Hull, [...] I was quite happy just pottering about, playing tunes. And then I had an accident which – I fell down the stairs, and injured both my knees and I couldn't work, and was off sick for a year. In that year, that's when I really started to get to grips with the fiddle. And I thought I wanted to improve my technique and there must have been a little bit of me somewhere that wanted to get up to Grade 8 so that I could officially stop playing classical music. So I did that, and I started going for classical violin lessons with a private tutor, and I kept asking him all kinds of tricky questions. And he said 'if you want to know stuff like that you should go and do an A level in music'. And so, because I wasn't working, that was a chance that I could take.

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<sup>24</sup> Nikki Williamson, Interview, 15th October 2005.



So I did, I went and did A level music, and I just got herded along with the rest of the eighteen-year-olds into filling UCAS forms in and I hadn't really given it a thought that I was going to go and do a degree. So I applied to six places, and they were all for the classical music course, because at the time I didn't know about the folk degree, or I'd heard of it and, for some reason, didn't think that that's what I wanted to do. So I just followed the UCAS thing, and at the very last minute, after I'd been given offers of places all over, I thought 'oh, no, I don't want to do that, I want to go and do folk music – it'll be the only chance that I get to do that kind of study'. So I did.

[...] I rang personally, and spoke to Alistair, and said 'I want to come on the course, but I've used all my UCAS options, what can I do?' And he said, well come up and have an interview, and an audition, to see if it's worth doing anything, first. So I did, and I explained the UCAS situation, and it was his and Karen Tweed's choice; they gave me an unconditional place which meant that I could bin all my UCAS [options] and use my last chance UCAS clearance thing to go in.<sup>25</sup>

This narrative offers a wealth of ethnographic detail pertaining to the complex relationship between folk music and the mainstream educational path of Western art or classical music. Most tangible in this recollection is the notion that achieving an ABRSM (Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music) Grade 8 on the violin was an essential target to be met before one is able to 'officially stop playing classical music'. The suggestion here is that this 'official' milestone acts as an indicator of cross-cultural – or cross-repertorial – technical skill, whilst the attainment of such skill is achieved only through the 'official' training processes of the Western classical music culture. This emphasizes the point that Associated Board grades remain – for many "Western" instruments, at least – the standardized benchmark of musical ability, employed across musical cultures engaged in formalized education but falling

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<sup>25</sup> Nikki Williamson, Interview, 15th October 2005.

outside the art music genre. The – mainly Western orientated – A level system is deemed equally generic as an indicator of knowledge and skill. Euro-American art music can, then, be a central element within the musical education of those individuals whom the ethnomusicologist might think most likely to have learnt their trade outside of the conventional contexts. The cultural instillation of ‘classical’ music’s primacy is articulated most succinctly in Nikki’s observation that her actions came as a response to a deep-seated and intangible, cultural need:

*there must have been a little bit of me somewhere that wanted to get up to Grade 8 so that I could officially stop playing classical music.<sup>26</sup>*

Although perhaps less tangible, it could be argued that the primacy of the Western classical music education is emphasized yet further by Nikki’s original actions of applying to mainstream, “standard” music degree courses. Nikki, herself, seems unable to account for this sudden change in her educational direction (‘at the time [of application] I didn’t know about the folk degree, or I’d heard of it and, for some reason, didn’t think that that’s what I wanted to do.’) which, again, would seem to suggest that she was engaged in a somewhat subconscious, culturally directed selection process. The standard path was followed:

*I just got herded along with the rest of the eighteen-year-olds [...]. So I just followed the UCAS thing [...].*

There was apparently no conscious decision-making until the “Damascus” moment at which point Nikki decided to depart from the prevailing practice of the UCAS process

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<sup>26</sup> Nikki Williamson, Interview, 15th October 2005; my emphasis.



altogether. Such an unusual and potentially risky decision is demonstrative of a strong-willed individual, intent on a very specific and *specialized* course. It could therefore be suggested that the power of cultural norms was sufficient to influence Nikki's original application pattern gives the primacy of Western art music yet greater emphasis here.

This centrality of classical music in contemporary Western music education is perhaps unsurprising, but interesting when considered in the context of The Sage Gateshead's cultural objectives. In her narrative on the development of Folkestra, Kathryn Tickell offers a portrayal of The Sage as a musical enterprise specifically aimed at cultural equality across musical genres, in particular folk music and classical music:

You've got the Young Sinfonia that have been around for ages, and you know, they [...] have been, until recently, the region's youth ensemble at the highest level, and it's worked for them – it's kind of something for other kids and youth orchestras to aim for, it gives them something to work towards, it gives them greater opportunities to be playing in different places, to be seen by different people, [...] to get to work with people of a different level sometimes. So I wanted the same thing for traditional kind of folk music, but also, at the back of my mind, I was thinking about – it wasn't just for the kids, to be honest, for me it was partly to see traditional or folk music being – not that I wanted it to be treated the same, but I want it to be seen as being equally important, which is not the same thing as being treated the same.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Kathryn Tickell, Interview, 8th February 2006. The same sentiments are certainly apparent in Anderson's description of the folk degree's origins, as has been discussed earlier in this chapter.

Tickell's portrayal of The Sage Gateshead's mission here suggests the furtherance of cultural equality through the raising of performance profile and educational opportunity within folk music. The unperceived – or, at least, unarticulated – disparity intrinsic within Nikki's story of her own educational expectations would seem not only to support the claim that such inequality exists, but also that that inequality is profound, and situated at the very heart of the cultural fabric of contemporary English society.

Nikki describes the first few months after her arrival at Newcastle-Gateshead as a period during which social and musical stratification caused her to become acutely aware of her brief time as folk musician:

N: They [the students in her year] are from lots of different backgrounds, but the thing that seemed to happen straight away was that people split themselves into the select few, and the people who seemed to be more like me, who'd played a bit of folk, and had found a bit of folk in the local pub.

S: So there was a slight separation of the purists who'd been doing it since they were two [years old], and [...] those who'd just found traditional music and carried on?

N: Yeah, I think our year was peculiar in that respect because, like, the second years, now, there's a load more of them that are just sort of on the purer side of stuff. I think our intake was a very odd intake, just [made up] of people who had an interest in playing folk music.<sup>28</sup>

Notable is the fact that Nikki found this division clearly identifiable and worthy of comment, despite the fact that her own element within the social structure of the

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<sup>28</sup> Nikki Williamson, Interview, 15th October 2005.



whole year group is ostensibly the majority: those who had played ‘a *bit* of folk’, or even simply ‘*found*’ the genre, the implication being that others on the course were born within the music culture, more fully immersed in the traditions, and that the music had been handed down to them in a less “accidental” manner. This demographic of musicians brought up “within the tradition” – ‘the select few’ – is imbued with a resonance back to many definitions of folk music offered by ethnomusicologists and folklorists of the last century; the common notion among such definitions is the analogy of music-as-family, whereby an individual is brought up “in to” the music as he or she might be raised “in to” a kinship.<sup>29</sup> The chief implication of this analogy is that the individual undergoes a process of complete musical enculturation; an upbringing characterized by a total cultural immersion in folk music.

Nikki’s testimony suggests that, whilst the extent of such immersion is debatable – much as it was at the time of Sharp’s definition of the ‘unlettered’ classes<sup>30</sup> – an equivalent group of individuals remains in existence, at least in the eyes of those folk musicians observant from without. It is acknowledged here that those students who had simply ‘found’ folk music interacted in social contradistinction to those who had “received” folk music as part of a broader enculturational development. However, it is also notable that the latter group is perceived by Nikki to be the larger across the degree’s 4 year groups, since her own year group was ‘peculiar’ for having a majority population made up of people who merely ‘had an interest in playing folk music’.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> This concept is strongly implied in the OED definition of folk music as passing from ‘generation to generation’; Hanks, *The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, 713.

<sup>30</sup> Sharp, *Some Conclusions*, 4.

<sup>31</sup> In fact, by saying this Nikki is in disagreement with Sandra Kerr, who has been quoted in the minutes of the Traditional Song Forum’s 2005 meeting as stating that ‘the intake for the course has changed now that a lot of the students who grew up as ‘folk kids’ has given way to a steady flow of students who start with less knowledge of folk music but who have a real interest in learning more

Also noticeable here is the fact that Nikki's reference to her own musical background as compared to that of the 'select few' implies a degree of self-deprecation: she refers to her folk-music-encultured counterparts using very positively charged phrases such as the 'select few,' and the 'purer side of stuff'; Nikki's references to herself and her own social group (as people who had played 'a bit of folk' and 'had an interest in playing folk music') are almost dismissive. In short, Nikki would appear to be presenting a subtle indication of cultural value: her language use would seem to imply that the two groups of musicians are separated not only by cultural experience but also, consequently, by status. Whether or not the detail of such social stratification is crystallized in terms of musical knowledge and technical ability, what is being described here is a perceived process of elitism; meanwhile, the immediacy of effect (the fact that a social split between the two groups of students 'seemed to happen straight away') suggests that this cultural division amongst young folk musicians is located at a most profound level.

## **Music of 'these islands': discourse and repertory**

Perhaps the most significant feature of the degree course is the eclecticism made manifest in its pedagogy's relative lack of repertorial delimitation. The following section shall demonstrate how, far from being restricted to the specifics of a developing musical canon, access to – and active engagement with – the music of a large number of traditional music cultures is encouraged. As in the case of Folkworks' public activities, a multiplicity of traditional and non-traditional repertories are drawn

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about the music and who are keen to perform it.' Traditional Song Forum, 'Meeting Report', *Meetings*. <http://www.tradsong.org/19-11-05.htm> (8th January 06).



upon in the development of the folk degree's pedagogical and musicological substance. Musical selections by students – themselves, derived from a number of disparate musical cultures – betray the internalization of a plurality that forms a basis for the cultural deconstruction of genre, along with the renegotiation of personality, location and tradition.

The first-year, compulsory contextual module for the degree programme is entitled *Traditions of These Islands*. This phrase is used a number of times in relation to the content of the folk degree, and is included in the opening sentence of the course description that appears on Newcastle University's ICMuS website: 'The course focuses on the traditions of these islands set in the context of Europe and the rest of the world'.<sup>32</sup> The phrase raises a number of issues regarding the way that the course identifies itself, and also the ways in which the North East folk music culture writ-large defines itself repertorially. Perhaps the most significant point to be made here is that this very broad, indefinite classification of the course's central content makes the folk and traditional music degree programme at Newcastle University very different from those courses to which it might otherwise seem comparable. Courses in traditional music such as those offered at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow (BA *Scottish Music/Scottish Music and Piping*), or at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, Limerick (BA *Irish Music and Dance*), are very clear in declaring their nationally orientated foci.

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<sup>32</sup> The University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, 'Folk and traditional music – curriculum', *Arts & Cultures; Undergraduate*. <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/sacs/undergrad/music/degrees/w340curriculum.htm> (6th October 2006).

There is no attempt being made here to suggest that diversity of content and introduction to “world music” does not play an important role in the curricula of other comparable folk music courses around the world. For instance, Tina Ramnarine makes specific reference to students at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki taking classes in Cuban drumming alongside their kantele studies, and demonstrates how such pursuits result in certain students engaging in the rhythmic reinterpretation of Finnish folk music.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, she explains how such processes and experiences are vital in order for Finnishness to be more easily identifiable as in contrast to a musical “other”: ‘it allows Finnish folk music to be recognized, compared, and more explicitly defined in opposition to other music’.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, the implication of Ramnarine’s text, taken as a whole, is that the main emphasis of the Academy remains squarely with the assertion and study of Finnish identity via indigenous folk music traditions. The apparently considerable extent of this emphasis on indigeneity at the Sibelius Academy contrasts starkly with the style of the course at Newcastle.<sup>35</sup>

Tadhg Maher, a student from the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance in Limerick studying at Newcastle as part of the Erasmus international exchange programme, identified the broad coverage of the folk degree at Newcastle as a very distinct – and positive – element of the course:

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<sup>33</sup> Ramnarine, *Ilmatar's Inspirations*, 76-8.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 78.

<sup>35</sup> This point may, of course, be overstated since the emphasis of Ramnarine’s text must necessarily owe much to the ethnomusicologist’s own inclination (intentional or otherwise) to stress the features and instances of the ethnographic “other”. Since I regard my research as “ethnomusicology at home” (having been an active English folk musician for the larger part of my life time), it is quite likely that my inclinations will differ considerably from those of the traditionally framed Western ethnographer in the non-Western field.



Unfortunately, I would say that in Limerick they're a little bit more closed in. It's probably focussing more on *Irish* traditional music, singing and dancing. And that is unfortunate, because you're not getting a wider scope into your repertoire. Saying that, we have had people like Chris Wood: Chris Wood has visited us, and we have had singing workshops with Chris. But apart from that, we haven't had too many other tutors coming to us from England or Wales or Scotland or other parts other than Ireland, let me say. It has been mainly focussed on a lot of the singers – great traditional singers – from within Ireland; one or two might have come from America, but would have been of Irish descent, so that is why it might be a little bit closed... That for me was one of the main reasons why I wanted to branch out – getting the opportunity to go on the Erasmus exchange programme, I decided 'well, OK, there're a lot of options available to us, such as Helsinki, Glasgow and Newcastle' and in the end I opted for Newcastle because I was speaking to [...] people who were actually doing the folk degree, and they were telling me it was very, very good.

[...] I really wanted to get a much wider scope, and when I heard that we'd be coming into contact with singers from Scotland, Wales, South England and, obviously, Northumberland as well, I said 'well, certainly I'll have to take this opportunity'.<sup>36</sup>

*The Traditions of These Islands* would appear, at first consideration, to make reference to the musical repertoires styles and cultures of the British Isles, including "Northumbria", England, Wales, Scotland, Eire, Northern Ireland, the Inner and Outer Hebrides, the Isle of Man, and the Channel Islands. This interpretation is reinforced by the course specification provided in the undergraduate handbook by ICMuS, which lists the programme's aims as the focussing of 'the learning process on the traditional

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<sup>36</sup> Tadhg Maher, interview, 14th March 2005.

musical repertoires of the British Isles and Eire.’<sup>37</sup> The website description offers an expansion of this region:

In the first year all students gain an understanding of the huge range of traditions across this corner of Europe and the richness and diversity within each region. As the course progresses, students are able to specialize further in traditions that are of particular interest to them.<sup>38</sup>

Here the area of study, ‘this corner of Europe’, is possibly extended to include the island-regions (and perhaps mainlands) of the Netherlands, France, Germany, and even (if Europe is read as a political rather than geographic entity) Western Scandinavia. However, the overriding impression with regards to the delineation of repertorial focus is one of ambiguity: a definition of the area(s) or tradition(s) of study for this course is not given.

However, the *Traditions of These Islands* phrase is the most enduring and regularly apparent. The selection of *These Islands* as a title for the location of the traditional music to be practised and studied at Newcastle is indicative of a number of features within the discourse of Folkworks’ folk music culture. Firstly, the use of the word *these* implies a degree of self-location, or geographical identification: for *These Islands* to be at all meaningful as an area of study must first require the centring of the group/community/folk music culture *within* that location; the study is of *These* islands, rather than *Those* islands or, indeed, *Some* islands.

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<sup>37</sup> The University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, ‘BMus in folk and traditional music’ *Music Undergraduate Handbook*. <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/sacs/undergrad/music/Handbooks2004-5/BMUSFOLK.htm> (5th October 2005).

<sup>38</sup> The University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, ‘Folk and traditional music – curriculum’.



Secondly, the reference to *Islands* (rather than these *nations/peoples/etc*) can be understood as a feature of a wider semiotic discourse, wherein physical geographical features play a central role as metaphor for – and frame of reference for the communication of – notions of tradition in folk music. The evocation of the physical landscape of Northumbria, for instance, is made manifest most clearly in the titles of Alistair Anderson's most celebrated compositions – *On Cheviot Hills* (for concertina and string quartet); *Steel Skies*; *On Windy Gyle*. The link between music and the natural scenery is also echoed in the discourse and imagery of the television programme *Kathryn Tickell's Northumbria*, aired on channel 5 on the 14th of March 2006: in the programme, Tickell makes similar references, enhanced by the accompanying photographic imagery:

I think the thing that I seem to write about quite a lot, or that comes out in what I write, is that feeling of open spaces and that feeling of – it's just the sky always seems so much higher (I know it's not) whereas in the city it seems to be crowding you in a bit, and you get out there and you're looking out over all that space and the fellsides and the fellsides and the bleakness of it all. It sounds like a funny thing, but it's like it makes your heart feel bigger or something. And it just really affects me.<sup>39</sup>

In Anderson's discussion of folk music pedagogy, physical geography (and mountains, in particular) represent a recurring theme:

And there's all those years [...] [I spent] touring the States, and used to have a great time playing with, you know, the Cajuns or the Texans or people from the North West, or whatever, and then coming home. I had

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<sup>39</sup> Kathryn Tickell, in *Kathryn Tickell's Northumbria*: Channel 5, London (14th March 2006). Patricia Winter and Simon Keegan-Phipps, *Music, Memory and Regional Identity in 'Kathryn Tickell's Northumbria'* Conference Paper *Sounding Out 3* (University of Sunderland: 8th September 2006).

a fantastic time when I went walking in the Himalayas, and when I used to climb in the Alps, but I just know the Cheviots and the Simonsides so well, I've seen them under different light, and different weather, from a different angle, so many millions of times that, you know, I'm still drawn there.<sup>40</sup>

This kind of conceptual relationship between traditional musics and a culture's physical landscape is well documented within the ethnomusicological record of music cultures across the world.<sup>41</sup> In such a discourse we find semiotic constructs representative of age and authenticity: the implication here is that the music (or, at least, the "tradition") is "as old as the hills". This notion is augmented by phrases such as 'rooted in the tradition', which is ubiquitous throughout Anderson's promotional material, to include idyllic, Sharpian imagery of the pastoral and agricultural. The analogy is most striking – and, perhaps, therefore most effective – since it is rehearsed within the wider context of the post-industrial, contemporary England, and yet more so within the specific, urbane surroundings of The Sage Gateshead.

For the moment, let us return to the question of the degree course's lack of repertorial focus, embodied in the phrase *The Traditions of These Islands*. I raised the ambiguity of this label with Alistair Anderson:

S: [...] It certainly looks as if there's been – whether it be conscious or subconscious – a decision [that] the degree isn't going to be an *English* folk music academy, [...] it's folk and traditional music of all sorts, from all areas...

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<sup>40</sup> Anderson, interview: 12th April 2005.

<sup>41</sup> See, for instance, Carole Pegg, 'Mongolian Conceptualizations of Overtone Singing (xöömii)', *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, 1 (1992), 31-54; Thomas Solomon, 'Dueling Landscapes: Singing Places and Identities in Highland Bolivia', *Ethnomusicology*, 44/2 (2002), 257-280.



**A:** Yes, there was a very conscious decision that it should be focussed on the traditions of *these islands*, set in the context of Europe, set in the context of the world. So yes, if we get some Finns come through, we're going to have a Finnish fiddle class, Bruce Molsky's American, [etc]. It is centrally about the traditions of these islands, but *not* just about England. [In] most other places it is, you know, in Scotland it's Scottish, in Ireland it's Irish, in Sweden it's Swedish, and what have you. It might be possible in the not too distant future to do one which is English, and do one here which is Northumbrian.

**S:** Is that what you want?

**A:** Certainly a lot of the youngsters that we were involved with at the time were interested in a range of, you know, Scottish and Irish and English music, so there was pragmatically a question of if it was just English, would you actually get enough people? And in it's first year I don't think you would have done. That doesn't mean it couldn't happen now.<sup>42</sup>

This closing statement implies an economic incentive in the adoption of a broad, indefinite, almost all-inclusive policy to the course's content. Again, it becomes apparent that matters of business and marketing have played a considerable role in the shaping of the degree programme's orientation, just as it did in the programme's earliest stages of conception. And, as in the case of the course's university affiliation and situation, the diversity of the curricula is framed within epistemological reasoning befitting of the folk degree's academic context:

Then, I still have a really strong feeling that looking seriously at experiencing other traditions does not erode people's appreciation of their own, in fact the opposite is usually the case. ...There is a real tendency – there is at least a risk – that if you restrict, and say “this [alone] is what you're interested in – this is *your* tradition, you

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<sup>42</sup> Anderson, interview: 12th April 2005.

must maintain *your* tradition”, then you’ll lose some people, at least. Where as, over and over again, I’ve seen people go out and be excited by, some times bowled over by – and spend two or three years completely immersed in – another tradition, and then a remarkable number coming back, and [...] then really reentering what might, you know, [be] their local traditions, or more local traditions, with a new excitement, and new involvement.

[...]So the idea behind the course is that we start in the first year or two by making sure that everybody is, at least, aware of the richness [of tradition] right across these islands, because I guess, if you like, if English music had had the profile that hopefully it will in the future (and it has certainly gained [since 2001]), we might not have felt quite the need to do it: even four years ago, English folk music’s profile was pretty low, and therefore with most of our English students (you know, our English-*born* students), we felt a very real need to get them to engage with that, because [...] the majority were *more* interested in Irish and Scottish music. And people are coming, actually arriving with slightly wider awareness now than they did then. But the idea is, OK, so we get them to be at least aware of all the various traditions [...] and then, by year three and four, they have the opportunity – like in year three, they choose up to three quarters of own tutors [...] you know, they still have six lessons with their regular tutor, but for the other eighteen, they put a proposal forward of who they would like to work with. And in the final year, again, they can do that – slightly less, because we just like to make sure that there’s somebody making sure they’re ready for their recital. But, in terms of their actual artistic direction in third and fourth year, if they want to concentrate on whatever, then they can.

And it’s interesting, see, people like Shona Mooney, who’s from the Borders, [and] [...] her dad plays border pipes and stuff, and when she came down here, she wanted to play Irish reels, and really fast, Scottish reels [...] – and she still plays them, great. But she’s now very, very seriously interested in the Border material, but of course, she’s coming from a tradition of real strength. I mean, she made a very personal decision: I think if we’d sat her down and said “oh, your from the Borders – have you heard [this]; oh, this is a good tune;



you'd better learn that" I wouldn't have thought it would have been as effective.<sup>43</sup>

Anderson's continuing reference to 'all the traditions' reinforces the inference that the emphasis of the course's pedagogy is on the understanding – or '*appreciation*' – of 'tradition' as a cultural substance, rather than of a single, specific tradition. I shall now go on to offer an example that illustrates how this broad acceptance of multiple repertoires is made manifest in the activities of students on the degree course.

### Tom Oakes: 'Arlo'

Between the 23rd and the 27th of May 2005, The Sage Gateshead housed a series of lunchtime concerts entitled *Folk Stars of the Future; Final year recitals of Newcastle University Folk Degree Students*. The recitals, each around forty-five minutes in length, were held in groups of three in each of the five days, and were the recitals of those students majoring in performance in the first year-group to graduate from the degree course. As with the majority of folk concerts held at The Sage Gateshead, these concerts were held in Hall 2 – the smaller of the two halls. Admission to the public, however, was free. Each concert in a session was separated by a fifteen minute interval, during which time the assessment panel adjourned to confer on marks for the previous performer.

One such performer, giving his recital on the last of the five days, was Tom Oakes. Oakes is a skilled exponent of the Irish traditional [wooden] flute although he, himself, is from Totnes in Devon. Thus, the combination of his instrument and his

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<sup>43</sup> Anderson, interview, 12th April 2005.



place of origin alone are suggestive of a pluralist, multicultural identity. However, the material of his concert represents a manifold reinforcement of this inference. The first of the seven items on Oakes' recital programme (see Figure 13) asserts his immersion in the Irish flute repertory: entitled simply 'Solo Set', this unaccompanied medley includes seven Irish tunes played in unbroken succession, and including a slow air, a slow hornpipe, a march, jigs and reels. This set is followed in the running order by: a self-composed tune heavily influenced by the reinterpretation of some Swedish friends, and accompanied by fiddle and Swedish Nyckelharpa; a traditional Irish tune, accompanied by piano; a tune composed by Oakes for his girlfriend in a pseudo-jazz style ('my first attempt at composing outside of traditional styles'), and accompanied by piano; a set of three self-composed waltzes, accompanied by piano and double bass; a tune called *Arlo*, also written by Oakes, and discussed in greater detail below; and a traditional Finnish polka, accompanied by piano, double bass and fiddle.



Figure 13: Tom Oakes' final year recital programme title page.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Reproduced with the kind permission of Tom Oakes.



The sixth item in the running order of Oakes' recital, *Arlo*, is introduced as having been consciously written in the style of a 'Finnish Tango'. The tune is named after – and inspired by – the hero of a tale from the collection of short stories *Generation X* by the contemporary Canadian author Douglas Coupland. The story 'The Boy with the Hummingbird Eyes', is about young American men fighting in South American civil wars during the 1950s, and a synopsis of the story is given in Oakes' programme notes. The tune is essentially tripartite, with each part repeated, and is accompanied by piano and percussive, jazz-style pizzicato double bass. A full transcription of the first complete exposition is provided below (Example 17; CD Track 8).

Unsurprisingly for a Tango, the piece is almost entirely written in a harmonic minor key and harmonic movement is purely diatonic (such as the circle of fifths from bars 22-26), in accordance with popular expectations of the Tango style). This, alone, is a distinctive feature alongside the major, Mixolydian, Aeolian and Dorian modes of the Celtic tunes on the programme. Oakes relates to the Finnish Tango genre in his programme notes thus: 'I wrote this tune after hearing all of the wonderful tango music that my friends from Helsinki play'. Regular references to Finland and Sweden in both the recital performance and the programme notes suggests a strong affinity with the music of these countries.

Flute  $J=150$  **A**

Piano

Double Bass *Pizz.*

Fl. **B**

Pno.

Db.

Fl. **C**

Pno.

Db.

Fl.

Pno.

Db.

Fl.

Pno.

Db.



**Example 17: Excerpt from *Arlo* (T. Oakes)<sup>45</sup>**

However, an analysis of the performance betrays a number of influences in play.

Firstly, Tom's background as an experienced player in the *Irish* flute tradition is still audible here: one particular example can be found in bar 14 of the excerpt provided here, the fifth full bar of the B part, where can be seen two common devices in Irish traditional playing. The first note in the flute part (A ♯) is an accented appoggiatura, identifiable by its absence at the beginning of the second subject's previous antecedent and consequent (excerpt bars 10 and 12), and a common device of ornamentation in Irish traditional music. The fifth note of the flute part in bar 14 (D) is lengthened to a crotchet – rather than played as a quaver and falling to a G, as in the case of bars 10 and 12 – and is separated from the following note (B ♯) by a breath.

This use of breathing amidst a musical phrase in order to articulate repeated material distinctly is a particularly important element of Irish flute technique (which is otherwise characterized by the exhalation of a complete breath, during which articulation is achieved via the subtle regulation of air and, chiefly, the fingers).<sup>46</sup>

Thus, Oakes performs this piece with the employment of ostensibly Irish flute-playing techniques.

<sup>45</sup> Transcribed from the final-year recital performance given on 27th May 2005.

<sup>46</sup> Niall Keegan, pers. comm. 21st October 2003.

Secondly, the performance of the Tango is also heavily imbued with jazz references and associations: the very use of a pizzicato double bass (or “string bass”) and piano to accompany the flute provides a strong association before the music has begun, but references within the text of the piece constantly reassert these associations. Examples include the aforementioned circle of fifths in bars 22-26 of the excerpt, which is articulated by a clearly audible, chromatic “walking bass” line on the double bass, more closely associated with a jazz “standard” such as *Autumn Leaves*. The piano accompaniment is also characterized by regular jazz-style inflections: major and minor sevenths are common throughout the piano’s predominantly chordal support, as are added ninths and sixths (see, for instance, bar 1, beats 2 and 3; bar 7, beat 1; bar 13; bar 16, beats 1 and 2; and the descending sixth from bar 35, beat 3, to the end of bar 36). One can also identify the voicing of a diminished chord over a dominant bass note as a substitution for a dominant chord, also a popular device in jazz accompaniment (see, for instance, bar 6, beat 1; bar 26, beats 2 and 3). It is important to note that the bass and piano in this performance are played by two other students on the folk degree – Ian Stephenson and Andy May, respectively – both of whom are well respected *folk* musicians in their own right.

Perhaps the most obvious of the extra-cultural references extant within this piece, however, is the very audible reference to – and subsequent development of – the opening bars of the popular classic, *Concierto de Aranjuez* by Joaquín Rodrigo in bars 19-38 of the excerpt. This reference is complicit in the further blurring of repertorial boundaries: Rodrigo’s *Concierto* is a well known piece of twentieth-century art



music, but is widely associated with the Spanish guitar for which it was written and, therefore, with the Hispanic peoples of the world *writ large*.

In short, Oakes' *Arlo* can be read as an extraordinarily complex expression of post-modern plurality within the folk and traditional music of the folk degree (the 'traditions of these islands'). On the one hand, the piece (or, at least, the performance of the piece discussed here) is a clear example of the referencing of "non-traditional" material within traditional music. More importantly, however, the piece represents a renegotiation of both genre and musical identity through reference and association. Both the content and context of the musical event are shrouded in apparently unquestioned ambiguities. For instance, given the popular profile of the opening bars of *Concierto de Aranjuez*, is the reference to Rodrigo's piece a drawing on material from classical (Western "art") or popular culture? Moreover, does the reference evoke associations with Spain, the Hispanic peoples, South America in terms of the origins of Tango, or South America in terms of the setting for Coupland's short story? How do these associations fit with the declared genre of specifically *Finnish* Tango, a genre that, itself, encapsulates processes of musical adoption and adaptation in the twentieth-century?<sup>47</sup> In the context of the other items in Oakes' programme, is the central connotation one of Scandinavian musical "traditions"?

Here we can observe a flautist identifying with the Irish traditional music culture (but originating from the South West of England), performing a piece of his own composition; the piece is, itself, inspired by a contemporary fiction of Canadian authorship which is essentially about Americans but set in South America; the piece

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<sup>47</sup> For more on this genre see Ramnarine, *Ilmatar's Inspirations*, 167-169

has been consciously written in the style of a Finnish Tango, and is accompanied by heavily jazz-inflected lines on both double bass and piano; the piece has been consciously chosen as a vehicle for the demonstration of Oakes' skills to lecturers who are predominantly grounded in the folk music culture of the North East of England. It is hard to imagine what more could have been done to further emphasize the multiplicity of genre, national identity and international association in this work. Whilst an extreme variety of sources, inspirations and styles, the performance can not simply be indicative of the musical selections and tastes of a single individual. Firstly, although *Arlo* was composed and largely arranged by Oakes, it is worth noting that he was able to find amongst his colleagues two individuals who were, themselves, very able to meet with the stylistic challenges set before them. Secondly, the music was not played from written notation by any of the three performers, and repetitions of the theme (subsequent to the excerpt transcribed here) were increasingly divergent from the original exposition, demonstrating improvisation *by all performers* as a vital element within the performance. Finally, in earlier quotes, Anderson has already mooted the role of teaching staff in ensuring that students are 'ready for their recital' – which one can take to include the insurance of appropriate technical levels *and* repertory. Thus it may be inferred from the wider context of the performance, that its musical characteristics are in accordance with the expectations and cultural values of the Folkworks and folk degree music cultures. A considerable degree of repertorial multiplicity has already been demonstrated as inherent within the teaching materials of Folkworks outside of the folk degree, and implies a direct relationship between the content of *Arlo* and the North East folk music culture at large.



At best, the cultural pluralism inherent in this performer's background, style, extra-musical inspirations and musical selections can be read as open-minded eclecticism; at worst, its presence in the context of a folk and traditional music degree course adjudication could be regarded as a clear manifestation of the globalized acceptability of arguably indiscriminate cultural appropriation, even within the context of a discourse centred around notions of 'tradition'. However, I have not attempted to answer the questions listed above regarding the various musical and cultural sources tapped in the creation of *Arlo* for the same reason that they are not openly asked within the culture of the folk degree: ambiguity of material origin – particularly in the creation of new compositions – is not deemed culturally relevant (just as the unambiguous selection of pre-composed – “traditional” – material is unquestioned in the *Folkworks Session Collection*).

In fact, it can be argued that the engagement with a plurality of music-cultural sources is actually complicit in a wider process of developing individualism within the Folkworks and folk degree culture. Unsurprisingly, the specific content – along with the extent – of Oakes' referencing activities are not “standard” among the practices of the folk degree students: far from it – having graduated from the course, Oakes has gone on to form a four piece band named the *Auvo Quartet* with the English melodeon player, Julian Sutton (also of the *Kathryn Tickell Band*) and two Finnish instrumentalists, Roope Aarnio and Suvi Oskala. The band describe themselves as ‘blend[ing] the vibrant traditional music heritage of their respective homes (Newcastle Upon Tyne; UK, and Helsinki; Finland) with the myriad of contemporary styles reverberating throughout those cities’, and list Miles Davis, Edgard Varèse and ‘lots

of Finnish people' among their influences.<sup>48</sup> Oakes has thus shaped his identity as a performer through his association not only with 'myriad [...] contemporary styles', but also – and most importantly – with *Finnish* traditional music. He is The-Irish-flautist-who-identifies-with-Finnish-music, a very specific profile within the Folkworks and folk degree music culture (not shared with any other individual) and one that has enabled him to forge a distinctiveness in the folk music market.

Thus, in the context of Folkworks and the folk degree, pluralism on this scale can be seen as a tool by which an individual is able to achieve an elevated profile. A link to the unusual (whether that be non-British, non-Celtic, or simply unrecorded “discoveries” from within manuscripts of the British or Celtic repertoires) acts as a conceptual handle for the folk music audience. And, as the successes of educational institutions inevitably result in increases in the population of the folk music performance market (i.e. folk degree graduates such as Oakes), so increases the need for such unique associations and image signifiers. Development of the individual – the iconic ‘folk star’; the identifiable; the saleable – is here seen to be attained through the valuing, researching and presenting of the exotic. It could even be argued that this emphasis on the performer as “distinct personality” has resulted in the process of identification through repertory (whether “foreign”, as in the case of Oakes, or “local” to the performer’s place of origin, as in the case of Shona Mooney) replacing the development of a repertorial canon. This process is in strong contradistinction to the clear canonic frameworks characteristic of other examples of institutionalization, such as those identified by Ramnarine and Goertzen.

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<sup>48</sup> The Auvo Quartet, ‘The Auvo Quartet’, *MySpace*. <http://www.myspace.com/theauvoquartet> (10th November 2006).



It must, however, be noted that the pluralities and eclecticism demonstrated by Oakes can also be related back to a significant characteristic of the North East folk music culture from which Folkworks and the folk degree has grown. I have demonstrated at the beginning of this chapter the significance of repertorial adoption and absorption to the shaping of the North East music culture as a “melting pot”, where attitudes towards the selection (in Sharp’s terms) of tunes and compositional elements from local (Northumbrian), local-diasporic (Irish, Scottish) and non-local (Scandinavian) repertoires are highly liberal and accepting. Oakes’ musical selections (or, at least, their cultural acceptability in the context of a folk degree recital) must certainly be regarded as an extension – albeit a recontextualization – of such attitudes and cultural norms. Nonetheless, it must be noted that these liberal practices are encouraged by economic motivations such as the identification of performer-personality discussed above.

Another example of the plurality of repertorial experience being encouraged by Folkworks for economic gain can be found in the marketing strategy employed for the selling of places on the 2005 *Fiddles on Fire Festival*. As is mentioned in the previous chapter, savings could be made when buying tickets to events in larger numbers:<sup>49</sup> one certain by-product of this financial incentive to attend larger numbers of workshops, in the context of such a musically wide-ranging event, is that individuals – consumers – are more likely to seek tuition in multiple repertoires and genres, or even simply fleeting introductions to unfamiliar musics. In the context of a festival programme where tutoring instrumentalists from numerous, disparate music

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<sup>49</sup> See page 146.

cultures give concerts together ('Fiddles from Three Continents'; 'Fiddles on Fire – Europe'; 'Fiddles on Fire – Transatlantic Links')<sup>50</sup> – not least so that each is given an opportunity to perform in a relatively limited time and space – an almost amorphous communal repertory drawing on 'all the traditions' (to use Anderson's phrase) is apparently encouraged.

However, it is also important to recognize the pluralities inherent in Oakes' music as indicative of the North East folk music culture whence Folkworks resides (and through which the institution came into existence). I have demonstrated in the previous chapter that this music culture can be characterized as based around multiple repertoires, where the origins of tunes become uncertain through lack of rehearsal, since such information carries little cultural capital. *Arlo* can be read as a clear manifestation of this aesthetically driven absorption of material, often without concerns for textual authenticity or repertorial identity. Nonetheless, the value systems of selection within this music culture can be seen to be clearly reciprocal to processes of broadening appeal for maximized custom.

## **Public reaction to the folk degree**

On the 19th of March 2003, BBC Radio 3 broadcast a "special" programme entitled 'A Place Called England'. The programme – a live, late night broadcast lasting four and a half hours – was clearly a manifestation of the renewed interest in English folk music and English cultural identity. Among the items contained within the programme were live performing sessions by, and interviews with, well known artists.

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<sup>50</sup> Folkworks, *Fiddles On Fire*, 2;4;6.



The show also contained an interview with Professor Richard Middleton, then Director of Music Studies at ICMuS. Middleton was interviewed in his capacity as a key instigator of the folk degree at Newcastle University. Before the interview commenced, Fiona Talkington (the show's presenter) read out e-mails sent in from listeners, which included the following anonymous missive:

As I write, Martin Carthy is talking about how folk needs to be performed; exactly! I'm horrified to see that later on you're going to have some academic input from somewhere: the *last* thing folk music needs!<sup>51</sup>

Certainly, the ultimate development in the formalization of folk and traditional music education in England has been met with a range of responses among “grass roots” folk musicians and folk music enthusiasts. These responses range from – and are generally polarized towards – extremes of: on the one hand cynical distrust; and on the other, ecstatic approval. Whilst “official” reaction to the commencement of the degree course (i.e. publicly rehearsed positions of other institutions within English folk music: EFDSS, FolkArts England, festival organizers, etc.) has been overwhelmingly supportive, emotive argument on the subject has quietly raged elsewhere. One example of such dispute can be found in the peculiarly public, yet potentially – and often – anonymous context of an online discussion forum set up by the BBC as an extension of the Radio 2, Mike Harding Show website, and entitled *The Acoustic Message Board*.

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<sup>51</sup> *A Place Called England* (London: BBC Radio 3, 19th March 2003).

The dispute to which I refer was sparked by a CD review in a widely circulated British folk and traditional music magazine, *The Living Tradition*. The review, in full reads thus:

Having heard a number of the graduates from Newcastle University over the summer, I was appalled at how little some of them appeared to either know or care about the music they were playing – it was merely a vehicle for displaying their instrumental dexterity and getting bookings at major festivals. Showbiz, in other words. This CD should be required listening for them. It is made with old-fashioned values, namely that the performers are there for the music – not the other way round.

It's a simple process: all three performers have a wealth of fantastic material which they have recorded and gleaned over a number of years. Then they sing this wonderfully, in a style which they have soaked up from their traditional sources. To this they add the simplest of accompaniments in order to act as bedding for the song – adding background colour but never distracting the ear away from the words. Consequently, you are presented with storytelling in music at the highest level. All three sing beautifully (although I wish Arthur wouldn't scoop to quite so many notes) and they play their instruments simply and appropriately. They obviously love the material and enjoy performing it and this comes across really strongly. They are masters at allowing a song to unwind at its own appropriate pace, with the "lighter" numbers being given more lift and bounce, rather than just speeded up.

The material is varied and unusual – even apparently well-known material appears in unusual or quirky versions. The whole thing is well-documented in an excellent booklet, giving full words (and even explaining the difficult Scots words for us poor Southerners), background to the song and source and details of Grieg-Duncan and Roud sources to allow the listener to dig deeper. An exemplary issue and one which will be providing pleasure long after the latest



whiz-kids' offering has been consigned to the remainder bin.<sup>52</sup>

Whilst the opinions of a single individual, the review's presence in the closely edited, British-Isles-circulated publication that is *The Living Tradition* suggest that Burgess' comments may provide an introduction to some of the negative attitudes towards the degree course existent amongst members of the folk and traditional music culture in England. The first point to be made with reference to this review is the perceived significance of an economic element in both the student's motivations and, by implication, the degree course's orientations. Remarks such as 'showbiz', 'getting bookings at major festivals' and 'consignment to the remainder bin' demonstrate a clearly acknowledged perception of the folk degree as being instrumental in the development of a commercially fuelled elitism. The implication here is that the course's students are engaged with a mercantile cultural structure in which the sanctity of 'the music' (and, therefore, the previous generations of musicians whence 'the music' originated) is subordinate to the achievement of personal financial gain. As the strongest thread of Burgess' indictment of the folk degree at Newcastle, this implication is perhaps ironic: the reviews section of the magazine in which he writes is sponsored most visibly by *Birnam CD*, a CD and DVD production and replication company.

A second element to Burgess' review that is particularly pertinent to this study is his attitude towards folk music education as a whole. In the review, Burgess suggests that the academic curricula of the course is failing in its duties, since folk degree-

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<sup>52</sup> Paul Burgess, 'Shepherd, Spiers and Watson; They smiled as we cam in', *The Living Tradition*, 66 (2006), 41-2.

educated students appeared to “neither know nor care” about the music they were playing. Since knowledge and appreciation remain central to all current forms of Western music education, this is indeed a damning criticism of the course’s pedagogical theory and practice. It is not, however, a criticism of the course’s existence: the review does not argue against the educational institutionalization of folk and traditional music in England on a generic level. In fact, some of Burgess’ allusions imply support for educational endeavours within folk music: he is very positive about the level of background information given in the booklet accompanying Shephard, Spiers and Watson’s CD, and the enabling of ‘the listener to dig deeper’. Even his – possibly flippant – comment suggesting that the CD be ‘required listening’ for folk degree students implies a basic sympathy for the development of a folk music canon and curriculum. Thus, the review does not censure the academic study of folk music *per se*, but rather passes judgement on the specifics of the actual degree course (or, to be precise, on ‘some’ of the course’s students, although the implications for the course as a whole are clear).

The final element of Burgess’ criticism is an implied issue of identifiable musical aesthetics. It is likely that issues of artistic aesthetics form the fundamental basis of all of Burgess’ grievances regarding folk degree students but, as with most such issues pertaining to musical performance, few subjective likes and dislikes are easily articulated in written prose. It is difficult, for example, to see how a musician can demonstrate a failure to ‘know or care’ about the music they are performing through the act of performance – an inflammatory comment that Burgess felt so moved as to put in print, but one which he did not feel a need to support with detailed evidence. Musically specific remarks regarding the folk degree students’ performance are made



in this review, however: these are essentially criticisms of the performance of tunes at too high a speed. The criticisms are, nonetheless, made manifest in relatively implicit statements about ‘instrumental dexterity’; unlike the folk degree students whom Burgess laments, he claims that Shepheard, Spiers and Watson ‘are masters at allowing a song to unwind at its own appropriate pace, with the “lighter” numbers being given more lift and bounce, rather than just speeded up’.<sup>53</sup> This last sentence, in particular, demonstrates the clear difficulty involved in articulating musical aesthetics in folk music; it is obvious to the reader that “just speeding a tune up” is a specific, elemental component of the accusations levelled at the degree course’s students, but Burgess is unequipped to argue in support of his preferred musical aesthetic with adjectives any more objective or unambiguous than ‘lift’ and ‘bounce’.<sup>54</sup>

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Burgess’ comments incensed folk degree students, whilst receiving both criticism and support by individuals not involved in the course (or with Folkworks, more generally). An ensuing – heated – debate could be observed in a discussion thread on the BBC’s Acoustic Message Board, an online forum used by folk musicians and enthusiasts accessible through the BBC’s Mike Harding Show website.<sup>55</sup>

The debate opened with the following posting:

*Message 1 - posted by BeckydaFolkie, Mar 7, 2006*

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<sup>53</sup> Burgess, ‘Shepheard, Spiers and Watson’, 41-2.

<sup>54</sup> I shall go on to discuss the significance of tempo as an expression of generational dispute in the final chapter of this thesis.

<sup>55</sup> Acoustic Message Board, ‘Burgess attacks folk degree’. *BBC Radio 2; Mike Harding Show*. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/mbradio2/F2142825?thread=2428240&skip=60&show=20>. (7th – 11th March 2006).

In the latest issue of Living Tradition magazine there is a review of the new Sheppard, Spiers and Watson cd by English folk stalwart Paul Burgess. In this review of a totally unrelated cd, Burgess uses it as a medium to slate the Newcastle University folk music degree course.

"Having heard a number of the graduates from Newcastle University over the summer, I was appalled at how little some of them appeared to either know or care about the music they were playing - it was merely a vehicle for displaying their instrumental dexterity and getting bookings at major festivals. Showbiz in other words."

Based on a short experience of a few students out of over 100 he made this sweeping generalization.

The whole review can be found at <http://www.folkmusic.net/htmlfiles/webrevs/sprcd1042.htm>

I have seen several of the students perform at various gigs and festivals and am certain I am not alone in feeling that this a completely unfair comment?<sup>56</sup>

The final sentence would appear to imply that the author of the posting is not a folk degree student herself, although anonymity is a key feature – and one of the most ethnographically problematic attributes – of the online message-board as a context (a point discussed in greater detail in the opening chapter of this thesis).<sup>57</sup>

It is interesting that the first message in response to this disapproval of Burgess' comments was a swift derogation of the folk degree:

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<sup>56</sup> Acoustic Message Board, 'Burgess attacks folk degree'. Please note that the context of the online message forum is characterised by short messages posted at speed. I have chosen, therefore, not to highlight spelling and grammatical errors in the conventional manner for a textual quote, but simply to represent postings exactly as they appear on the message board, in order not to unnecessarily complicate the quote, or confuse the reader.

<sup>57</sup> Thus personal motivations for the content of the posting are unclear: the author may not be a student on the degree course, but she may be a relative of such a student, or may have some other personal reason for voicing disapproval towards Burgess' comments that she (or he!) has chosen not to disclose.



*Message 2 – posted by UncleBoko, Mar 7, 2006*

Couldn't agree with Paul more. By far the majority of them have zero feel for the trad way of playing. I really do not want to hear tunes played at 200mph with silly guitar chords.<sup>58</sup>

In the course of this message thread, UncleBoko became a principle antagonist in opposition to the folk degree students, some of whom represented themselves personally on the Acoustic Message Board. He later expanded on his dislike of the course and its students:

*Message 9 - posted by UncleBoko, Mar 7, 2006*

No, I think it maybe that the old traditional way of playing is more pleasing to the ears of people who have been listening to folk music for a long time, and perhaps.....reverse ageism!!!<sup>59</sup>

UncleBoko was by no means the only contributor in support of Burgess' comments.

“MikeGott” offered more measured concerns regarding the folk degree:

*Message 14 - posted by MikeGott, Mar 8, 2006*

[...] there have been those who "understand" where the music came from and why it was played and those who simply don't who usually turn the whole business of singing or playing an instrument into a scholastic exercise. I don't have a problem with degrees in folk music though I can't help thinking that it's a hell of a long way removed from Fred Jordan, Oscar Woods and Scan Tester. How long before I'm not allowed to play my melodeon - (I first took this up at 8 care of the old "traditional" player who lived next door to us, and didn't get involved with the folk scene until I was 22) - because I don't have the relevant qualifications.....?!<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Acoustic Message Board, 'Burgess attacks folk degree'.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

This suggestion that a qualification in folk music may take on the role of a divisive “performance permit” was a brief articulation of a wide-reaching concern: the question implies a fear of educational elitism. MikeGott’s disquiet is not related to an inauthentic or displeasing application of musical repertory or style, but to (1) the apprehension that folk music may become hierarchically categorized according to those with an institutionally sanctioned educational qualification, and those without, and (2) the fear that this division will result in the reduction of performance opportunities for those in the latter category. The indication of his own educational experiences in his development as a folk musician would suggest that this contributor regards the mode of transmission as an essential element in the identity of the musical “tradition”, and that such an identity is eroded through institutionalization.

Perhaps most important is the fact that, whilst this fear of elitism was rehearsed throughout the course of the thread, other feasible concerns (such as those relating to potential standardization or recontextualization) were not voiced. The possible effects signalled to by these contributors were related to stylistic issues (such as speed) and social issues (such as elitism) rather than fears of repertorial canonization. The concern that the newfound relationship between formalized education and folk music might somehow erode the “older” relationship between folk music and socially inclusive activities was reiterated throughout the thread:

*Message 17 - posted by MikeGott, Mar 8, 2006*  
[...] Drinking/dancing/singing - having a good time  
after a hard day's work - that's what it was about, not  
writing a thesis.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Acoustic Message Board, ‘Burgess attacks folk degree’.



Response to these messages are equally interesting, since they were often oblique in their approach to the questions raised. One such response in defence of the folk degree – apparently offered by a student on the course, ran as follows:

*Message 21 - posted by jimodevon, Mar 8, 2006*

That was a bit frivolous i admit, but being serious this time i do feel it is important we have a degree in traditional music in this country. It is good that it is recognised as an important area of study just like any other genre of music.

People ask ‘why study folk music?’ and i say why on earth wouldn't you? it covers polotics, history, sociology, anthropology etc any i think anyone who says that our traditional music isn't worth studying is a fool. Despite what i said earlier i do get some work done now and then and i'm wholly grateful to be here in Newcastle and to have this opportunity to immerse myself in the music that i love.<sup>62</sup>

What is particularly interesting regarding this message is the fact that none of the contributors to the Acoustic Message Board appeared to have asked the question ‘why study folk music?’. And yet that question was being answered here, and the answer was reiterated throughout the thread by those students writing in support of the folk degree. It would appear, then, that students feel the need to justify the course’s existence, despite critics such as MikeGott stating ‘I don’t have a problem with degrees in folk music’. This need of folk degree students to write in support of the *existence* of their course would appear to imply a recognition of potential problems. However, reflexivity was largely incomplete, since the problems that the students were positing themselves to address were not explicated. Thus, it became unclear in what ways the students were defending the course: it would appear that the discussion

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<sup>62</sup> Acoustic Message Board, ‘Burgess attacks folk degree’.

on the Message Board required a defence on the grounds of epistemology and institutionalized pedagogy, reassuring the concerned critics of the course's positive effects on folk music and folk music culture. The defence offered above, however, suggested a need to justify the course's existence in terms of economics and politics. The implication is that jimodevon and his fellow students may have recognized a need to justify folk music as a subject worthy of degree-level scrutiny – a need to argue that the folk degree is not a “Mickey Mouse” degree, without wider social value or intellectual rigour. It would appear then, that critics have asked the question “why *institutionalize* folk music *in this way*”, whilst students on the course itself have sought to answer the question ‘why study folk music’. The two are essentially very different, since the latter draws contributing students to argue that the degree is an acceptable use of “the tax-payers’ money”.

Interestingly, one way in which students and supporters writing on the Acoustic Message Board *did* engage with the specifics of the folk degree's impact on folk music culture at large is particularly telling:

*Message 8 - posted by katdave, Mar 7, 2006*  
[...]What people (and I am guilty here of generalising like Mr Burgess) are not picking up on, or not talking about, are the students of the folk degrees who spend much of their time teaching, passing on the tradition. Those students who play in slow sessions and who actively try to be inclusive.<sup>63</sup>

*Message 18 - posted by Diane Easby, Mar 8, 2006*  
[...]But additionally, those learning formally how to

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<sup>63</sup> Acoustic Message Board, ‘Burgess attacks folk degree’.



teach better will pass it on even more effectively.  
Whatever's the problem?<sup>64</sup>

Here we are able to observe the degree course (and the generic formalization of folk music education) being justified in a largely cyclical manner: the implication is that the folk degree students (after receiving the formal training offered by the course), will be prolific and superior teachers of the subject. This suggestion is cyclical inasmuch as the argument supports the formalization of folk music education for the purposes of improving formalized folk music education in the future.

Much more might be said about this exchange of views on the Acoustic Message Board in a dedicated internet ethnography of the subject. However, the ambiguity of the forum as ethnographic field, such as the difficulty in ascertaining personal identities, must restrict the role of this discussion to an indicator of publicly aired arguments both in opposition to, and in favour of, the course. The problematic nature of the subject was summed up by this contribution:

*Message 12 - posted by Surreysinger, Mar 7, 2006*

Incidentally, am I alone in getting more than a bit fed up with the constant harping on and on about this particular course. Every time I see it mentioned I want to run and duck for cover, as I know I'm going to get exasperated with something that's said either on the pro or con side.(A bit like the early days of late night telephone discussions on the radio, when I just wanted to shout at the set with frustration). What's more I find that in folk related circles it's difficult to make conversation about it, as no matter what you say you'll get shot down in flames by someone who's incontrovertibly opposed to what you've just said.... so I generally try to avoid it if possible.... don't recall similar

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<sup>64</sup> Acoustic Message Board, 'Burgess attacks folk degree'.

conversations ensuing about operatic/classical musical courses in the same way [...] <sup>65</sup>

## A discourse of justification

As has been mentioned, Anderson and Tickell are very much aware of the indictments of folk music revival administered by scholars such as Boyes' *Imagined Village* and Harker's *Fakesong*, and are keen to point out that Folkworks is dealing not in the officiation of a folk music canon, but in the increasing of opportunities for participation in the genre. Tickell expresses her initial concerns at the idea of the folk degree in very concrete terms, which imply fears of standardization and ossification but raise more *directly* the problem of elitism:

I think there are loads of potential problems in the whole idea of teaching traditional music in this sort of [way] ... well, the whole idea of *teaching* traditional music is bizarre, in a way, so I wanted very much to be right in it from the beginning, and helping to be part of the way the course was shaped and to kind of [...] I mean, what I was really worried about was that some person could come out, after doing four years on this course, and then meet – not Will Atkinson [a well known Northumbrian harmonica player of the generation previous to that of Anderson], but somebody like that, and start contradicting them, saying “no, no, that’s not how you do it, and I know, because I’ve got a degree in folk music”. And the thought of that just filled me full of dread and horror, so it was kind of “I’m going to make sure I’m involved, to make sure – or to do whatever I can to make sure – that nobody comes out thinking that because they’ve got a degree in folk music, it means that they can then tell a traditional musician how to play and how not to play.” <sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Acoustic Message Board, ‘Burgess attacks folk degree’.

<sup>66</sup> Kathryn Tickell, interview, 8th February 2006.



The articulation of these concerns is telling in its betrayal of underlying values and attitudes innate to Tickell's folk music culture. The principal fear is that, if incorrectly managed, the institutionalization process may result in the development of a folk music elite; a group whose social status within the culture will be simultaneously elevated and self-warranting by the resultant credential of graduation. Apprehension regarding the installation of an officially sanctioned repertory or style of performance remains subordinate, a point that could be seen to highlight the significance of a concept of community within the culture: interaction between individuals, social stratification and confrontation are the principal features of this "worst-case" scenario, rather than the stagnation of musical characteristics. In short, the fears expressed here are about people, not music. Notions of egalitarianism, then, remain key to the identification of the music culture for – and by – which this process of institutionalization is constructed, and it is in such terms that the manifestations of this process must be judged.

The staff on the folk degree at Newcastle University are fully aware of the problem of teaching folk music at a higher educational level without standardizing the content and style of the music over time.<sup>67</sup> Certainly this possibility is a concern to many folk musicians not directly involved in Folkworks: a number of informants have related to me their fears that many young instrumentalists who attend Folkworks workshops seek to adopt, wholesale, the stylistic characteristics and repertoires of their tutors. Thus there is a risk that young people partaking in this institutionalization process are engaging in the emulation of an unhealthily small number of musicians.

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<sup>67</sup> The 'clone debate' – Sandra Kerr, interview, 19th January 2005.

However, in response to the claim that the educational institutionalization of folk music in England will result in the standardization of musical style and repertoire, exists the counter argument most eloquently mooted by one informant: “I know what they mean, but at the end of the day, Folkworks has got more young people playing folk music than have done for years, and that’s got to be the most important thing...”. It is also in terms of equal opportunity and expansion of community, therefore, that justification must be presented; such a justification is provided by Anderson, who describes Folkworks’ greatest motivation as a desire ‘to widen the bottom of the pyramid all the time’, by increasing the social status of the music in general. It is possible to extrapolate from this metaphor, since a pyramid with a base of infinite width (as would appear to be the desired result) would be a flat surface: a shape of equal height, representing a music culture without stratification. It is unlikely that Anderson regards such a romantic ideal as achievable, but the statements presented here provide further insight into the role of community and social equality as a defining cultural attitude of the folk music culture that Folkworks represents.

Not surprisingly, the reflexive analysis of the folk degree rehearsed in these interviews must necessarily fall short of establishing that some degree of elitism is inevitable: the official endowment of authoritative status must be unavoidable, since the lecturers are themselves concerned with the task of saying (to use Tickell’s terms) “no, no, that’s not how you do it, and I know, because I’m a *lecturer* in folk music”. Such analysis would, of course, be self-defeating to those engaged with the degree. Instead, a self-justifying discourse under construction around the folk degree, and educational institutionalization more generally, offers the expansion and increased elaboration of educative activities as the *preventative* of elitism in folk music:



I think, so far, the positive of having a whole new generation of really good players out there, especially good players who have a little bit of business sense (that's one of the modules), and good teaching skills, and usually a keenness for that [...] and having had experience over the four year of seeing Kathryn and Catriona and me teaching them, but also Kathryn [teaches ...] a bunch of kids up at Rothbury, and a bunch of students go and help with those, and you know, they help on some of the work out days and summer schools and those sorts of things, and they see the positives in that, and see that the likes of Kathryn feel that it's important to do that, and the likes of Brian Finnegan, or Chris Stout, or any of the great performers that come to teach the students are also [teaching] on summer schools, and feeling that it's worth while. So I'm fairly confident that the idea of the, you know, performer who is so in the clouds that they don't want to bother with any of the amateur people, I think we're guarding against fairly strongly.<sup>68</sup>

This discourse is extended by the construction of an (ultimately unidentifiable) pedagogical other that serves not only to support the notion that the educational market was expectant of such a course as the folk degree, but also to add to an ideological configuration in which Folkworks is presented as defender of the music in which it deals:

You've got that thing of – do you do the course, or not? You know, or do you think, “oh, that's really difficult to teach traditional music, therefore we'll not do it at all.” And then somebody else is going to do it and maybe in a way that you really wouldn't agree with.<sup>69</sup>

Thus the market forces at work in the coming-about of the folk degree can be presented as a non-economic, culturally acceptable and altruistic motivation to

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<sup>68</sup> Alistair Anderson, interview, 12th April 2005.

<sup>69</sup> Kathryn Tickell, interview, 8th February 2006.

prevent the possibility of formalized education by agencies less concerned for the preservation of “tradition” and the avoidance of elitism.



## **5. Shooting Roots and FolkArts England**

*I suppose ... I'd never ... you see, I never think of Northumbrian music as being English [...]. I mean, Northumberland is in England, I just think the music is quite different.<sup>1</sup>*

The conceptual, cultural distinctiveness of the North East region within the larger (political) nation, and the economic, ethnic and linguistic roots and musical manifestations of that distinction, have been discussed in the opening sections of chapter 3. I should therefore like to continue by affording a similar level of scrutiny to the less academically researched area of “England,-not-including-the-North-East”. As was explained in the introduction to this thesis (and to avoid confusion), I shall refer to this area as ‘England’ and to its repertoires and practices as ‘English’, since these are the labels most commonly assigned by musicians and listenership (as Tickell’s comments above demonstrate). In particular, I shall attempt to provide a basic overview of the key features relating to ‘English’ folk music culture, within a generically comparative framework. Through such comparison, practices of educational institutionalization – along with the broader notions of regional identity, nationalism and folk music around which the pedagogical activity is constructed – may be more coherently contextualized. I shall examine the particulars of Shooting Roots’ educational practices and structures, and consider the pedagogical implications for teaching and learning within the folk festival context. I shall consider the role of the institution as a commodity for consumption by folk festivals, before finally studying the key repertorial features of the institution’s educative activities.

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<sup>1</sup> Kathryn Tickell, interview, 8th February 2006.

## **Folk music in ‘England’**

Much of what follows in this section is based on informal observations made over a total period of five years in the field. My interest in the considerable differences and interrelationships between the folk music cultures of these two distinct regions was first aroused upon my arrival in the North East, from my (cultural) “home” in the Midlands, two years before I embarked on preliminary research in the field. The experiences, attitudes and practices – not to mention repertoires – of my North East counterparts was so markedly unlike my own that a comparison of the cultures became a natural feature of my attempts to integrate with my new surroundings, and to understand the interactions between the cultural values and practices of each.

It is, of course, possible to overplay the reductionist notion that the politically defined nation of England is, in fact, culturally divided into two separate regions. I have not discovered any written scholarly evidence of the claim having been made regarding English folk music before, although the implications of a considerable body of socio-cultural research concerned with defining (and, therefore, *distinguishing*) the “North East” would certainly appear to support such an assertion. If we are to accept the existence of a culturally distinct “North East”, distinguished by the clarity and multifaceted nature of its regional identity, then it is reasonable to expect that “the-rest-of-England” should demonstrate a degree of unity, even if only in the manifestations of its alterity to the North East.



Nonetheless, many other regional identities exist across 'England', although this thesis supports the argument that these are considerably lesser in strength, cultural pervasion or scale of populace (an argument also supported by the comparative *lack* of writing on the distinctiveness of such other regions). The structure of this report is not intended to ignore such identities in order to reinforce the (incorrect) notion of two entirely disparate music cultures. Merely, I hope to demonstrate in this section that 'England' is characterized by a number of key traits and emphases that differ substantially from the overriding cultural characteristics of the North East folk music culture. The ways and extents to which folk arts activity in the North East differs from that of 'England' is, of course, a sizeable research topic in itself and one that exceeds the scope of this thesis: the issue certainly represents only a secondary focus of this study. However, to overlook the question of disparity between folk music in these two "regions" of England would be to negate a clear, contextually grounded understanding of the educational institutions upon which this study centres. Whilst all that is possible here is the briefest overview of the ways in which 'England' differs from the North East in terms of contemporary folk music, the discrepancies are so considerable – and the topic so unexamined – that a synopsis of the former's principal elements is epistemologically justifiable as a crucial foundation for the following chapter.

### *Social Status and Popularity*

Fundamental to an understanding of folk music in contemporary England is the issue of social status; that is, the discursive identity and value afforded folk music by the wider community. Folk music, dance and song in 'England' have, since the subsidence of the second revival period in the late 1970s, occupied the cultural space

of humorous absurdity among the popular music-, mainstream-orientated majority: folk music activities have generally been regarded by most as the indulgent idiosyncrasies of an eccentric, middle-class, middle-aged minority.

This interpretation of the indigenous folk arts as inherently comedic can be found articulated in references to dance, song and music throughout the mainstream British media. I shall now go on to list and describe some of the more high-profile of these references in order to illustrate the pervasion of ridicule as a response to ‘English’ folk arts.

The first example is taken from the 2004 series of the extremely popular UK reality television show *Big Brother*. During the course of each series, the “housemates” (i.e. contestants), are presented with various challenges, and their success as individuals and as groups will often determine their quality of life within (or potential eviction from) the house. On Wednesday 30th of June 2004 (Day 34) , to mark the taking-place of the annual Glastonbury music festival, the housemates were set the challenge of a “Folk-off”.<sup>2</sup> They were split into two teams, and each was provided with a guitar and a tambourine. The individuals were also provided with Aran sweaters, fake beards and sandals (all of which *had* to be worn in order to complete the challenge successfully). The teams then had three hours in which to write their own folk song, with original tune and lyrics. Team A’s song was obliged to contain the words ‘pipe’, ‘Shrewsbury’, and ‘fair maiden’; Team B’s song had to include the words ‘barley’, ‘heritage’ and ‘bicycle’. Once the time limit was up, the two teams were instructed to

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<sup>2</sup> *Big Brother 2004* (London: Channel 4, 29th May – 24th July 2004); Mark Grout, ‘Big Brother (UK 2004) – The Folk Music?: thread 5a (ILM)’, *I Love Music*. 30th June 2004. <http://ilx.wh3rd.net/thread.php?msgid=4800236>. (3rd October, 2006).



congregate in the garden, around two fake campfires, to perform their songs in a 'folk off'.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of this example is the nature of the accoutrements involved: the insistence on the wearing of beards, Aran sweaters and sandals, and the contextualization of the event around a campfire betrays the popular association of English folk music with the revivalist folk song movement of the 1960s and 70s which was most visible within the context of the music festival. Whilst the nature of these elements has been exploded into caricatured proportions to maximize entertainment potential, their selection demonstrates a perception of folk music as a comical, historic throw-back. The inclusion of lyrics such as 'pipe' and 'Shrewsbury' also goes some way towards denoting a folk-singing demographic (the pipe being symbolic of a man aged 50 years or over, whilst Shrewsbury is a historic but small – low-profile – market town, perceived from outside as having *no* youth culture-related activity).

The second example is taken from a recent series of television adverts for the mobile phone shop *Phones 4U*. The adverts are built around a central, informative character, Jack, who is American, good-looking, fashionably dressed and slick in verbal delivery. His foils throughout the series of adverts are the unattractive, inarticulate, people whom he attempts to assist and direct in their quest for the right mobile phone for them. Two such adverts, both released on the 11th September 2006, feature ironic references to the traditional (bland, uninteresting) English seaside resort, in which

these foils are contextualized.<sup>3</sup> In both, the only music incorporated in the sound track is that of an Anglo Concertina playing quintessentially ‘English’ folk music at a pedestrian pace. In one of the adverts (entitled *Paddling*), the concertina is heard but not seen, whilst in the second (*Pulling*) the instrument is seen being played by a distinctly unattractive female character who is fleetingly presented as a love interest of Jack’s key foil, Billy.

Key to this advert is the notion that ‘English’ *instrumental* folk music is, in itself, perfect material for a comedy soundtrack. It is associated with unattractive people: the correlation of folk music with the uneducated is interesting, since it is the element of the scenario most distant from the truth, but this is far less important than the central message that folk music is the peculiar activity of the socially inept – those in most need of guidance on matters of popular culture. In fact, Phones4u have made such inferences about the folk arts before: in the period 2000-2003, the company ran a television advertising campaign in which individuals’ shame for their highly “embarrassing” activities was overshadowed by a greater embarrassment regarding their unfashionable mobile phone. One such “embarrassing” activity was morris dancing.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps the most significant media statement on the status of – and public response to – the English folk arts is that encapsulated in the link sequences of the BBC’s terrestrial television channels. Since the late 1990s BBC1’s inter-programming link sequences have mostly contained dancing displays of various different dance styles

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<sup>3</sup> Phones4u, ‘TV Adverts’, *About Phones4u* [http://www.phones4u.co.uk/Info/info\\_tvadverts.asp](http://www.phones4u.co.uk/Info/info_tvadverts.asp) (6th October 2006).

<sup>4</sup> The exact details of this advert are no longer available, but its contents and period of airing have been corroborated by informants for the present study.



and cultures, including Bollywood, salsa, Masai dancing, ballet and tap dancing. BBC2, on the other hand, is linked by means of one or more computer-animated characters all in the shape of a number “2”; these are involved in amusing scenarios, often incorporating their retractable, robotic arms, and always imbued with an element of humour. It is interesting then that, to celebrate May Day 2005, morris dancing was presented not as a BBC1 link (that context shared by other forms of dance), but as a BBC2 animation, where six “2”-shaped characters holding white handkerchiefs appeared to dance around each other in a ‘hay’ formation, whilst another appeared at the top of the set, accompanying the dancing by playing an instrument clearly identifiable as an Anglo concertina (see Figure 14).



**Figure 14: Stills taken from the BBC 2 Morris Dancing ident**

The first point to be made here is that, whilst other forms of dance – traditional and non-traditional – are represented in the “serious” manner of filmed human activity, morris dancing is portrayed via a “comedy turn” by some animated computer graphics, betraying its status as a figure of fun within the wider English society. However, the portrayal of a “musician” with an Anglo concertina is also interesting, since the soundtrack to the sequence appears to be a recording of a morris dancing performance accompanied by a single *melodeon*, an instrument audibly identifiable by its double accordion reeds and bass note/chordal capacity, and about which more shall



be discussed in the next subsection of this chapter. Whilst it could be said that artistic licence was invoked in the selection of the concertina as a more visually successful image, it could also be suggested that such confusion occurs because a recognition of the instruments central to 'English' folk music is not regarded as important. After all, the music being played in the soundtrack (albeit a convincing 'English' folk tune), is a very close motivic relation of the soundtracks to the other BBC2 link sequences, and therefore almost certainly newly-composed; thus, it must surely have been possible to record the soundtrack to this sequence using a concertina, if that was seen to be more visually effective. Were the sequence to be based on the performance of jazz, it seems wholly unlikely that a similar confusion between the visual image of the saxophone and the recorded sound of a clarinet would have been deemed acceptable. The implication here is that differentiation between folk instruments in 'English' folk music is unnecessary; this, in turn, suggests a widespread disinterest and lack of engagement with the activity. Other discrepancies between the visuals and the soundtrack also betray this relationship between the BBC and morris dancing: the recording to which the animators have constructed the sequence includes clearly audible stick clashes; the "2s", however, are shown dancing with handkerchiefs.<sup>5</sup> The choice to portray dancing with handkerchiefs rather than the sticks can be interpreted as consequential to a search for an iconography more closely connected with the morris-dancing discursive figure, rather the depiction of reality.

It is, of course, important to acknowledge that these references – and others like them – are disseminated via media that includes the North East region in its coverage area

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<sup>5</sup> In the course of a single dance, Cotswold morris dancers dance only with sticks or with handkerchiefs – never with both simultaneously.



(that being, in most cases, the UK as a whole). However, it can be convincingly argued that the implications of such content be regarded as betraying the cultural attitude-norms of the country's majority, articulated by the predominantly London-based machinery of commercial and public media. The geographical and cultural location of these examples' administrations, in combination with the content of the references (and particularly the emphasis on morris dancing), identifies them as the popular critique of – specifically – 'English' folk music. A concerted, qualitative study of the relationships between 'English' folk music and the contemporary media has yet to be conducted and is long overdue, since such scrutiny is essential to a comprehensive understanding of 'English' traditional cultural practice within modern, British-mediated society. The examples discussed here are merely provided as basic illustrations of the wider English population's responses towards the folk arts; a fuller examination of the relationship between the English folk music and the British media is, necessarily, beyond the scope of the present study.

### *Morris dancing and the melodeon*

One crucial way in which the folk music culture of 'England' differs from that of the North East is the central role played by morris dancing in the construction of the former's identity. Morris dancing, and specifically Cotswold morris (the variety so vigorously promoted by Sharp, and iconically characterized by predominantly white costumes, handkerchiefs and bells) is often perceived and presented by those outside of the folk arts culture as the most comical element of English traditional culture.<sup>6</sup>

Supportive of this fact is the statement made by Laurel Swift, a long-time morris

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<sup>6</sup> I shall explain later in this section that "those outside of the folk arts culture" is the vast majority of 'England's' population.

dancer and Artistic Director of Shooting Roots, the organization on which this chapter shall later focus:

Morris teams [...] often get looked at as folk's 'indecent' half, the inferior thing that drags the reputation of folk down...<sup>7</sup>

However, she goes on to express her views on the contribution of morris dancing to the wider folk music community:

OK, there are a lot of shit morris teams out there who don't do anyone any credit, least of all themselves, but I was working it out recently, and over fifty percent of my friends who are into folk music got into it because they were in a morris team.<sup>8</sup>

The great significance of morris dancing to the wider folk culture of 'England' is demonstrated by the considerable presence and variety of morris teams at festivals in this area. Whilst an onlooker at the Rothbury festival in the heart of Northumberland can expect to see as many Highland pipe bands and Scottish sword dancers on display as morris dancers (including the North East-associated equivalent of Rapper dancing), morris plays a much more central role in the activities of festivals further south.

Many of the larger festivals in 'England' pride themselves on the number of morris teams that take part, with morris processions through the respective towns taking a prominent place in the diary of such events.<sup>9</sup> The largest morris dancing association, the Morris Federation, currently has 405 member-teams, of which only 15 are based

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<sup>7</sup> Laurel Swift, interview, 28th February 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> As in the case of the sizeable morris processions through the towns of Warwick, Ely and Sidmouth during their respective annual festivals.



in the North East.<sup>10</sup> More member-teams of the Morris Ring, the oldest organization of morris teams, are located outside of the UK than are based in the North East!<sup>11</sup> Whilst this evidence is anecdotal, presented in combination with the relative popularity of all things folk-music related in the North East region it offers a compelling illustration of the disparity of emphasis between the North East and the rest of the country.

The predominance of morris dancing within the 'English' folk music culture is clearly seen in its interrelationship with instrumental music and musicians. Whilst the majority of instrumental traditional music now occurs in the North East as (relatively) separate from any dancing context, folk music and morris dancing are fully integrated elements of the folk music culture of 'England'. Here, instrumental musical performance tends to gravitate to morris dancing activities and teams. For instance, morris dancing is often an important context for the early development of a musician's instrumental skills: morris teams are often keen to swell the numbers of their accompanying band, whose size – and, therefore, volume – is of considerable importance when performing in a busy market square or town centre (common arenas for morris dancing). The basic tunes are relatively accessible to the learning instrumentalist (as shall be discussed in greater detail later in this section), and the accompaniment of morris dancing has, traditionally, been as concerned with audio-visual impact and spectacle as with subtler issues of musical accuracy (intonation, timbre, ornamentation, etc).<sup>12</sup> Thus, a learning musician is able to hone his/her skills

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<sup>10</sup> Morris Federation, 'MF Members List', *The Morris Federation*, <http://www.morrisfed.org/mf/members/shtml> (19th September, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> Morris Ring, 'Morris Ring Member Clubs Web links and contact information', *The Morris Ring*, <http://www.themorrisring.org/M.html> (19th September, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> This is particularly true of the more raucous morris forms, such as Border morris and Molly.

within the supportive monody of a large group, and without the anticipation and fear of close scrutiny.

Morris dancers in larger teams who do not play – or intend to play – any instrument when they take up dancing often find that, after a few years, they wish to learn an instrument in order that, when taking a break from the physically demanding act of dancing during a performance (or ‘dance-out’), they are able to remain involved in an alternative element of the performance. Where folk music sessions occur in ‘England’, a significant proportion of attendees often represent a quorum of the local morris team’s regular musicians. In light of this central role played by morris dancing in the initiation and development of ‘English’ folk musicians, it is perhaps unsurprising that very few skilled instrumentalists from this folk music culture have not, at some point, played to accompany Morris dancing.<sup>13</sup> It is perhaps significant that, when the Licensing Bill (which became an Act of Parliament on the 18th July 2003) threatened to make all public entertainment licensable, it was the exemption of morris dancing that was most vigorously sought by the London-based English Folk Dance and Song Society;<sup>14</sup> the achievement of such an exemption was rapturously welcomed by the organization, and was celebrated by the congregation of a huge number of teams from across the country in Trafalgar Square on 2nd November 2003. It may be inferred that music sessions in pubs (which received no such exemption, and which are now licensable as entertainment), are of lesser significance to the folk music culture that the EFDSS works to defend than morris dancing, a suggestion that

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<sup>13</sup> It is important to note that still fewer have not played as part of a ceilidh band, and that this element is shared with the North East folk music culture.

<sup>14</sup> See English Folk Dance and Song Society, ‘Regulating the Folk Arts’, *EFDSS*. <http://www.efdss.org/> (10th March, 2003); English Folk Dance and Song Society, ‘Further Statement’, *EFDSS*. <http://www.efdss.org/> (10th March, 2003).



might serve to betray the extent of morris dancing's significance within 'English' folk music.

Also demonstrative of morris dancing's role at the centre of 'English' folk music culture – and, therefore, of the disparity between 'England' and the North East – is the predomination of the melodeon within the former's instrumental music (see Figure 15). Often called the diatonic or button accordion in other European folk music cultures, the melodeon and its ergonomic relation, the Anglo concertina, are generally well represented in morris bands and instrumental sessions.<sup>15</sup> Of course, many of those instruments played in the North East (such as the fiddle or whistle) also play a prominent part in folk music over the rest of country, with the unsurprisingly notable exception of the Northumbrian small pipes. Others tend towards slightly different functions: for instance, the guitar is less commonly used as a rhythm instrument in 'English' instrumental music than it is in the North East, but it remains very popular as an accompaniment to song (usually in the hands of the singer). The piano accordion, wooden (or Irish) flute and tenor banjo are much less common in 'England' than in the North East: in the cases of the latter two examples, strong associations with Irish traditional music must certainly also be regarded as a key factor in explaining their rarity.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Certainly, the melodeon is not unique to England: the instrument also plays an important role in Breton folk music and in Irish traditional music. However, in these instances the instrument is not imbued with distinctive cultural identity: it is notable, for example, that whilst it is featured very prominently in the photograph of a session on the front cover of Hast and Scott's *Music in Ireland*, the authors do not refer to the melodeon in their survey of Irish traditional instruments (although they *do* include a section on 'piano, synthesizers, and electric instruments' to provide a juxtaposition of tradition and modernity). Hast and Scott, *Music in Ireland*, 70-82; 82.

<sup>16</sup> However, in the case of the banjo, organological matters must be considered, since the instrument is characterised by a distinct lack of sustain: as we shall see, 'English' folk music is generally slower in tempo and more irregular in note duration than the Celtic traditional repertoires with which the banjo is most closely associated; it could be argued that the instrument is, therefore, less common in 'England' due to its better suiting to faster, more regularly resounding tunes, much for the same reasons that





**Figure 15: Simon Bannister playing melodeon with the English Ceilidh band Ceilidhography.<sup>17</sup>**

Much regarding the fundamental cultural systems of this music culture can be deduced from the melodeon's popularity at the 'grass roots' level of 'English' folk music: the instrument's ubiquity is due to a combination of its ergonomic characteristics and inherent aesthetic qualities. At the most basic level, the instrument enables the performer to play both a melody and a chordal harmony line simultaneously, whilst being relatively small and portable in size (essential to its function as the accompaniment to morris dancing). Unlike equivalent alternatives, such as the piano accordion, the notes on a melodeon are organized in such a way that each button on the right (melody) side plays two notes (one note when the bellows are squeezed together – 'on the push' – and a different, adjacent note when the bellows are pulled apart – 'on the pull'). Thus a major scale is achievable with the use of just four buttons of one row. The greatest proportion of melodeons played in the 'English' morris tradition are 'two row', where the row on the extreme right of the

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composers of baroque harpsichord music tended towards fast, regular movement and heavy ornamentation.

<sup>17</sup> Photo by kind permission of Ceilidhography, 2007.



instrument plays one major scale (usually D major), and the other plays a major scale a fourth above the first (usually G major).<sup>18</sup> The vast majority of the morris repertory is in a diatonic major scale, and most tunes are restricted to the range of a twelfth, meaning that the novice melodeon player with moderate musical ability will, even at the first learning stages, will be rewarded with practical access to a large number of culturally central tunes.

This is not to suggest that the melodeon is intrinsically easy to play – far from it: since the buttons situated on the left side of the instrument also give different bass notes and chords on the push to on the pull, exploitation of the instrument’s full melodic and harmonic potential requires an in-depth, instinctive familiarity with the – often counter-intuitive – layouts of the notes and chords. For instance, complexity of performance is increased considerably once, in order to maintain a particular chord and bass note with the left hand, the player must ‘cross’ (or alternate) rows with the right hand in order to avoid alternating the direction of the bellows. However, the melodeon is still relatively accessible at the earliest stages of the instrumentalist’s development. Of course, the continued success of the melodeon within the ‘English’ folk music (and particularly morris dance) culture is likely to be, to a certain extent, self-perpetuating: whilst concerted tuition is almost unheard-of within morris circles, informal assistance from fellow-melodeon playing colleagues is more readily available due to the ubiquity of the instrument. So, too, are the instruments themselves: There exists a healthy market in cheaply available basic two-row melodeons from companies such as the German manufacturer Hohner, whose

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<sup>18</sup> As well as being the two keys for which most English melodeons are specifically configured, D and G major are also two of the most popular keys for British folk musics generally. They are keys to which other key instruments, such as the fiddle, are ergonomically inclined.

*Pokerwork* model is extremely popular, almost enjoying the status of a cultural 'institution', and available for less than £200.

However, aside from these basic practical elements of the melodeon, cultural-aesthetic systems may also be offered as an explanation for the 'English' morris musicians affinity (if not explicit identity) with the instrument. One vital point to be made here is that the mechanics of the melodeon requires a visually physical element of performance that tends towards dance: this is particularly true of the more 'budget' instruments such as the Hohner *Pokerwork*, since these examples are less responsive in their playability, and thus require greater physical movement in effecting the alternation of the bellows' direction. Whilst the player of another instrument, such as the whistle, may be *required* to move his/her fingers and *inclined* to tap his/her feet in time to the music, the melodeon player is *required* to move his entire upper body to play the tunes. What's more, this movement is necessarily rhythmically related to the music: a piano accordionist must also move his upper body in order to play, but the relative unimportance of the bellows' direction in his/her case means that the two motions effecting the opening and closing of the bellows may last a number of bars; a melodeonist is often alternating the direction of the bellows with each crotchet or quaver of a bar. Most emphatic of these movements is the closing of the bellows, which generally occurs for the sounding of the notes within the major arpeggio of the tonic – thus physical and visual, as well as aural, emphasis is afforded to the opening notes of phrases, cadential closures and a tune's harmonic grounding generally. The physical movements of the melodeon player are exaggerated yet further when the player is standing up (and thus supporting and directing the full weight of the bass side of the instrument with his/her left hand), and also when the player is attempting



to achieve maximum volume (as is a natural intention when playing in a crowded street). In short, then, the melodeon is inalienably linked with morris dancing in the 'English' folk music culture, since its performance at a 'dance out' is, effectively, as much a visual and physical element of the morris dance as it is accompaniment to it: the player is forced to 'dance' in order to create the music, although that 'dance' is not explicitly choreographed. The melodeon is inextricably linked with the cultural act of rhythmically orchestrated physical movement: it lends itself to a visual as well as aural entertainment, a fact explanatory of its close associations with morris dancing.

Key to our understanding of morris dancing as a music culture is the significance of inclusivity. Although most obviously a performance of street theatre, where performer and audience identities are clearly apparent, morris dancing is also a public display of communal music making: everyone involved is – or, at the very least, can be – a musician; even those involved in the central act of dance are participating as musicians by virtue of the bells tied around their ankles, or by the striking of their clogs' hard wooden soles against the ground.<sup>19</sup> Although there are often very clear hierarchies within a morris band's membership (usually based around a present leader, previous leaders and the longevity of each individual's membership), where *music* is concerned, a cultural emphasis is given to the accessibility of the material and the potential for participation. The extent to which this inclusivity principle is made manifest (or explicit) varies from one morris side to the next, but in all cases the ethos is discernible; it is not only promoted by a pragmatic necessity for the volume and visual presence of a large membership, but also enabled by accessibility of important, aesthetically complementary instruments such as the melodeon, and of the

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<sup>19</sup> The latter being mainly in the case of North West Clog and Border morris.

basic musical material. We shall later see how this system of cultural behaviour is reflected in the pedagogical and musical practices of the educational institution, Shooting Roots.

### *Playing and singing: session and club culture*

Disparities between the North East folk music culture and that of the rest of England lie in both the regularity of singing and instrumental performance, and in the cultural location and compartmentalization of those two elements. The first point to be made here is that, outside of morris dance activities, song plays a much greater, more central role in the 'English' folk culture than in that of the North East. Just as the higher profile folk performers in the North East can betray the region's predilection for instrumental music, so too does a brief survey of the most popular and high-profile representatives of 'English' folk music serve to demonstrate the significance of song: in 'England', the key "headlining" folk acts (at the time of writing: Eliza Carthy and the Ratcatchers; Van Eyken; Chris Wood and EAC; Kate Rusby; John Spiers and John Boden) are all performers or groups within whose repertory song plays an integral part.

This 'English' orientation towards singing (or at least, the fact that singing plays as significant a role in 'English' traditional music performance as instrumental music) is particularly interesting in light of the central position of morris dancing, an activity with which singing would be quite incompatible.<sup>20</sup> However, the cultural separation

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<sup>20</sup> This is true except for a very few exceptions, where the dancers might break into song as a prearranged element of the overall performance. This is generally done for comic effect, often involving comic songs, and is only effective as such due to the rarity of the occurrence.



of these two elements of folk music performance in 'England' does not extend far beyond this basic pigeonholing of activities. Traditional music practised at a grass roots level, as on the concert stage, is most often inclusive of both song and instrumental music: the traditional pub session which forms the basis of popular folk music activity in 'England' – as it does in the North East – will often be home to an interspersion of *both* songs and tunes during one evening. In this way 'England' differs markedly from the North East, where (as has been discussed in chapter 3) instrumental music and songs inhabit largely separate domains.<sup>21</sup>

Whilst the assembly of singers and instrumentalists (many individuals are, of course, both) in a single session is characteristic of 'English' rather than North East folk culture, the ways in which such communal performance events are structured also betray key differences.<sup>22</sup> In the 'English' folk session (unlike in the North East – see page 99-100), there is commonly an explicitly directed structuring of the proceedings. There will often be one or two 'session leaders' – usually individuals with a certain venerability or "veteran" identity within the local folk music community. In many cases this individual or individuals will preside over a 'round-the-room' structure: during the course of the evening, the leader/s will select willing participants from those seated about that area of the bar, and each individual will take it in turns to play *or* sing, the sequence typically moving in one direction around the room. Time will be taken between each tune or song for much the same reasons as in the North East

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<sup>21</sup> Within the 'English' folk culture, such separation of singing and instrumental music tends to exist only within the context of the festival: here, large numbers of visitors, outside of local subcultures, are catered for in terms of the specialization (rather than homogenization) of activities; thus singers will congregate to sing, whilst instrumentalists will congregate to play. A perceived desire for this separation in such an artificial context perpetuates the behaviour, by specifying 'instrumental session' or 'singaround' in the programme.

<sup>22</sup> For in-depth ethnography of the English pub session, see Stock, 'Ordering Performance'.

session, but the ends of these pauses are generally signalled by the leader's publicly verbal invitation for the next participant to play or sing. Resultant of such a structure is the assurance that each participant has – depending on the available time – an equal opportunity to instigate a song or tune.<sup>23</sup>

The “round-the-room” technique does occur in instrumental sessions in the North East, but is much more likely to be observed in the contexts of singarounds and folk clubs. The structural practices of the latter of these – almost exclusively song orientated – milieus are often formalized yet further: the master of ceremonies may circulate among attendees before the commencement of the musical activities in order to compile a kind of running order dependent on the participants present at the event. This scenario is also to be found in folk clubs across the rest of England, and the extent of formality and structure in all forms of folk music activity across the nation varies according to the attitudes and musical orientations of the significant individuals within each local folk music culture. However, the more structured approach to session practice summarized above is certainly more prevalent in the ‘English’ folk music culture.

Both the North East's “opportunistic” session practice and the “round-the-room” method common in ‘England’ may be read as demonstrative of cultural systems in which egalitarianism plays a central role, but where the equalities of opportunity and status are articulated very differently. Unlike in the North East session – where novice instrumentalists must quickly internalize unspoken cultural systems and

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<sup>23</sup> Key exceptions are, again, those (instrumental) sessions that take place in the context of the festival: the round-the-room structure is often untenable in this environment, where participating musicians are often much greater in numbers and transient during the course of such events.



develop strategies for playing along with unfamiliar tunes – in an ‘English’ folk session, all participants have equal opportunity to lead a tune or song (a cultural act that encapsulates the selection of repertory, tempo, volume, etc.). But this opportunity resides within a clearly structured framework, not dissimilar to the practice of “queuing”.<sup>24</sup> However, this queuing process is often presided over not only by social convention but also – more explicitly – by one or two individuals who are endowed with administrative responsibility (albeit nominal) and, therefore, a subcultural authority recognized by the participants of the event. In short, an apparently egalitarian system of opportunity is governed by a rudimentary but explicit social hierarchy.

The comfortable inclusion of less able musicians in ‘English’ sessions, as well as *all* forms of musician (i.e. singers and instrumentalists), is of vital importance to our understanding of the ways in which the North East folk music culture differs from that of the rest of England. Whilst both cultures operate within a discourse of community and – consequently – of equality, that equality is meted out on different levels. The North East folk music culture (or, specifically, *instrumental* folk music culture), essentially functions within an apparently non-hierarchical egalitarianism, but might be said to be inclined towards an elitist recognition of the individual’s technical abilities, an assertion supported by: the provision of Oliver’s workshop (see page 101-2); the ‘survival of the fittest’ response to it; the overall segregation of singing and instrumental music as specialized activities; and – perhaps most critically – the extent of educational institutionalization within the North East region. Contrastingly, the

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<sup>24</sup> A practice that is well established in contributing stereotypical definition of the English people in the eyes of foreign observers. E.g. Fox, *Watching the English*, 92-100.

system of equality by which the 'English' culture operates is that of egalitarian inclusivity, located at a more profound and pervasive level, but therefore publicly more accommodating of lower technical standards among musicians. I shall now go on to offer a brief discussion of the key characteristics of the 'English' folk music repertory in order to offer an understanding of how this inclusivity principle can be seen as both textually manifest and supported.

### 'English' folk music: repertory

By far the most common tune form in 'English' instrumental music is that of the Polka. Used in ceilidhs to accompany (amongst many others) dances incorporating the couples step of the same name, the polka is a tune in 4/4 time, predominantly in a diatonic major key, and generally played at a speed of between ♩ = 200 and ♩ = 240. These tunes are characterized by the predomination of crotchet movement – or, at the very least, crotchet and quaver movement in equal proportions – as can be seen in the popular session (and morris) tunes *Bonny Brest Knot* (Example 18) and *Gallopede* (Example 19; both tunes appear, in the reverse order, on CD Track 9).



**A**

**B**

**Example 18: *Bonny Brest Knot***

**A**

**B**

**C**

**Example 19: *Gallopede***

These examples both show very clearly the main musical attributes of the ‘English’ polka: namely, the simplicity of the chiefly conjunctive melodic movement, punctuated only by very minimal arpeggio figures, nota cambiata and unaccented appoggiaturas. Quaver movement is often in the form of a sequence (e.g. the third bar of the B part in *Bonny Brest Knot*, and the seventh bars of the B and C parts of *Gallopede*) and, where leaps of more than a third do occur in the ‘English’ polka they are not normally preceded by a note of duration shorter than a crotchet (a fact true of most ‘English’ instrumental music).

As has been demonstrated earlier in this chapter, morris dancing plays a vital part in the activities of the ‘English’ folk music culture, but it is interesting to note that a tune’s original role as accompaniment to morris dancing can also shape the performance of that instrumental music in the alternative context of the session. One such case is *Gallopede*, which is often heard played in the form AABC, rather than AABBCC, in line with its common use as accompaniment to a basic 32 bar dance. However, a more dramatic example is the popular morris tune, *The Princess Royal* (Example 20). Outside of the instrumental session, this tune is used exclusively in the accompaniment of a specific Cotswold morris dance of the same name. On most renditions, the tune is performed as written in Example 20 but, at a specific point towards the end of the dance, where the dancers exaggerate their leaping and crouching movements to the greatest extent physically possible, the A part of the tune is reduced in speed so that the crotchets of bars 1-4 match the durations of the dancers actions (see CD Track 9). The tempo of the tune is effectively – but not exactly – halved for these bars, before returning to the original tempo (see Example 21).



**A**

**B**

**Example 20: *The Princess Royal***

**A**

**B**

etc.

**Example 21: *The Princess Royal* (alternative A part)**

Most interesting about this tune is the fact that its recontextualization – from morris dancing to the instrumental session – has not resulted in the erosion of this anomaly. Instead, the tempo reduction of the first four bars of the A part is cemented within the session performance of the tune: the alternative A part is commonly applied to the beginning of the third repetition of the tune (earlier than its customary application to

the dance accompaniment)<sup>25</sup>, since this is usually the final repetition in the context of the session. However, due to the lack of visual clues provided by dancers to delimit the new tempo (as are used by musicians in the original context of the tune), the new speed tends to be more exactly half that of the first.<sup>26</sup> The playing of the tune three times – rather than the more common four or six times for morris dancing – in order to meet the session context's criteria of overall duration is matched by the uncompromising maintenance of the tune's morris-instigated peculiarity. The peculiarity in question is musically non-essential to the tune's success – hardly any other tune in the English repertory is like it. However, the alternative A part is such an integral part of the tune's character within the 'English' folk music culture, that it remains in all contexts, albeit with the minor modification of a regulated meter. Thus, *The Princess Royal* gives further support to the significance of morris dancing in the construction of a generic musical identity in 'England'.

The Jig is also an important tune form, although far less so than in Irish, Scottish or Northumbrian traditional music. It shares the main characteristics with jigs of these traditions, being in 6/8 time, although, once again, crotchets play a greater role, and the usual tempo is more sedate, around  $\downarrow = 120$ . Like polkas, 'English' jigs are largely conjunct in melodic progression, although with more by the way of arpeggio movement, as can be seen in the first and fourth bars of *The Moon and Seven Stars* (Example 22; CD Track 10).

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<sup>25</sup> This is, of course, dependent on the number of dancers and figures used, both of which are variable from one morris side's performance to the next.

<sup>26</sup> When played for morris dancers, this tune is often performed by a single melodeon. The regulation of tempo in the session is also, then, a necessary requirement in order to enable numerous musicians to play in time with each other.



The image shows musical notation for 'The Moon and Seven Stars'. It is divided into two sections, A and B. Section A consists of two staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. Section B also consists of two staves, starting with a repeat sign and a key signature of two sharps (D major). The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

Example 22: *The Moon and Seven Stars*

Hornpipes also represent a notable proportion of the ‘English’ instrumental repertory. As in the case of repertories already discussed in this thesis, they are performed with a predominating rhythm somewhere between  and . These, too, are generally diatonic, although not generally to the extent of complexity found in the Tyneside hornpipe repertory – modulations within a section of an ‘English’ hornpipe are a great rarity.

In comparison with Irish, Scottish and Northumbrian repertories, then, some key differences can be found: the ‘English’ repertory, played at the standard tempo, is generally – *in essence* – accessible at a lower technical level. The average note-duration is longer and any faster, quaver passages tend to be in the forms of basic – diatonic – scales and arpeggios, or else embellishments of a melody that may be easily simplified. Simply “playing the notes” is not nearly as technically demanding for the ‘English’ repertory as it can be for Irish traditional music, say. This is not to say that it is technically easier to become a leading, professional ‘English’ folk

musician than a high-profile Irish traditional musician – it can be argued that it is necessarily harder to become the former, since it is more difficult for a performer to demonstrate technical prowess with the use of relatively simplistic musical material. The question of how and to what extent these musical boundaries are expanded to enable virtuosity shall be discussed later in this and the next chapter, but the nature of ‘English’ folk music has a major implication for the nature and profile of ‘England’s’ educational institutionalization in comparison with that of the North East: if it is easier to become a successfully active (i.e. culturally acceptable) ‘English’ folk musician, then educational institutionalization within this music culture must surely take on different forms and roles from that of its neighbours. I shall go on to demonstrate the accuracy of this assumption by looking in detail at ‘England’s’ highest-profile equivalent to Folkworks, Shooting Roots.

## **Shooting Roots: history, nature and structure**

Shooting Roots advertises itself as ‘providing music, dance, song and theatre opportunities for young people’.<sup>27</sup> The organization, a subsidiary of the national arts development agency FolkArts England, began in 1994 as a programme of educational workshops for young attendees to the Sidmouth International Festival (at the time, one of the largest folk music and dance festivals in the country). From its earliest incarnation as a handful of enthusiastic young volunteers, the concern is now staffed by a fluid team of some forty tutors, and is hired out to festivals across the southern and central regions of England. The operation and development of Shooting Roots is demonstrative of cultural attitudes, pedagogical criteria and economic interests that

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<sup>27</sup> FolkArts England, ‘Shooting Roots’, *Shooting Roots*. <http://www.folkarts-england.org/sroots/index.htm> (11th January, 2005).



often contrast considerably with those of Folkworks. The information provided here on the expansion and outlook of the organization has been taken from interviews with Shooting Roots' Artistic Director, Laurel Swift.

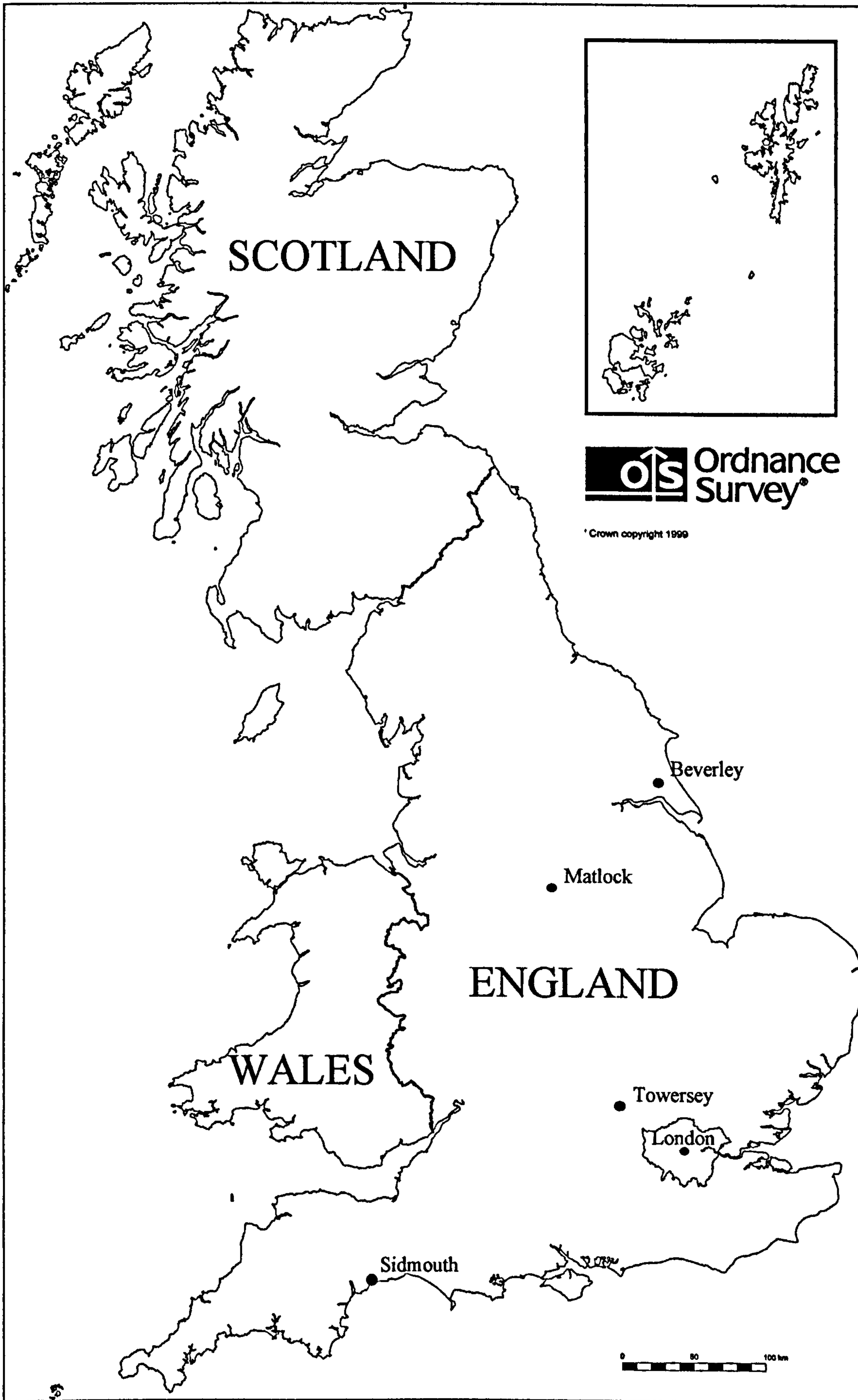


Figure 16: Map of key FolkArts England locations



Shooting Roots was born out of a very particular context: the Sidmouth International Festival (see Figure 16 for a map of key FolkArts England locations). The festival itself was, by 1994, a very well established event – having existed since 1955 – and one of the largest festivals in the English folk music calendar. For the first week in August every year, the small seaside town on Devon’s southern coast was inundated by 65,000 visitors, folk musicians, enthusiasts and dancers from all over the country, as well as guest performers (particularly dance troupes) from across the globe.<sup>28</sup> The way in which the festival context has affected the administration and educational approaches employed shall be discussed in depth later in this chapter.

The programme of workshops that formed the first year of Shooting Roots’ activities in 1994 was run by Sandra Kerr, herself already a key personality on both the workshop and performance circuit throughout England and particularly in the North East, where she was a regular tutor at Folkworks events (Folkworks had, by this time, been active for some seven years). The development of the various Sidmouth workshop series was based upon the identification of niche requirements to ensure entertainment for all attendees to the festival by means of assessing and arranging age groups:

Shooting Roots came out of workshops at Sidmouth  
festival. Eleven years ago, Sandra Kerr ran a workshop

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<sup>28</sup> Steve Heap, (pers. coms. March 2006). For more on Sidmouth International Festival, see Derek Schofield *The First Week In August: Fifty Years of Sidmouth Festival* (Sidmouth: Sidmouth International Festival, 2004). Much of what is discussed about the festival here shall appear in the past tense: in 2004 Mrs Casey Music, the festival-organizing firm employed to run the event and another facet of the FolkArts England group, ceased their managerial involvement with the concern after eighteen years. This resulted in the initial (although not sustained) removal of Shooting Roots from the context of its origin. The reasons (mainly financial) for this change and its effect on the festival are beyond the scope of the present thesis. The effect on Shooting Roots of this recontextualization, along with the different challenges experienced at different festivals, will be discussed in the course of this chapter.

for young people at the festival, probably because Alan Bearman and Steve Heap [the festival organizers] decided “we need to have a new strategy, we need to be providing stuff for young people”. There was a very successful children’s festival at Sidmouth, but there wasn’t anything crossing from the children’s into the adults’. [Until then] I think the festival organizers to some extent thought that there wasn’t a need for it: the children’s festival catered for everybody until they were too old to go to the children’s festival, and then they could go to the adult workshops. But there wasn’t the presence of young people (twelve to twenty year olds) that there is now. There were kids in the adults’ workshops, but not a lot. The first one [run by Kerr] had a sort of 12-15 age range.<sup>29</sup>

The running of the workshops was duly passed on to two young musicians and attendees to the festival, both in their late teens: Tim Van Eyken (founder of South West youth folk music project Acoustic Youth, now a nationally renowned melodeon player and singer, enjoying a successful solo career and both past and present membership of numerous popular English folk music acts); and Jenny Shotliff (a regular performer and founding member of the North West based project, Youthquake).<sup>30</sup> From this point, the Shooting Roots programme was to be run ‘for young people by young people’ as Swift puts it, an important and enduring characteristic of the organization that sets it apart from adult-led institutions such as Folkworks, as shall be discussed later in this section.<sup>31</sup>

The scope of the Shooting Roots project was further developed and expanded by Swift and other young performers such as Bill Jones and Kirsty Cotter over a period

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<sup>29</sup> Laurel Swift, interview, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2005.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Brocken, ‘The British Folk Revival: Article MT020’ *Musical Traditions* [http://web.ukonline.co.uk/mustrad/articles/broc\\_ndx.htm](http://web.ukonline.co.uk/mustrad/articles/broc_ndx.htm) (11th March, 2002).

<sup>31</sup> Laurel Swift, interview, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2005.



of some years, to include activities beyond the original areas of vocal and instrumental music making:

At the end of the second year of the singing workshop, Bill and I decided we wanted to hand over to a group of girls who'd been in the workshops, to lead it, and I wanted to set up a theatre series – I wanted to do a show – so I set up that, and that was complete chaos, that was great. We had some music and some dancing and some singing, and not very much theatre at all! But we were putting together a little bit of a show, and meanwhile the music workshops and the singing workshop were still carrying on.<sup>32</sup>

Diversity in the nature and content of workshops available to the young festival attendee has continued to be a key characteristic of the Shooting Roots programme, with street-theatre and dance workshops and performances playing an important role alongside the instrumental and vocal events from which the series originated:

Two years ago [...] I put it into its present format, where we had Shooting Roots ensemble series, which combined all the other workshops. So the old Shooting Roots music workshop, and the old Shooting Roots singing workshop were all basically [about] playing and singing together for the fun of it, and creating big ensemble pieces, so it was more about arranging and playing together and ensemble skills. We combined that into one, so there was an easy band, and middle band, a hard band, unaccompanied song and accompanied song. So we had Shooting Roots Ensemble; we had Shooting Roots Skills, [...]: so we had a flute workshop, we had a wind and brass workshop, we had a fiddle workshop, we had a vocal workshop; and then we had Playing for Dancing. We also had a dance series, which was rapper and molly and clog, running simultaneously, and we had a theatre series (for the second year), which was focussed on street theatre. That worked quite well as a format, and

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<sup>32</sup> Laurel Swift, interview, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2005.

we also had the Forum, which was a session-cum-folk club kind of relaxed thing to get people sessioning.

This year, we had the ensemble series again – slightly altered so, instead of the accompanied song group we had ‘working in small groups’, so playing in duos and trios... Then Skills, we put the squeezeboxes into there so we had flute; fiddle; wind and brass; vocal; and squeezeboxes. I split up the dance because every single child on the planet wants to learn to do rapper, so we had rapper and then we had clog and morris running separately to rapper, but against each other. Then we had the theatre series running again and the forum’s still going.<sup>33</sup>

The administrative problems encountered by Swift in organising the Shooting Roots programme each year played an important part in a trial-and-error developmental process:

[One year] I attempted to combine all of the other Shooting Roots series into one big show, so the singers and the music workshop, and the theatre workshop were all working together on a show and it was a very good show in parts. There were a lot of very interesting things in it, but it didn’t work – there was a breakdown in communication between the music people and the singing people [...] we had two venues running simultaneously [...] it was all a bit messy, and I think it rained a lot as well, which didn’t help.<sup>34</sup>

During the ten years from Shooting Roots’ conception to its decontextualization from Sidmouth International Festival, its activities had grown from a small handful of workshops run by a well known adult – long-respected in the field of folk music and song – to a sizeable workshop programme made up of multifarious but, ultimately, related elements. The workshops culminated in showcase performances given for –

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<sup>33</sup> Laurel Swift, interview, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2005.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.



among others – the parents of those involved. And the number of participants involved has, of course, increased considerably:

We've gone from having twelve participants in the days of Sandra Kerr, and probably about twenty when Shooting Roots was first running as Shooting Roots, to about 200-250 all told, but most people doing two or three different series. That's the thing, people don't just want to be musicians: they want to do a couple of things, or at least try it out.<sup>35</sup>

In 2005, Shooting Roots did not play a part in the schedule at Sidmouth's festival. It did, however, appear on the programmes of no fewer than eight other festivals located all over the country, demonstrating the transferability of the workshop series they provide, along with its desirability for other festival organizers (since fewer than half of these are organized by Mrs Casey Music). For the last two years the numerous potential Shooting Roots tutors have attended an annual meeting and training weekend exploring not only the various possible methods of conducting workshops, but also basic issues pertaining to health and safety and arts administration. The organization continues to exist as a coordinated group of – often geographically distant – individuals: FolkArts England's headquarters remain in Matlock, Derbyshire (see Figure 16), whilst Swift continues to live in London; other tutors are based in Somerset, Whitley Bay, and Shropshire to list but three. The result is a network of young amateur folk musicians spanning the length and breadth of the country, and the Shooting Roots workforce enjoys a speedy turn-over: older tutors follow new careers (often as performers); new young participants supersede the level of teaching on offer and are offered tutoring work themselves.

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<sup>35</sup> Laurel Swift, interview, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2005.

A lot of the people who aren't interested in participating in the workshops anymore because their too musically able, you can say to them, "oh, can you come and tutor on this", so you've got a lot more openings for keeping people involved in different ways.<sup>36</sup>

## **Educating at folk festivals**

In considering Swift's discussion of the origins and development of the Shooting Roots workshop series and related activities, two key themes are especially prominent, and offer great insight into both the very particular nature of the festival context and the 'English' folk music culture writ-large. First and most significant of these is the fact that any educational element to Shooting Roots' activities is tempered by an emphasis on inclusion and participation, as the subtitle of the group's website implies:

Providing music, dance, song and theatre opportunities for young people.<sup>37</sup>

Swift expands on this sense of informality, offering a pseudo-pedagogical justification for the specifically non-directive educational practice:

[...] It's about informal music making for young people; it's about facilitating [...] – [enabling them] to go off and do their own thing in their own time. [...] Shooting Roots isn't about spoon-feeding people, it's about slightly frustrating them... to give them the incentive either to go off somewhere where they can be spoon-

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> FolkArts England, 'Shooting Roots'.



fed, or to figure it out for themselves, in their own way.<sup>38</sup>

This understanding of Shooting Roots' approach to folk music education plays an important role in the formulation of a corporate identity that posits itself in opposition to the practices of Folkworks:

I think the difference is the tutors (having been on the Folkworks Summer school as well, and having for a long time had a lot of good stuff from Folkworks). Folkworks, for me, has always been about experts telling you how to do it properly: not necessarily saying "oh, don't do it like that, that's wrong", but it's somebody who's in a position of knowledge, leading a workshop where you get taught stuff and it's generally – I mean the tutors they have in are great, and they're a great bunch, and they're generally young (as in, they're under 40). Shooting Roots, the tutors are usually under 25, definitely under 30, and it's much more about being a facilitator. [...] So I think Shooting Roots is about informal music making, and I think Folkworks is, erm, I need to be careful how I phrase this: I don't think that they're not about informal music making, which is what folk music is, but they've provided a framework in which you can learn to get better at it through working with a tutor. I think Shooting Roots is about trying to provide the incentive for people to do it themselves, and I think Folkworks is providing the skills and the detail and stuff, but I think in doing that you don't lead to creative exploration – you don't lead to people thinking for themselves and figuring stuff out for themselves.<sup>39</sup>

The emotive nature of this differentiation is all the more notable since it is articulated by someone who is, apparently, being "careful how she phrases it".

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<sup>38</sup> Laurel Swift, interview, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2005.

<sup>39</sup> Laurel Swift, interview, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2005.

Besides the presentation of these alternative educational models as an explanation of Shooting Roots' methodology and underlying attitudes, however, more fundamental features of the festival context provide further insight into the practical development of the organization. Perhaps most significant of these is the fact that the festival, as a cultural phenomenon, exists primarily for the purposes of arts *entertainment*, rather than *education* per se. Since Shooting Roots' workshops are, in many cases, aimed towards introducing young people to a new activity (whether that be arranging a folk tune for wind instruments, or rapper dancing), a concentrated level of formal direction may be inappropriate, and unlikely to enthuse the beginner. As an event within the programme of a festival, Shooting Roots is in constant competition with other events – in particular, concerts – and so cannot afford to be regarded as an extension of school by potential participants.<sup>40</sup>

The informal nature of the organization's tutoring is made manifest in a number of practical ways. Firstly, many of the workshops are led by more than one tutor – indeed, the size of groups attending the workshops can often be too great for a single leader to be practical. It is certainly worth noting that such large groups are usually not split into smaller ones, of a size more manageable for an individual tutor, since this would be to negate the very communal and socially inclusive elements of the organization's ethos. Where multiple leaders are present at a single workshop, a dilution of artistic, educative and social responsibility takes place, which in itself serves to reinforce the underlying sense of community by eroding teacher/learner barriers. In my observation of such workshops, a key component to the reinforcement

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<sup>40</sup> However, the overriding sense of informality and emphasis on enthusiastic engagement rather than expert direction must necessarily be tempered, at least to a certain extent, by an essentially educational grounding, since Shooting Roots play an important economic role in the drawing of family audiences to the festivals in which it operates, as shall be discussed later in this chapter.



of an informal atmosphere appeared to be the social interaction between the tutors, many of whom have become close friends during their experiences tutoring for Shooting Roots and are able to put participants at ease with their casual repartee.

Informality is also inherent in the names of workshop series that Shooting Roots run (e.g. 'Funky World Band', 'Commotion', etc). At the end of the Sidmouth International Festival in 2004, participants were asked to fill out an evaluation questionnaire: the questionnaire asked for respondents to rate various elements of the Shooting Roots experience on a scale from 1-5, where 5 was labelled 'Totally Great' and 1 was labelled 'Well Dodgy'.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, a chief characteristic of the events is the non-directive approaches taken: participants are regularly asked how they think proceedings should continue, and often have considerable influence over the artistic direction of a workshop, particularly when those attending participants are of a higher level of musical ability.

The second key theme recurrent in Swift's discussion of Shooting Roots is closely related to this issue of informality, and of the dialogues between education and entertainment within the festival context: the corporate identity of the organization is also based upon an explicit identification of tutors with their tutees. The notion that the activities offered by the group are devised and run "for young people, by young people" is central to both its marketing and its growing success. The Shooting Roots website expresses this sense of identification as alternative to the straight-forward provision of a service:

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<sup>41</sup> Laurel Swift, *Shooting Roots; Sidmouth Festival Shooting Roots Evaluation 30 July-6 August*. (Matlock: FolkArts England, 2004).

The project has gone on to be developed at other festivals and over the years has gained identity with young people aged between 12-25yrs.<sup>42</sup>

The close proximity in age between the tutors and participants is real: Swift herself is under thirty years old, whilst the majority of her staff are younger, and many are situated within the latter half of the age range for whom the organization caters. The tutors are, therefore, identifiable as representatives of the participants' own peer group, a feature of Shooting Roots that has a profound effect on its educative practice.

In the first instance, this peer-identification of Shooting Roots' personnel with its participants and (more importantly) visa-versa, is the resultant sense of a musically exploratory environment from which members of the older generation ("adults") are excluded. This is important in terms of the immediate context of the folk festival, where the number of attendees over thirty is certain to outweigh that of attendees within Shooting Roots' target age range, with few – if any – other opportunities for the latter to escape the company of the former in a secure and entertaining setting. Furthermore, almost all of Shooting Roots' participants under the age of sixteen years will have come to the festival as part of a nuclear family group. In other words, the success of Shooting Roots within the festival context lies in the fact that not only are there (seemingly) no "adults" involved, but there are specifically no *parents* present, something that can hardly be guaranteed at any of the adult workshops.

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<sup>42</sup> FolkArts England, 'Shooting Roots'.



Within the wider context of available folk music education in England, this feature of the Shooting Roots organization also stands in contradistinction to Folkworks, whose workshops are generally run by “adults” (in culturally identifiable terms), and most often either for mixed age groups separated by ability (e.g. the *Fiddles On Fire* weekend) , or at the very least separated by age group with children’s events running alongside – and in relatively close proximity to – adult workshops (e.g. the Summer School).

Such generational identity and the social affinity which that identity inevitably embodies does, of course, reinforce the notion of a relaxed, informal atmosphere. The two themes of informality and youth identity are, indeed, inalienably linked.

However, one could argue that the relationship between the two features exists on pedagogical as well as social grounds: the individual tutors have rarely received any degree of educative training outside of the annual tutors weekend which, as has been mentioned, is as much aimed at health and safety, and administrative issues as it is at pedagogical good practice:

... we’re not telling them how to teach or what to teach, we’re just helping them with the answers and helping them work through when things aren’t going right, or when they’ve got questions and they’re not sure. Tutor training is very much not about telling people how to do things, but making sure they know the basics of health and safety, and making sure they’ve got different means of getting what they want across.<sup>43</sup>

It could therefore be argued that a lesser degree of formal structure in Shooting Roots workshops and activities is predictable, since the tutors have not received training that

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<sup>43</sup> Laurel Swift, interview, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2005.

would, most likely, seek to encourage the maximization of quantitative educational results only possible through a certain (higher) level of prescription. It could also be argued that, where tutors are generally less experienced and perhaps, therefore, less confident of specific teaching practice, the smallest measure of antagonism will be avoided, resulting in a particularly participant-led event.

It would be misleading to suggest that all Folkworks tutors necessarily receive rigorous training before running workshops, although such training is available through The Sage Gateshead's *Folk Force* programme.<sup>44</sup> Nonetheless, Folkworks' predominantly older tutors are likely to have attended events of a related nature; many are, or have been, educators outside of folk music and are likely to have internalized the value of a moderately structured methodology. Many more will be most experienced in running workshops for an adult majority, where notions of facilitating musical exploration and maturation processes are less relevant: the adult participant is more likely to have very clear and quantifiable expectations of a workshop's results, i.e. that s/he will leave the workshop being able to do something that s/he could not do prior to attending.

It could also be argued that the techniques employed by Shooting Roots' tutors may be imbued with a more experientially motivated – albeit not necessarily conscious – grounding. It is important to remember that the majority of the organizations tutoring personnel have only recently crossed the relatively hazy divide from participant to workshop leader. It is not unheard of for a newly appointed tutor leading a workshop

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<sup>44</sup> The Sage Gateshead, 'Learning and Participation; Folk Force', *The Sage Gateshead*. [http://www.thesagegateshead.org/l\\_and\\_p/practitioners/folkforce.aspx](http://www.thesagegateshead.org/l_and_p/practitioners/folkforce.aspx) (5th Feb 2004).



series to be attending another as a participant. In such a context of regular turnover and “graduation” from learner to teacher, tutors are likely to have clear memories and constructs of their experiences as participants. It is therefore to be expected that these tutors will be most likely to recreate those practices and techniques that they themselves – as participants – have found most beneficial and enjoyable. In other words, the less structured casualness of the workshops offered by Shooting Roots must necessarily have experiential foundations, implying that the techniques and practices applied by tutors are based on the evidence of recent musical encounters, rather than simply being the result of a context-driven accident or of an age based *inexperience*. This explanation of informal practice within the workshops is certainly supported by the growing number of participants attending the workshops and of the high retention and “graduation” of individuals within Shooting Roots as a whole.

## **Shooting Roots as a festival commodity**

One essential factor contributing to the success of Shooting Roots is the organization’s ability to fulfil a number of non-educational roles. Not least of these is Shooting Roots’ significant function of attracting funding – and particularly public funding – for the festival by whom they are employed. Such funding, usually originating from the Arts Council England, is the subject of considerable competition, and successful applications are increasingly reliant upon the applicant – in this case a festival organizer – being able to demonstrate a demographic breadth of target audience. This is particularly vital in the case of folk arts organizations, for reasons made clear previously in this chapter: the folk music of ‘England’ still tends to draw audiences who are predominantly above the age of 40; furthermore, the wider public

consciousness of mainstream English society continues to *associate* the various activities related to folk music with discursive figures who all share the trait of middle-age.

With folk music embroiled in these expectations from non-folk orientated individuals (such as one may anticipate finding on the committee for a national arts-funding body), a festival's organizers must be seen to be making specific and considerable attempts to broaden this projected audience demography, by making provision explicitly for "young people". The inclusion of an educational element to this provision is yet more acceptable to funding bodies (although it must, ironically, be down-played by more publicly circulated material – where the emphasis is on having fun and making new friends – in order to achieve the desired result of actually *attracting* young attendees). The significance of attracting funding, and the identification and labelling of a locality's socio-cultural needs, as a central responsibility of Shooting Roots is highlighted by Swift:

On the application forms now, whenever I'm filling in Shooting Roots things it says "what issue of social economic deprivation blah-de-blah...do you tackle", and we're mostly dealing with middle class, white kids, but we're tackling isolation. Definitely, because we've got all these kids who want to do something, and there's just no opportunity to do it.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Laurel Swift, interview, 28th February 2005.



Shooting Roots' main advertisement to festival organizers – its website – makes the point succinctly: in the list of three main advantages to contracting Shooting Roots, entitled 'Outcome for Festival', the second is 'more appealing to funders'.<sup>46</sup>

One indirect function of Shooting Roots pertains to the *maintenance* (rather than development) of the young festival audience. Swift describes the scenario as it progressed in the case of Sidmouth International Festival:

A couple of things have happened at Sidmouth. Firstly there's started to be a massive presence of young people at the festival: we've found that people when they get to sort of 14-15, and have the opportunity to go on holiday [either] with their parents or with their friends, rather than not coming to Sidmouth and going on holiday with their friends, which is what they *were* doing, they're coming to Sidmouth and bringing their friends with them. So we didn't just keep all the young people that have been coming through Shooting Roots, we gained a lot more because we gained their friends. And also young people who had been coming to the festival but hadn't been coming to Shooting Roots kept coming to the festival because there were all these other young people still there, because Shooting Roots was a magnet for them. Even people who never went to Shooting Roots were being kept in [attendance].<sup>47</sup>

Not surprisingly, anecdotal evidence along these lines is given pride of place within the publicity material featured on the website. Furthermore, the idea is expanded to show the potential of achieving such audience retention: first on the list of 'outcome[s] for festival[s]' is the promise of a '[r]apidly growing young and loyal audience - future security, present vibrancy'.<sup>48</sup> Such effects (or claims of effect) are

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<sup>46</sup> FolkArts England, 'Shooting Roots at YOUR Festival', *Shooting Roots*. <http://www.folkarts-england.org/sroots/hireout.htm> (20th January, 2006).

<sup>47</sup> Laurel Swift, interview, 28th February 2005.

<sup>48</sup> FolkArts England, 'Shooting Roots at YOUR Festival'.

key to Shooting Roots' success within festivals, and growing popularity among festival organizers: aside from the fact that the provision of separate entertainment for young people in a safe and officially sanctioned context is, unsurprisingly, popular amongst both ticket-purchasing parents and their offspring, so the guarantee of loyal, contiguous future audiences is vitally important to a festival's potential investors. Above all, however, is the simple fact that the presence of Shooting Roots at a festival is demonstrative of a considered, long-term development plan, which in turn suggests a strong investment to sponsors, promoters and funding bodies.

As was briefly mentioned earlier in this chapter, Shooting Roots is – like Folkworks – a subsidiary element of a larger organization: FolkArts England. The complexity of the organization's structure is briefly indicated by Swift:

L: So the way it works at other festivals [is that] they buy us in: we say "we'll cost you this much", they say "OK, here's your money – get on with it". While this has all been happening, in the last year FolkArts England has come into being, which is an umbrella body for the Association of Festival Organizers, the Folk Arts Network, Shooting Roots, and Direct Roots. The FAN and the AFO are much more established – particularly the AFO – than Shooting Roots, but it's a partner in it, and that's sort of seen as the mission... FolkArts England pays me a retainer to stop me going off and doing forty other things in the summer, so that Shooting Roots will be my priority... So in that sense, we are subsidising what's happening at the other festivals. Shooting Roots *wants* to do lots of other things. But a lack of administrator I think is the key. I'm not really an administrator, and that's not what I'm paid to do – I'm the artistic director [...].

S: FolkArts England, where do they get their money from?

L: Arts Council. And heavily subsidized by Mrs Casey Enterprises [...].



S: Where does Mrs Casey fit into it all?

L: Mrs Casey is an assortment of different companies: there's Mrs Casey Records; there's Mrs Casey Music; there's Towersey Festival; there was Sidmouth Festival; at one point there was about ten things. So the Record company, is a record company and a record shop. Mrs Casey Music I think are consultants and organizers, so they run festivals or they are consultants for people wanting whatever specialist information they can provide. And... Mrs Casey Music are hired in by Towersey Village Festival, by Beverley Festival, now, and were hired in by Sidmouth Festival to run those festivals, so they get a management fee from the festival for running the festival. But, if Steve [Heap] owns all of it then, at the end of the day if it goes down, he goes down.

Before FolkArts England, it was always straight forward in that they were always running a business. Now, suddenly you're getting into situations where you can apply for funding to do stuff. Because that's always been our ... Shooting Roots hasn't been funded: we've got funded once by the Arts Council at Sidmouth – possibly twice – and for the two years at Towersey. A couple of times we've been funded by Friends of Sidmouth Festival, but it's still a from-the-event kind of thing. Because it was run by a business, and not by a charitable organization, we – on the whole – weren't eligible for funding, so we just ended up doing voluntary work. It [FolkArts England] is not a charity yet, but it's all advocacy kind of work. The AFO is about support for festivals, FAN is about a practitioners network, Shooting Roots is about providing a service, Direct Roots is an information service (I think it would like to be able to be a *free* information service, but somebody's got to collect it, collate it, edit it. At the minute, it's not funded so it can't be free). Shooting Roots would be doing heaps of brilliant stuff outside of festival season now, if we had an administrator. But [with funding from] Youth Music, for example, you're only allowed to spend something very low – it's either five or ten percent of the cost of your grant on administration, because they want the money to be spent on musicians... We can't run a melodeon project because we haven't got any melodeons, and we can't run any projects because... we've got loads of tutors, but haven't got anyone to actually run the stuff. The Arts Council will pay for administrators if you remember to put it in your budget, but what everybody wants – which is on the decrease – is core funding,

where the core administration of your organization is funded, and then you buy in to do projects; that's what we don't have. Well, actually that's what we do now have from FolkArts England on a small scale, but we need more to actually get beyond just thinking about it.

What is interesting about this configuration of the various elements of the organization, is the categorization and distancing in image (at least on a publicity level) between FolkArts England – whose 'advocacy kind of work' is obviously developing with an intention to achieve some form of charitable status in the future – and Mrs Casey Enterprises, which is fundamentally a business, not vying (or eligible) for funding, and concerned with offering services and products for a profit. The two facets of Heap's business are generally not associated in publicity (the FolkArts England and Shooting Roots websites make no mention of Mrs Casey Enterprises), despite the fact that the former is financially beholden to the latter, and that both are essentially run by the same individuals (specifically, Heap and Bearman). For the purposes of this thesis, suffice it to say that the clear distinction between the charitable and the profitable within these ventures is indicative of the complex economically ordered structures compliant in the contemporary institutionalization of folk music.

## **Riffs and Pop; context, music and culture**

Unsurprisingly, 'English' folk music plays a significant role in the educative practices of Shooting Roots: a particularly popular tune being taught by the group during the period of fieldwork was *Old Tom of Oxford*, a tune typical of the 'English' repertory (see Example 23). The tune is quintessentially 'English', being predominated by crotchet durations, scalar and arpeggiotic movement. As has been discussed earlier in



this chapter, these musical characteristics are most common within ‘English’ folk music, and combine to form a repertory that is accessible to musicians of a greater range of technical abilities, relative to Celtic and Northumbrian repertories of the North East.

**Example 23:** *Old Tom of Oxford*

This accessibility of the “dots” in their basic form to learners has a great deal of bearing on the way in which the educative practices of Shooting Roots operate and are delivered: where the material is technically easier to learn, emphasis on informality and experiential styles of teaching and learning are most likely to succeed.

This is not, however, to suggest that English folk music is the sole content of the Shooting Roots programmes: much as repertorial diversity is central to the practices of Folkworks and the folk degree, so too is it a key element of Shooting Roots. Here, however, the musical genres drawn upon – outside of the standard traditional

repertory exemplified above – are very different, and perhaps more profoundly distinctive, since they often fall within the common categorization of popular music:

...We did the Funky World Band – one of our series, which was basically a community music style thing. Everybody learnt a tune as part of it, but we were much more into learning riffs, and ‘this section do this for a bit, and this section do that’, and we were all sounding great together. So it’s not about learning detail, it’s just about playing in a band.

...In the Shooting Roots ‘Big Band’ one year they did the Muppets! So they [Shooting Roots] are not *necessarily* doing folk stuff, they’re just getting together and playing.<sup>49</sup>

In this quote, the performance of the theme tune to the one-time popular television show *The Muppets* is presented by Swift as an amusing anomaly from the norms of the group. However, a popularist approach to music-making that included regular sojourns beyond the boundaries of “folk” or “traditional” music *per se* was a key element of the activities observed during the period of research for this thesis. For instance, the use of ‘riffs’ such as those referred to by Swift in reference to the ‘Funky World Band’ is actually prevalent throughout the various group activities offered by Shooting Roots: a key example is the Shooting Roots arrangement of the old ‘English’ tune *Bob and Joan* (Example 24).<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Laurel Swift, interview, 28th February 2005.

<sup>50</sup> It should be noted that this tune is known by a number of title variants, of which this is likely to be one of the more recent. Playford’s “Dancing Master” of 1651 lists the tune as ‘Bobbing Joe’.



**A**

**B**

**Example 24: *Bob and Joan***

During their workshop series at the Towersey Village Festival in 2004, Shooting Roots tutors taught *Bob and Joan* to the participants of the ‘Megaband’ (the largest instrumental performance group). Once the members of the group were comfortable with the tune, they were separated into groups; these groups were given the respective roles of creating “riffs” taken *from within the material of the tune*. These fragments can be seen in Example 25.

Riff 1. Riff 2. Riff 3. Riff 4. Riff 5.

**Example 25: Shooting Roots "Riffs" accompaniment to *Bob and Joan***

The riffs were then employed thus: the Megaband's performance was opened by the first and second subgroups playing Riff 1; on direction from a tutor, the second subgroup moved on to Riff 2; they then returned to Riff 1, whilst a third group began playing the melody as it appears in Example 24; upon reaching the B part of the tune, the first group moved on to Riff 2, whilst the second group accompanied with Riff 3. The process continued using various permutations of these groups and riffs, until the tune had been performed in its entirety some 6 times, and ceased to give way to simultaneous exposition of all five of the riffs. The groups gradually reverted back to the first Riff, until this was the only material being played. At this point, and with direction from the tutors, the music was brought to a close.

The use of brief, repeated phrases, such as the riffs referred to above, certainly resolves many of the problems thrown up by the brief of orchestrating activities that are both educational and aimed at a resultant "performance": in terms of educational functionality, a one- or two-bar riff is quick and easy to teach to young people of a wide range of abilities; the use of riffs immediately enables a group to adopt the melody/accompaniment dialectic of a cohesive musical ensemble (it is, after all, 'just about playing in a band'); from a performance perspective, this dialectic and resultant cohesion is identifiable to the (consuming, parental) audience.

In the mainstream of "arranged" contemporary 'English' folk music (and, indeed, contemporary folk music across Britain), riffs are rarely employed as a device for accompaniment: in the majority of popular cases, recording groups generally orchestrate the raw musical material according to a primarily monodic principle, where the central melody is balanced by an accompaniment comprising of rhythm and



chordal harmony. However, such a principle relies on the inclusion of various instruments that are respectively predisposed to the creation of each of these elements (e.g. percussion for rhythm; guitars, accordions, melodeons, etc. for chordal harmony). The ever changing participant composition of groups in the Shooting Roots programmes means that the level of attendance and ability of instrumentalists able to fill these categories cannot be relied upon for the formulation of a structured framework. 'Riff' accompaniment, however, (as well as being quickly and easily taught) can be achieved by participants using a wide variety of musical instruments.

The creation of a riff is also an important feature of Shooting Roots educative practices, since it provides a valuable opportunity for participants of varying levels of musical knowledge and skill to become involved in a process of group creativity. It is possible for the vast majority of participants on a Shooting Roots group programme such as the Funky World Band to provide creative input in the development and implementation of an ostinato accompaniment figure, within a very short time frame (a weekend-long festival, for instance). This specific provision of creative opportunity enables the organization to reinforce its image as a group of facilitators rather than formal pedagogues, although the opportunity exists within a highly structured and managed framework.

Thus the musical material used by the tutors, besides that of the tunes themselves, is quite unrepresentative of the 'English' folk music culture with which the institution associates: rather, they can be regarded as the result of contextually delineated points of necessity. However, this is only one of a number of possible readings of Shooting Roots' musical directions. Another reading stems from the cross-cultural associations

of the “riff” within music. By far the most overriding of these within contemporary British culture is that with Western mainstream popular music.<sup>51</sup> Such associations are strengthened by the nature of the riffs used by in Shooting Roots’ workshops: these are often pentatonic in construction, and generally built around syncopated rhythmic structures reminiscent of pop music from throughout the last half of the twentieth century. Engagement with – and, indeed, direct reference to – pop music writ-large was actually a common theme within the musical texts of Shooting Roots activities during the period of research: during the Shooting Roots Forum (a music and song session, formally led by Shooting Roots tutors), a leading tutor accompanied the traditional ‘English’ tune *Gallopede*, (Example 19, see page 268) with the clearly recognizable bass line to the song *I Want You Back* by the Jackson Five. One of the Shooting Roots team’s more popular and less skill-specific music-making activities was body-popping, where the thumping of chests, clicking of fingers and clapping of hands in directed patterns – intended to imitate the bass drum, high-hat and snare, respectively, of a drum kit – resulted in the recreation of rock/pop drum rhythms. These rhythms could then be used to accompany instrumentalists performing ‘English’ traditional tunes.

The association of Shooting Roots with mainstream (e.g. non-folk related) popular genres in this way can be interpreted as resulting from a combination of two key factors. On the one hand, it can be seen as a method whereby Shooting Roots as an organization can maximize its market potential: due to the context of the festival, participants of the groups programmes cannot be expected to share the same depth of

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<sup>51</sup> See, for instance, Richard Middleton ‘Play it again, Sam: some notes on the productivity of repetition in popular music’, *Popular Music*, 3 (1983), 235-270.



devotion to – or interest in – folk music. Therefore, the combination of folk music with stylistic elements of pop music – achieved in such a way that these elements reside in the middle- and background (i.e. accompaniment) of the musical texts – can enable the folk music to become more accessible to those more culturally distant to it. In this way, Shooting Roots are broadening their target demographic, whilst ensuring and increasing their popularity among their more traditionally-oriented clientele who are, for the most part, active participants in pop music culture as well as folk music culture.

On the other hand, this association with aspects of mainstream popular culture can be viewed as more than a mere affectation, practised in order that the organization might achieve economic success: it is also a reflection of the *tutors*' musical and cultural inclinations. These young 'facilitators', whilst sharing an interest in folk music and its related activities, remain very active members of contemporary popular culture (see Figure 17)<sup>52</sup>: they follow mainstream sartorial fashion; they own mobile phones; as well as folk music, they listen to pop, rock and hip-hop, to list but three generic music labels.

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<sup>52</sup> The figure situated at the back on the far left is a guitarist named Matt. Of interest here is the fact that his stance and dress in this photograph would not be incongruous with the visual content of a contemporary hip-hop music video.





**Figure 17: Shooting Roots tutors**

Swift explains that the level of engagement with popular culture has, on occasions, resulted in concerns among those more exclusively involved in folk music, such as the fiddler, Kirsty Cotter, a tutor on the original music workshop series:

Kirsty's issue with it was that most of the tutors on Shooting Roots music [series] only did folk at Sidmouth, they didn't do it the rest of the year. Now that's not entirely true, but it's certainly true ... [that] they weren't absolutely obsessive about it; they didn't listen to folk music and nothing else all the time, [which] I think was probably the gripe.<sup>53</sup>

It could be argued, then, that Shooting Roots is, like Folkworks, a music culture in its own right: it is certainly not necessarily representative of the 'English' folk music culture in its entirety, since its artistic texts are largely defined by the generation for whom – and by whom – it has been created. In contrast, the patrons of 'English' folk clubs – mostly in their fifties and sixties, as identified by MacKinnon – rarely make reference to contemporary popular culture, except for the purposes of achieving

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<sup>53</sup> Laurel Swift, interview, 28th February 2005.



humour through incongruity. However, the transient nature of Shooting Roots activities – its ability to succeed in drawing new participants and, subsequently, new tutors whilst constantly moving around on the country’s folk festival circuit – would suggest that its activities, artistic values and cultural systems *are* representative of something extant outside the boundaries of the institution itself. Apparently, then, a “young” ‘English’ folk music culture is identifiable; here we are observing a movement that is very clearly distinct from the adult folk music culture alongside which it develops.

Just as in the case of the Folkworks folk music culture, the “young” ‘English’ folk music culture has also developed on the foundation of textual diversity and liberal absorption. However, where Folkworks (and the North East) are constantly drawing on alternative “folk and traditional” repertoires (be they American Old-Time fiddle repertoires or Finnish Tango), Shooting Roots appears to embody a cultural inclination towards an engagement with mainstream popular culture.

This interpretation is supported by the output of numerous contemporary ‘English’ folk musicians: The fiddler and singer Eliza Carthy’s double album *Red Rice* continues to be regarded as an especially significant move to fuse traditional material with contemporary popular styles and instruments, a move not attempted so explicitly since the folk-rock generation of her father (Martin Carthy, one time member of Steeleye Span) some thirty five years previously.<sup>54</sup> More recent support for this reading exists in the form and success of the band Bellowhead, which includes in its

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<sup>54</sup> Eliza Carthy, *Red Rice* (Topic, 1998). For more on the folk rock movement, see Sweers, *Electric Folk*.

line-up the popular folk singers and musicians John Spiers, Jon Boden and Benji Kirkpatrick and which celebrates the release of its debut album *Burlesque* on the 1st of December 2006 with an appearance on the popular BBC 2 pop music programme *Later with Jools Holland*.<sup>55</sup> Bellowhead is best known for combining traditional ‘English’ music with stylistic elements and orchestration more commonly associated with Big Band jazz or swing. At the time of the field research conducted for this thesis, a particularly celebrated new figure on the stages of Sidmouth International Festival was the young performer Jim Moray. A central characteristic of Moray’s music is the use of digital recording equipment to achieve live sampling, which plays a substantial role within his live performances and recordings, and speaks of a broader engagement with music technology uncommon in contemporary folk music.<sup>56</sup> Moray received the BBC 2 Folk Awards Album of The Year Award 2004. The performer Seth Lakeman came to prominence the following year as an exponent of acoustic pop-oriented folk song and was nominated for the Nationwide Mercury Prize in 2005.<sup>57</sup>

It would, of course, be hazardous to suggest that such “fusions” of traditional and pop musical elements does not occur within the contemporary Celtic folk music cultures: similar musical dialectics are (and have, for some years) been closely associated with a number of Irish and Scottish traditional performers such as Michael McGoldrick and bands such as Shooglenifty, Capercaillie and the Peatbog Faeries.<sup>58</sup> It would also be misleading to suggest that the explicit combination of folk music with pop elements constitutes the majority of the “young” ‘English’ music culture’s output: such

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<sup>55</sup> Bellowhead, *Burlesque* (Westpark, 2006).

<sup>56</sup> Jim Moray, *Sweet England* (Weatherbox, 2003).

<sup>57</sup> Seth Lakeman, *Freedom Fields* (I Scream, 2006).

<sup>58</sup> Shooglenifty, *A Whisky Kiss* (Greentrax, 1996); Capercaillie, *Beautiful Wasteland*. (Survival, 1997); Peatbog Faeries, *Welcome to Dun Vegas*. (Peatbog, 2003).



references are far more subtle (albeit, one might argue, not absent) in the music of high-profile young folk musicians such as Robert Harbron, John Dipper, and the duo John Spiers and Jon Boden. Here, any musical absorption from mainstream popular culture – usually in the form of chord choices and pedals – is often only identifiable through a process of extremely close scrutiny that moves beyond the scope of the present study. However, the *growth* of this practice over the course of a single decade has been particularly marked in the context of “young” ‘English’ folk music culture, and suggests a real musical trend that plays a central role in the defining of a generational group.

The trend has been most recently manifest in the album *Stiffs Lovers Holymen Thieves* by the popular melodeon player and vocalist Tim Van Eyken, on which the majority of tracks include electric guitars, bass guitar, drum kit and sequencing.<sup>59</sup> This development is particularly significant, since Van Eyken’s previous output has been notably “traditionalist” in its orchestration and character. This is also true of the vocalist and fiddler Nancy Kerr, who appears regularly throughout Van Eyken’s album. Also significant is the rife appearance of short, one- or two-bar riffs in the accompaniment to songs and tunes. One might even argue, then, that *Shooting Roots* – whilst not necessarily *forging* a popular aesthetic – is responding to a trend at a speed comparable to those leading performers of the highest profile.

Furthermore, the cementing of this “popularized” musical aesthetic in terms of a national (i.e. ‘English’) identity is clear: Jim Moray’s success was launched by his album entitled *Sweet England*; In 2002, Eliza Carthy released her album, *Anglicana*;

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<sup>59</sup> Tim Van Eyken, *Stiffs Lovers Holymen Thieves*. (Topic Records, 2006).

Seth Lakeman's album, *Freedom Fields*, takes the name of the 1643 battle that is regarded by historians as a turning point in the English civil war. In 2006, Laurel Swift and a large group of "young" Cotswold morris dancers toured a number of English middle scale arts venues with the English Acoustic Collective, giving a joint performance entitled *On English Ground*. The creation and dissemination of this national identity through commercially distributed recordings and performances is certainly an area requiring of further, profound research. The brief details outlined here are provided merely as indication of a recent development of 'English' national consciousness, running parallel to the growth of educational institutionalization such as Shooting Roots.

Alongside the activities of Shooting Roots, then, one is able to observe the construction of an 'English' traditional musical identity; just as with the North East musical identity supported by Folkworks, this 'Englishness' appears to be characterized by cultural absorption. Unlike Folkworks, however, this absorption is not simply the unspoken assimilation of various, "non-local" traditional repertoires: instead, it is manifest in the – often subtle and complex – combination of mainstream popular cultural elements with the traditional, whether that be the incorporation of pop music devices or (in the case of *On English Ground*) simply the infiltration of mainstream performance contexts. In both cases, the diversity encouraged is enveloped in a discourse of identity, regional or national.



## **6. A Greater Whole: Identity, Education and Big Business**

The two examples of educational institutionalization discussed in the previous chapters – whilst very different in approach, content and context – are by no means wholly disparate locations within the cultural landscape of traditional and folk music in contemporary England. Since their respective conceptions, consumers and personnel have moved between these institutions – and continue to do so – in search of new learning opportunities, performance experiences or employment. This concluding chapter links Shooting Roots and Folkworks back to their wider context of contemporary England, offering assessment of their influences and implications outside of their immediate working parameters. I shall demonstrate how both are complicit in the articulation of the cultural and musical divide between Celtic music and the ‘English’ repertory and, therefore, the development of an ‘English’ musical identity. A brief ethnography of the BBC Young Folk Award 2005 final shall be offered to demonstrate the collusion of multiple agencies including Shooting Roots and Folkworks in the development of a folk music industry, and I shall continue by considering institutionalization alongside notions of consumerism, commodification and privatization. Finally, the chapter shall return to the controversial matter of defining folk music in terms of the material discussed in this thesis, and shall consider what elements – if any – can be regarded as definitive of this ‘traditional’ genre.

## **Improvisation versus speed: the new 'English' style**

It is certainly important to note that written criticisms pertaining to the folk degree such as those discussed in chapter 4, whatever their implications, are *articulated* with specific reference to the degree's students. I have not, as yet, come across any written disparagement of the *staff* as regards their educational responsibilities and influences at The Sage Gateshead. Considering the ferocity and emotiveness of the discussion on the subject, both written and conversational, this is surprising: all folk musicians so concerned as to be moved to levels of criticism akin, for instance, to those of Paul Burgess are fully aware of who is involved in the formulation and running of the degree course, and especially of Anderson's, Tickell's and Kerr's respective involvement. Why, then, are these individuals not explicitly held responsible for the alleged behaviours and attitudes of their students?

This significant point can be read in one or a combination of two ways. Firstly, it can be seen as a reflection of the fact that the teaching staff are very influential and popular performers and exponents of folk music in their own right, and have been since before the folk degree came into existence. To criticize these well known and well liked figures would perhaps be a controversy too far for the majority of lesser-known, active folk musicians and commentators who are unwilling to risk losing favour with their own audiences. It could be argued that no writer within the English folk scene (most of whom are performers of one sort or another), would be prepared to risk a drop in their own popularity by challenging directly the works of such iconic figures as Anderson, Kerr and Tickell.



### Speed...young versus old

However, an alternative reading of the criticisms discussed in chapter 4 is that commentators express no quarrel with the key instigators of the folk degree, simply because they have none. This assertion is based upon the notion of generational dispute. Wider observation of the folk music cultures in England would suggest that a dichotomous disquiet exists between the two active generations of folk musicians, and is generally articulated as an issue of musical aesthetics; principally, of tempo. Essentially, the stereotypical “old folk musician” dislikes the stereotypical “young folk musician” for his or her tendency to play tunes too quickly, without enough “feeling” for the music, and with too great an interest in complex arrangement. Meanwhile, the stereotypical “young folk musician” is bored by the slow and uninteresting playing of the stereotypical “old folk musician”, attributing these features to a lack of technical ability and creativity.

Such a generation rift is articulated by one member of the discussion board that forms part of the Irish traditional music website, *The Session*, who opens a discussion thread (entitled *Old People*) thus:

Why the hell are other members of the session always so critical of the young people in sessions?! I never hear a good word! Remember, we're the future PLUS some tunes are supposed to [be] fast and not all played at a boring old doddery pace where the triplets sound laboured and one time through the tune feels like it has already gone on too long. I know I'll get bombarded with angry people now but it has to be said!!!  
Posted on May 30th 2006 by JoeOConnor10<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Session, ‘Old People’, *Discussions*, <http://www.thesession.org/discussions/display/10181/comments#comment212436> (May 30th 2006).

The case of the folk degree at The Sage Gateshead, it could be argued, offers a clear demonstration of the ways in which an educational institution – and particularly a *new* strain of educational institution in receipt of media coverage proportionately greater than that of the culture to which it is associated – can be a target for the rehearsal of one generation’s aesthetic disparity with the next. The interesting point about this “generational dispute” model with regards to the public appraisal of the folk degree is that its formulation relies on an acknowledgement of the students’ considerable powers of aesthetic, cultural selection – both collective and individual. Through this understanding of the degree, the students are led and taught by “older generation” folk musicians of the highest quality (and therefore, one might argue, most representative of “older generation” aesthetics) but are, nonetheless, capable of making musical, stylistic selections quite incongruent with those of their teachers’ peers.

What has been suggested here is that, where folk musicians of the “older generation” write disapprovingly of the folk degree students, they are actually arguing against the students’ musical and stylistic selections. The fact that such criticisms – when they are voiced – are so emotive and inflammatory, suggests that this disapproval of the students’ aesthetic preferences is strong indeed. It would therefore follow that a failure to extend the criticism to the folk degree writ-large would suggest an underlying, unyielding sympathy for the course *in principle*: apathy towards the educational institutionalization of folk music would soon turn to a firm dissatisfaction if accompanied by such a strong dislike of the course’s visible (or audible) output. A possible explanation of these responses – within the model of generational dispute – is that the course’s critics are “old generation” musicians who wish to see a degree



course that reinforces and canonizes the stylistic and repertorial selections of their own generation (i.e. of the latter part of the “second” revival). This purely aesthetic concern is, however, articulated through a discourse of “knowing or caring about” the music (to use Burgess’ phrase). The generational dispute model, which illustrates the considerable extent to which the younger generation of musicians are able to break away from the aesthetic judgements of their older tutors, would appear to totally disprove the very *possibility* of a canon-forming pedagogy in folk music: no matter what musical values are impressed upon them, the “younger generation” will make their own selections.

It is important to note that, where the aesthetic selections of the younger generation appear to diverge from those of their tutors, such divergences are not *necessarily* the result of generational rebellion – i.e. concerted anti-conformity on the part of the students. The students of the folk degree do not make value judgements in antithetical opposition to those of their tutors: the particular stylistic trait being portrayed here as representative of the younger generation of instrumentalists – speed and virtuosity – are also marked elements of the performances of both Kathryn Tickell and Catriona MacDonald. Here the question of generation breaks down when juxtaposed alongside pedagogical structure, since these two tutors are situated *between* the generations of Anderson and Kerr on the one hand; their eighteen-year-old first year students on the other. Nonetheless, in tandem with comments such as those made by Burgess, the model of generational dispute would see Tickell and MacDonald culturally associated

with their older work colleagues, despite having been students of post-war revivalists themselves in the last decade of the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup>

### Speed... 'England' versus Northumbria, Ireland and Scotland

An alternative reading of the tempo debate exists that can account for this deconstruction of the generational model offered above: that of the issue of tempo – and, specifically, of traditional instrumental music being played “too fast” – as a manifestation of wider geographical and *repertorical* characteristics and relationships. To do this, one must first return to the premise – expressed in earlier chapters of this thesis – that the North East of England’s folk music culture represents a negotiation of multiple repertoires, being a melting-pot of Northumbrian, Irish and Scottish traditional music. As has been demonstrated, all three of these instrumental repertoires are inherently imbued with a tendency towards dexterous virtuosity: the perpetual quaver movement of the reel and jig forms found in each lends itself to the development – and value – of a “prestigitatio” style.

It is also worth recapitulating earlier sections of the previous chapter to reinforce the fact that ‘English’ folk music is, on the other hand, quite different. Perhaps due to the nature of the dancing styles and contexts for which English instrumental music has been maintained, the repertory inclines toward a moderate tempo, with short (usually two bar) phrases articulated through quavers and crotchets in relatively equal measure. For example, the hop-step predominant in English morris and Ceilidh

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<sup>2</sup> Most notable is the case of Tickell, who was heavily influenced and directed by Alistair Anderson, although in a less formal context than that of a “student” on the degree course on which they both now lecture. MacDonald was a pupil of the Shetland fiddle revivalist, Tom Anderson.



dancing contrasts considerably with the percussive and intricate clog stepping of Irish and Northumbrian traditional dance, or the step of the North East-originating Rapper; thus, morris and Ceilidhs are generally characterized by tunes such as polkas, the simplicity and steady pace of which equate with that of the dance steps they accompany. Furthermore, (as has been made clear in the previous chapter) the significance of morris and Ceilidh dancing as an influential context for the maintenance of ‘English’ traditional instrumental music should not be underestimated.

The developments of a *purely* instrumental style and competence in ‘England’ are in their relative infancies compared to the instrumental music of Ireland and Scotland, for instance, where “tunes” have their own, well established performance context quite separate from those of “songs” and “dances”. Now that such developments *are* taking place in ‘England’, (such as can be observed in the works – and profiles – of the English Acoustic Collective and Spiers and Boden)<sup>3</sup> their manifestation in musical terms has taken on differential characteristics: rather than these developments resulting in the increased musical complexity and speed that appears to have resulted from the professionalization and canonization of traditional repertoires in Ireland and Scotland, ‘English’ traditional music is developing an identity formed around musical activities such as improvisation and a creative approach to harmonization.

It is, of course, important to note that the latter of these is an increasingly popular feature across British folk musics. Nonetheless, the emphasis now being placed on improvisation – “playing around a tune” – in ‘English’ folk music is particularly

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<sup>3</sup> English Acoustic Collective, *Ghosts* (RUF Records, 2004); John Spiers and Jon Boden, *Tunes* (Fellside, 2005).

significant in the current development of an 'English' instrumental style, since it differs from the Celtic styles of 'England's' neighbours. Although a certain, small degree of improvisatory behaviour – usually in the form of ornamentation and occasional arpeggiation – is implied throughout the various British repertoires, the creative freedom being advocated in the exploratory development of English country dance tunes – by exponents of the highest-profile – is now considerable in both scope and apparent importance.

At the 2005 *Fiddles on Fire* workshop event at The Sage Gateshead, I sat with a group of fiddle players as they were taught a tune by the popular performer (and member of the English Acoustic Collective) John Dipper (extracts of the workshop are included here as CD Track 11). Before playing the tune, Dipper gave a little background to the tripartite melody, which he found in a publication of *John Playford's English Dancing Master* of 1651. Once his tutees had successfully learnt the basic notation, Dipper went on to suggest that one way of 'developing' the tune to give added interest, was to play the second of the three parts (the B part) a note higher within the same scale: effectively transposing the part into the minor key of the supertonic. The degree of change in the tune's character was, unsurprisingly, considerable. The participants were overwhelmingly positive in talking about the suggested development during and after the workshop. The acceptability of such dramatic levels of personal creativity were reinforced by the concertina player Robert Harbron, in his workshop entitled 'Making a Tune Your Own'.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Folkworks, *Fiddles On Fire Festival*.



The suggestions made by Dipper in his workshop are perhaps most extreme for an ‘English’ instrumental performer: ‘playing around the tune’, as it is often referred to, is more commonly reified as the embellishment of a tune through the use of integral and auxiliary passing notes and arpeggiation. This process can be seen by comparing the “standard” tune of the ‘English’ tune of Gallopede (already referred to in chapter 5, page 268; Example 26), with a transcription outlining the improvised changes made to the norm by the skilled Shropshire melodeonist, Simon Bannister (Example 27).

The musical score for 'Gallopede (common version)' is presented in three sections, A, B, and C, each on a single staff. Section A is marked with a box containing the letter 'A' and consists of two staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The second staff continues the melody and includes a first ending (marked '1.') and a second ending (marked '2.'). Section B is marked with a box containing the letter 'B' and also consists of two staves of music. Section C is marked with a box containing the letter 'C' and consists of two staves of music. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests, along with repeat signs and first/second endings.

**Example 26: *Gallopede* (common version).**

**Example 27: *Gallopede*, performed by Simon Bannister, 1st January 2005.**

These forms of ornamentation can also be identified in the recordings of – amongst others – the English Acoustic Collective. The development of this form of improvisation has only recently begun to receive clear recognition as a discreet and articulated stylistic feature of ‘English’ folk music; it is therefore an area of considerable ethnomusicological interest, and deserving of in-depth examination, but this sadly falls beyond the scope of the present study. For the purposes of this thesis, it can be argued that the extent to which improvisatory techniques are becoming



embraced as a central element of English instrumental folk music is symptomatic of a repertory whose stylistic development is now posited in direct and clear distinction to the speed and dexterity that have come to be recognized as characteristic elements of Celtic traditional musics. Thus key figures in the development of interest in a specifically *English* instrumental folk music – such as Chris Wood – are apparently succeeding in associating the intrinsically simplistic “raw materials” of the English repertory with a distinctive creative technique that not only implies a particular and highly developed technical skill beyond recitation of a tune, but also sets English folk music apart from its Celtic counterparts. Another important implication of this improvisatory ‘English’ style is its ability to maintain the underlying cultural system of social inclusivity emphasized in chapter 5 as central to ‘English’ folk music: through this system of proficiency, highly skilled instrumentalists can play a shared repertory alongside less able performers, whilst being able to demonstrate their prowess without excluding novices from playing along. Whilst the regularity of the crotchet duration in ‘English’ repertory does lend itself to the interpolation of improvised quaver passing notes and arpeggiation, these devices are not *required*, meaning that various levels of embellishment can be employed simultaneously in a session attended by musicians of various levels of ability.

It would appear, then, that ‘English’ traditional musicians have, for reasons of repertorial inclination and cultural identity, rejected playing at high speed as a measure of technical ability. It could, therefore, be suggested that when “young people playing tunes too fast” is cited as a dislike of Folkworks’ activities (as often it is), we may in fact be witnessing a confrontation between two consciously disparate cultural value-systems. That particular criticism is, after all, primarily rehearsed by

musicians and audience members of the (southern) English folk music culture, as in the case of Paul Burgess and ‘UncleBoko’ (who describes himself as a ‘Surrey Guitarist’ later in the same thread). The critique here is, in fact, of a Celtic and Northumbrian held cultural value that is not compliant with that of its critics.

Such differences in musical value are difficult to reconcile, however, due to the complexity of Folkworks’ geographically *English* context. The media through which the folk degree course has received coverage is both regional and *national*, due at least in part to its content, which has to be described as indisputably pioneering within an *English* national context. Thus we see Folkworks and the degree course as paradoxically (or cyclically) located: on the one hand, the organization is the most visible face of folk music in the English national media, because of its uniqueness as an institution within England; on the other hand, Folkworks is simultaneously presented as an integral and representative element of English folk music culture (even within the culture itself), due to its considerable media profile. The difficulties raised in the negotiation of conceptual, cultural and musical boundaries between the regional and national are perhaps made most tangible within this context of media representation and public appraisal.

## **Competition: the Young Folk Award**

I am seated in a central position in the stalls of Hall 1, at The Sage Gateshead. Hall 1 is a large and immaculately presented concert hall: a purpose-built performance space with a fashionable, contemporary appearance, from the halogen house-lighting to the chrome hand rails. Just ahead and to the right of where I am sitting is the sound desk,



which, from where I am sitting, appears sizeable and expensive. I have not been to a concert in Hall 1 before, but have regularly attended events in the smaller, more intimately arranged Hall 2. I have, however heard from fellow musicians of the superior acoustics of this larger space. As I scan the auditorium I am aware that, whilst the concert is well attended, the hall is not filled to capacity. This comes as a surprise to me, since I am aware of the relative popularity of folk music locally, as well as the fact that the tickets to the event are free.

From my slightly elevated position at the back of the hall, I can briefly survey my fellow attendees. I am immediately aware that my gaze unavoidably falls upon a great many heads of white or thinning hair: the audience is predominantly middle aged, and I estimate that the large majority are over the age of 45. However, another age group is also well represented among the event's listenership: that of the performers' peer-group (aged approximately 15-21). Dressed in contradistinction to their older-generation counterparts (often in the very causal uniform of blue jeans and T-shirts; occasionally wearing an untucked shirt) these younger audience members are generally congregated in prearranged groups around the auditorium, and the social mixing of older and younger attendees before or after the performance – or during the interval – is rare: the few examples of such interaction that I observe are limited to brief moments of contact between Folk Degree students and their tutors (the vast majority of whom are in the audience).

The background music being played whilst the audience take their seats – a well produced professional recording featuring a fiddle and guitar playing tunes of ambiguously Celtic origin – is finally faded out, the house lighting is dimmed and the

assembled fall silent. From the wings of the stage, which are themselves adorned with large banners of the BBC Radio 2 logo, appears the man who has come to represent folk music on the British public broadcasting service, Mike Harding. Harding is immediately identifiable as a member of the predominant audience demographic: thin, whitening hair; thick, large rimmed spectacles; beard. He is, however, dressed in a far less formal manner: a creased red shirt, blue jeans, trainers and a sleeveless fishing jacket. The informality of his presentation is continued in his behaviour. Standing, almost diminutively, over to one side of the stage, Harding welcomes the audience and introduces the judges – who are sat in an elevated and highly visible position in the auditorium – whilst occasionally referring to his notes, which are written on a clearly apparent white A5 scrap of paper.

One by one, the six “acts” (four of them individuals, two of them bands of six members), are introduced by Harding, welcomed on to the stage with warm applause – occasionally supplemented by whooping and whistling from the musicians’ peer-group supporters – and given around eight to ten minutes to perform. The performances comprise of between one and three separate “sets” of tunes or songs (a mixture of traditional and newly composed), and all of the material performed is introduced or announced by the musicians themselves. This competition final includes performances on a variety of different instruments, including (in total) three vocalists, seven fiddlers, three guitarists, a flautist, a highland piper, a clarsach (or Celtic harp), a djembe player, a whistle player and a melodeon player. All of the performers play into microphones, to enable both live amplification to the audience and for the recording which will be edited and played on Radio 2’s Mike Harding show the following week. The presence of amplifying technology is rarely forgotten:



between the performance of each act – whilst Harding introduces the next – the microphone ‘set-up’ is appropriately reconfigured; at one point during the evening Harding’s microphone becomes inoperative, and a few minutes are spent waiting for the problem to be resolved; one of the solo acts is forced to wait on stage for a considerable period of time before being able to begin his performance due to a similarly microphone-related problem.

Technology also acts in aesthetic as well as functional capacities. Varied lighting is employed (albeit reactively) to add to the drama of the performances: centre-stage, coloured flood lighting is the norm throughout the evening, but this is dimmed to one or two spotlights for slower, quieter tunes.<sup>5</sup> Similar effects could be observed in any pop or rock concert.

During the musical performances, only very limited audience involvement or participation is observed. During two particularly fast and vigorous sets by different performers, I grow increasingly aware of a low rumbling from above, occurring approximately in time to the music, and quickly identified as the stamping of feet from those audience members seated on the first floor of the auditorium. On one occasion, this – fairly unobtrusive – response to the energetic nature of the music is augmented by a ‘whoop’ of enjoyment, as one might expect in a more informal folk music context, such as a club gig or session. On one occasion, an entrant invites the audience to join in with the chorus of her song, which they do with a certain degree of

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<sup>5</sup> These attributes exist in tandem in vast majority of British folk music performances. Tempo in such tunes is generally inflected with varying degrees of rubato, whilst dynamic does, of course, depend upon the requirements of the performance context and the dynamic range of the instrument/s in question.

subdued self-consciousness.<sup>6</sup> However, for the majority of the event, the audience conduct themselves in much the same way as they would for any formal performance context, sitting silently through the performances, and responding with enthusiastic applause at the end of each set or piece.

The entrants' performances are all received with rapturous applause, and are followed by a twenty-minute intermission, during which the judges must make their decision, and the audience are given the opportunity to discuss what they have heard amongst themselves. Finally, the audience are called back to their seats and the second half of the programme commences. Harding steps on to the stage to remind the audience that before the judges announce their decision, we are first to hear a performance by last year's winner of the competition, Scottish fiddler, Lauren MacColl. MacColl is joined on stage by a guitarist and a pianist (at one of The Sage's many concert grand pianos), for a 25-30 minute performance of a relatively varied Scottish fiddle repertoire. After this performance has finished, again to warm applause, Harding invites Kathryn Tickell on stage as a representative of the judging panel, to deliver their verdict. Within an atmosphere of predictably palpable tension, Tickell begins by congratulating all of the finalists on the high standard of their performances, going on to express just how very difficult the decision was for the judges. She finally announces that the winners are the second of the two group acts, Bodega. The band in question are then invited back on to the stage to euphoric ovation, and their nominated representative, the singer and djembe player, steps up to the microphone to accept the

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<sup>6</sup> The subdued nature of the audience participation at this point is not unexpected: whilst it is a normal occurrence for a regular folk-club attendee, joining in the chorus to a song requires a greater level of musical skill than simply tapping one's foot or whooping; in very close proximity to other audience members (who you may, or may not, know), one is likely to feel their singing to be under a greater degree of scrutiny than in a more informal setting, and so singing in such a large scale and formal context may be the source of a certain level of embarrassment, even amongst folk music audiences.



award. When asked to say a few words, he begins an acceptance speech in his Gaelic native tongue – which is received with waves of laughter and applause – before continuing in English for the benefit of the 99 percent of the audience who will, of course, not have understood a word he has just said. Harding continues the joke by announcing in the Irish language that the band will briefly pose for press photographs, before apologising (in English) to the band for being unable to speak Scottish Gaelic.

### *Audience identity and formalization*

I have, as yet, said very little about the natures and identities of the various performers, or of the music they performed at the final heat of the award, choosing to concentrate instead on the extra-musical features of the evening. Let us first consider these observations, and how they reflect folk music as a recontextualized genre.

It would appear at first glance that the age group most represented in MacKinnon's folk club survey of the late 1980s (over 45 years) remains the dominant feature of contemporary folk audiences (and, by implication, folk music culture generally).<sup>7</sup> However, the relationship between audience age range and the folk music genre can be overstated: one must be forced to concede that the same demographic would prevail at the majority of concerts held in this venue, or in any other of its kind. Surely a concert of jazz or classical music would draw a similar audience. This concession is strengthened through a modest social demography of the middle aged listenership, possible by simply observing the appearance of those audience members within this age range: almost all present themselves in the habitual "smart-but-casual"

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<sup>7</sup> MacKinnon, *The British Folk Scene*, 63-4.

attire of the middle class concert goer – a dominant group across the vast majority of musical genres catered for at The Sage Gateshead. Nonetheless, the predominant age range of the audience demographic is, of course, in direct contrast to that of those who are to provide the evening's entertainment.

The presence and behaviour of the performers' peers in the audience dilutes yet further the relationship between the older generation and folk music identity. It is possible that the representatives of the younger age group are all the more conspicuous for their situation alongside large numbers of their parents' and grandparents' generations. Nonetheless, the audience is apparently polarized in age, with seemingly very few attendees representing the intervening age range (approximately 21-40). Furthermore, the behaviour of the younger audience members is socially subsistent, and generally exclusive of the older members, thus demonstrating that this polarization is not merely explicable as a result of separate, multigenerational family groups.

By engaging with such a demographic and behavioural survey of the audience at the Radio 2 Young Folk Award final, one could infer a great deal about the way in which the educational institutionalization of folk music has affected the characteristics of the genre's listenership. Interviews after the concert confirmed my expectations that many of the younger audience members were, indeed, folk musicians themselves, of whom most were involved in some way either with Folkworks, or with equivalent institutions in Scotland. In short, the young performers being trained by these various organizations now exist as an identifiable sector of the folk music audience,



demonstratively capable of attracting others of their age group to auditoriums as well as workshops.

Mike Harding's appearance and behaviour on stage also offers valuable insights into the image of the genre that he represents. Whilst the vast majority of the audience are dressed with a certain degree of smartness, the culturally acknowledged leader of the event is dressed in particularly casual clothing. This must surely be regarded as a relatively rare cultural phenomenon within the context of the Western concert-stage: a master of ceremonies, on stage at one of the foremost concert venues in the country, dressed in a far more casual manner than the audience members whom he is addressing, despite his apparent identification with their broad social group.

Harding's presentation echoes the long-standing associations of folk and traditional music with informal music making, associations which now contrast strikingly with the "formal" nature of the event and the venue. The presenter's exceedingly relaxed demeanour appears all the more anachronistic in light of the performers' visual presentation which, although relatively casual (as in the case of their peers in the audience), seems considerably more "image conscious": the male performers wear smarter shirts, whilst the women perform in formal trousers, or patterned skirts. Thus the musicians continue to identify with their peers in the audience, whilst simultaneously acknowledging the relative formality of their situation. In short, this younger generation of performers appear happy to engage with the visual aspect of the stage-presence construction process, their visual presentation reflecting the negotiation of the music's recontextualization in to such a decorous environment.

The irony is, of course, that the informality of Harding's presentation style is born of the second period of revival, during which much emphasis and value was placed on the reclamation of folk music and song from the artifice of the concert stage, the context previously promoted by Sharp and his contemporaries. One is, therefore, forced to question whether the development of the Young Folk Award, in tandem with educational institutionalization, represents a return by the various institutions involved to many of those methods employed in the first period of revival at the turn of the twentieth century (the aggrandization of scale; the formalization of production) in an attempt to achieve similar goals (the promotion of technical excellence; the raising of the music's national profile). One might continue by acknowledging that such a return would achieve considerable success when tailored for an audience who are, themselves, unfamiliar with the negative connotations attached to these Sharpian formalization processes by the folk musicians and scholars of the mid and late twentieth century. In short, it could be argued that the Young Folk Award, Folkworks and its equivalents across Britain, exist as a large-scale movement towards a formal recontextualization that is likely to succeed (at least in the short term) due to the cultural and temporal distance of its young audience to the class-led and nationalist associations of its previous incarnation. Those audience members of the older generation who are aware of the ideological problems originally presented by Sharp's programme will be comfortable with the new movement: confident that the lessons of the past will have been learned; content that the mistakes of previous generations will not be made again; and convinced that the impermeable nature of globalized Western culture makes the inflation of folk music's profile and scale necessary to ensure the genre's survival. Brief discussions with older audience members suggested that they were not ideologically questioning, but simply observant of an increase in the number



of “young people involved in folk music,” and aware of an escalation in the quality of performance and technical skill.

### *Value judgements and the folk music market*

Finally, let us consider the BBC Radio 2 Young Folk Award within the context of the folk music industry. The award represents an economically complex feature of the folk music culture, having as it does such a large number of interested parties. Of course, the highest financial stakes are attributable to BBC Radio 2, which supplies the larger proportion of the funding, in exchange for scheduling material (as well as the competition final itself, the winners are also “given the opportunity” to record a live session for Mike Harding’s show) and advertising. However, less well publicized stake-holders in the event’s success are organizations such as Smooth Operations, the ‘independent specialist music producers’ responsible for the production of both The Mike Harding Show, and the Young Folk Award final.<sup>8</sup> Another organization with a particular public interest in the competition’s smooth running is Folkworks, which ‘organizes’ all stages of the event, a fact of which audience members are reminded by the text of the concert programme (and something which Harding was also keen to acknowledge in his closing address of the evening).

However, perhaps most pertinent to a survey of the economic characteristics of the Young Folk Award is the nature of the judging panel:

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<sup>8</sup> The Sage Gateshead, *The BBC Radio 2 Young Folk Award 2006; Programme*, (Gateshead: The Sage Gateshead, 2005).

**John Leonard**

Executive Producer, The Mike Harding Show

**Eddie Barcan**

Manager, Cambridge Folk Festival

**Simon Thoumire**

Musician and founder of Foot Stompin' Records and

Hands Up for Trad

**Steve Heap**

Director, Mrs Casey Music

**Kathryn Tickell**

Britain's foremost Northumbrian piper, and the winner

of the 2005 BBC Radio 2 Folk Award for Musician of

the Year.<sup>9</sup>

What is interesting about this group is that the judgement they pass has specific and, in most cases, direct economic ramifications for each individual; furthermore, it could be argued that these ramifications are likely to affect the value judgements sanctioned by the group, and thus become instrumental to the acceptance or rejection of certain musical and non-musical qualities by the folk music performance and recording industry as a whole. This claim is a substantial one, that at first consideration may be regarded as an almost personal affront aimed at the adjudicators in question. It is, however, intended as nothing of the sort, since it is based on a purely objective understanding of the roles that these individuals play in the representation of the

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<sup>9</sup> The Sage Gateshead, *Young Folk Award 2006 Programme*.



culture industry's market forces, which are, themselves, simply the mechanisms of a large scale and contemporary process of repertorial and stylistic selection.

To substantiate the claim, let us first consider the "prizes" that any winner of the Young Folk Award can hope to achieve. Firstly, the winning individual or group is presented with the opportunity to record a special live session for the Mike Harding show. Already, then, one is able to observe that Leonard, as the executive producer of the show, may have a very real interest in passing musical value judgements that are popular with the programme's audience; in other words, it could be argued that his judgements must necessarily prioritize saleability and economic potential ahead of a purely artistic merit. Other prizes include giving performances at two of the largest festivals in England, Cambridge Folk Festival and Towersey Village Festival.<sup>10</sup> The chief organizers for both of these festivals are on the panel of judges for the competition. The economic significance of both Heap's and Barcan's respective judgements is, then, clearly visible, since both are primarily concerned with the identification, advocacy and representation of economically viable acts (i.e. those acts which are – or are expected to be – most popular amongst the audiences to which the festivals are aimed, and will therefore increase the festivals' cultural status and, ultimately, financial success). It stands to reason that both men should be interested in selecting an act that offers their festivals with a popular and saleable product. The question here is whether or not those interests have the potential to take precedence over wholly artistic criteria.

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<sup>10</sup> Or rather, since the reduction of the Sidmouth International Festival, *the* two largest folk festivals in England – at least in terms of status.

Of course, this matter of economic interest in the selection of musical acts and, therefore, the passing of musical value judgements, can be overstated: the single, collective decision of the judges is not likely to have any serious negative affect on the future careers of the individuals in question. This fact is ensured by the sizeable and multifaceted nature of the folk music industry. If an act is proclaimed winner of the competition, only to be found unsuitable or unpopular among the festival-going, CD-buying audiences for whom they are intended, the act in question would either adapt in response to the public's aesthetic requirements, or else simply disappear from the performance arena: the judges of the competition would not be expected to take any publicly acknowledged responsibility for the economic failure of the group; nor would they be likely to shoulder any great financial burden (particularly in the festival context, where such a large proportion of revenue is gained through season-ticket sales which are not specific to any one individual concert). However, the success of these individuals as festival organizers – and directors of various other ventures – demonstrates business acumen and an ability to identify the needs of the commercial market. The involvement of a certain degree of economic consideration in the practical business of selecting musical acts for their promotion is highly plausible, even if that consideration is purely subconscious.

The economic interests of the remaining two judges are perhaps lesser. Thumire is founder of a record label (Foot Stompin' Records), which would certainly imply a certain degree of commercial consideration. It is also worth noting that, as director of Hands Up For Trad (a Scottish pseudo-equivalent of Folkworks), he is also the organizer of the BBC Radio Scotland Young Traditional Musician of the Year competition, the title for which is now held by an ex-Newcastle folk degree student.



Meanwhile, any musical value judgement passed by Tickell is unlikely to affect her illustrious career as a performing folk musician, but her role as a higher education lecturer to many of the finalists may be worthy of consideration, since the success of those students in such competitions gives kudos and justification to the degree course of which her personality and status is an inalienable feature. A cynical analysis of Tickell's place on the judging panel might suggest a conflict of interests: one member of this year's winning band is, after all, enrolled on the Newcastle folk degree.<sup>11</sup>

The positioning of folk music as, by definition, a genre in opposition to mainstream, commercial popular culture implies that the matter of economic consideration as a feature of the stylistic and repertorial selection process would be regarded as unacceptable to a large proportion of the folk music audience. This is supported by the fact that the close economic relationship between the judges and the judged are kept relatively tacit: this is particularly noticeable in contradistinction to the competition's contemporary, pop music counterparts – extremely popular mass-media led competitions such as *Pop Idol*, *Fame Academy* or *The X Factor*. Whilst the basis of these competitions is the unashamed concern of the judges (who invariably have sizeable and immediate economic interests in the nature and quality of the winning act) to identify *the most* saleable commodity to – ultimately – fulfil the fiscal requirements of the individuals and the industry, no such transparency of motivation can exist in the folk music equivalent. It is, perhaps, notable that Steve Heap is not referred to in the BBC Radio 2 Young Folk Award programme as the organizer of the Towersey Village Festival or of the AFO's conference, but instead labelled 'Director; Mrs Casey Music', another – comparatively unrelated – one of his many roles.

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<sup>11</sup> Anon, 'BBC Radio 2 Young Folk Award', *The Living Tradition*, (January/February 2006), 8.

Tickell is, similarly, announced in the programme as ‘Britain’s foremost Northumbrian piper and the winner of the 2005 BBC Radio 2 Folk Award for Musician of the Year’, with no reference to her decidedly influential role both in the educational institutionalization of English folk music and, more directly, in the education of many of the finalists. Of course, this background information on such well known individuals is very easily obtained by any interested member of the public, and many members of the listening audience at the Young Folk Award final will have been quite aware of the facts summarized here. The point being made is that such information is not explicitly expressed, a clear indicator that the genre remains uncomfortable with its engagement in the commercial, media-based selection methods of other popular genres.

If the judging process for the BBC Radio 2 Young Folk Award is – at least to *some* extent – commercially motivated, it stands to reason that the resultant award winner or winners must betray something of the nature and predilections of the folk music industry as it currently exists in Britain. Therefore, let us end this particular ethnography by considering the specific musical characteristics of the winning act of the 2006 competition: Bodega. Described in the programme as a ‘Six piece group aged 16-18 from all over Scotland’, the band line up (as it appeared on stage at the Young Folk Award final) consists of highland or lowland pipes; two fiddles; djembe and vocals; acoustic guitar; and clarsach.

The success of this instrument combination points to two key characteristics of contemporary folk music performance. The first of these is the use of, and reliance upon modern amplification technology to facilitate the performance act. For instance,



the highland bagpipes are a notoriously loud instrument; the lowland pipes (also referred as the “border” pipes), whilst not necessarily so strident, are of a similar bore and timbral quality. The clarsach, on the other hand, is characterized by its extremely low volume and mellifluous timbre. The pipes are designed for acoustic, open-air projection; the harp is acoustically and physically best suited to the salon. The notion that the two could successfully play simultaneously on an acoustic concert stage seems highly unlikely. The clarsach would appear even less audible when also joined in performance by two fiddles and the sonorous percussion of a djembe. In the context of an electronically amplified concert, however, the perceptibility of each instrument in the combination becomes a far more realistic expectation. With the pipes some distance from a low-level unidirectional microphone, and the clarsach amplified by means of one or more sensitive pick-ups installed in the sound box, both instruments can achieve a similar – or at least comparable – volume level in the overall output of the group.

The second characteristic demonstrated so succinctly by the line up of the group is the complex renegotiation of authenticities and identities through instrumentation. Whilst the guitar and fiddle are ubiquitous, found in almost all forms of folk and traditional music across the British Isles (as well as across Europe, Scandinavia and America), the clarsach, pipes and djembe carry with them very specific socio-cultural, historical and musical connotations. The first two of these instruments are generally perceived as epitomising the ancient, Celtic traditions of the Scottish Highlands, and – therefore – of Scotland generally. As summarized above, the acoustic attributes of the two instruments contrast hugely. The cultural effect of the pipes and clarsach being performed together is, therefore, that the disparate nature of their various physical

characteristics aids in their representation of the two extremes of a single, healthy and varied musical tradition. This reinforcement of a Scottish national music culture is strengthened yet further by the singing of Gaelic songs, with powerful association to Scotland's rural antiquity. Alongside this outward strengthening and enunciation of the Scottish traditional music culture, however, the presence of the djembe is all the more striking. This African drum carries with it its own cultural connotations, far removed from – and often oppositional to – those of the pipes and clarsach. The instrument is still primarily associated with the World Beat movement of the late 1980s and 90s, during which period it became omnipresent as a result of its perceived “tribal” connections, and due to the relative lack of training required to play to a satisfactory standard for the Euro-American listenership.<sup>12</sup> In conversation with performers involved in the revival period of the 1960s and 70s – a period very much concerned with contextual and instrumental authenticities – the djembe is referred to with a degree of derision, although it remains popular among world music fans for the same reasons listed here. It can be regarded as a largely unspoken signifier of that form of the “world music” genre most accessible to the mainstream Western audience. The connection between the djembe and dated processes of dislocation and commercialization remains strong; moreover, the culturally homogenizing movement that it subconsciously represents to the educated, middle class folk music audience member is now associated with exploitation, questionable ethics and misrepresentation practised by an unscrupulous record industry of the late 1980s and 90s. These negative associations, whilst remaining subconscious or – at the very least

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<sup>12</sup> See Eric Charry, ‘Jembe [djembe, djimbe, jimbe, yimbe]’, *Grove Music Online*, ed. L Macy, <http://www.grovemusic.com> (6th February, 2006).



– tacit, are nevertheless reinforced when the performer of the instrument in question is a white European.

Thus the instrumental line up of Bodega is imbued with an interestingly contradictory quality: on the one hand the pipes and clarsach, two instruments indigenous to the homeland of the respective instrumentalists in the most overt and unambiguous sense; on the other hand the djembe, which is not only clearly recognisable as an instrument of non-European origin, but also encompasses an almost ethereal musical identity, of which persistent recontextualization is a far more potent element than any national or tribal grounding. In other words, the instruments of the greatest possible degree of nationalist – or at least *national* – subtext are placed in contradistinction to an instrument that has, at the hands of the globalizing music industry, become effectively a-national, and existent merely as a transient *other*.<sup>13</sup>

The implications for an ethnomusicological understanding of contemporary British folk music are considerable. Primarily, the line up of this – ultimately successful – group would appear to demonstrate that notions of authenticity are of little importance in the selection of the music culture’s representative performers (and, therefore, of definitive aspects such as repertory, style and instrumentation). However, the striking juxtaposition of the nationally identifying pipes and clarsach with the vague, migratory icon of Westernized “world music” that is the djembe, implies a more complex relationship between an enduring notion of nationalist authenticity and an unquestioning, postmodern acceptance of instrumentation according to criteria of

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<sup>13</sup> The djembe is by no means presented as “African” here, thus distinguishing the cultural nuances of Bodega’s line-up from the conscious and explicit juxtapositions inherent in the music of bands such as the Afro-Celt Sound System.

physical and acoustic functionality, rather than those of social and cultural identity. The identity of the band remains overwhelmingly Scottish, whilst the cultural ubiquity and ambiguity of the djembe (as opposed to other African instruments) ensures that the band is not regarded as a “world” or “fusion” oriented group rather than a Scottish folk group.

Fundamentally, this brief ethnography demonstrates the extent to which educational institutionalization is developing in close formation with commercial music mediation. The folk music performed here is recontextualized to the highest levels of “concert” performance, and professional performers are – potentially – placed in a position to pass very public value judgements on their own students (and, therefore, on their own educational prowess). Musical and non-musical assertions of authenticity are generally ambiguous or absent, a point congruent with Oakes’ performance of *Arlo*, discussed in chapter 4, and decisions are necessarily made with reference to commercial viability within the folk music market.

### **Educational institutionalization: why now?**

If organizations such as Folkworks and Shooting Roots are now succeeding (in terms of economic growth and cultural acceptability) where previous attempts at large scale institutionalization (such as those made by the EFDSS) have now passed into comparative obscurity, then what has changed? How have the concepts of community and identification on the one hand, and the hierarchical framework of pedagogy on the other, achieved a satisfactory level of reconciliation?



Perhaps the answer lies behind the transmutation of the concept of community within the English folk music culture of the last century, and its relationship with the notion of equality. At the turn of the last century, the first English folk revival made no attempt to produce a community based on equality: as has been suggested above, the folk music promoted by the likes of Cecil Sharp made no attempt to challenge the accepted class structures of the day and, through pedagogical hierarchies, actually served to strengthen them. The “folk community” of this era existed either as a fabled collection of “unlettered classes” whence the music evolved naturally, or as the learners within the pedagogy – proud patriots, now instilled with a redoubled nationalist fervour. By the second revivalist movement of the 1960s and 70s, the importance of “community” as a concept had moved beyond the nationalistic and, through the development of the revivalist movement’s socialist ideologies, was imbued with a desire to equate “community” with a strong element of egalitarianism; it was this egalitarianism that would ultimately negate the adoption of clear teacher/learner roles within a large-scale institutional framework.<sup>14</sup> The new movement, however, has developed within a happy medium between these two cultural climates: a temperate (liberal) socio-political landscape in which barriers founded on labels of career and class have been – or are being – deconstructed, and where notions of community are no longer denoted by contours of equality, but rather existent on newly forged lines of communication. Along these lines, hierarchies of authority and professionalism are able to exist, undistorted by preoccupations with nationalism or socialism.

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<sup>14</sup> It is possible to offer critique of this suggestion with the aid of certain notable exceptions: for instance, Ewan MacColl’s role as ‘mentor’ within the Critics Group (Sandra Kerr, interview, 19th January 2005). However, such groups were small scale, relatively informal in structure and the ‘teacher’ roles – whilst generally accepted by the group – were not endorsed by any official body, or endowed with professional status. In this way, such examples differ considerably from the contemporary cases under scrutiny here.

Another explanation for the new acceptability of folk music's institutionalization in England lies in a contemporary understanding of the activity's detachment from connotations of social control. Over the latter half of the last century, the formalization and standardization of folk music collection, performance, composition, and education has been a principal occupation of extreme political regimes, as was shown in the introductory chapter of this thesis. The use of institutionalization by the Communist authorities of the Soviet union, characterized by socialist-realist selection and classicization, is widely documented,<sup>15</sup> as is the manipulation of regional and national traditions to support nationalist ideologies by Fascist dictatorships such as those of Portugal, Spain and Italy.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, the institutionalization of folk music has for some time been associated, by the predominantly liberal educated classes of Britain, with the sinisterly excessive political control of such extremist governments. In the face of such negative associations, wide scale institutionalization of folk music could not hope to thrive – particularly that which appeared to be sanctioned or supported by central government.

These associations, however, are losing their potency: some fifteen years after the fall of the Soviet regime – and more since the decline of fascism in Europe – images of the USSR's artificially constructed state folk orchestras and Portugal's "ranchos folclóricos" are no longer active memories in the public consciousness of the new

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<sup>15</sup> See for instance Nelson, *Music for the Revolution*; Edmunds, *The Soviet Proletarian Music Movement*; Radulescu, 'Traditional musics and ethnomusicology'.

<sup>16</sup> e.g. Castelo-Branco and Toscano, "In search of a lost world"; Perez, 'Spain'; Sachs, *Music in Fascist Italy*.



generation of English folk musicians.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the remnants of such organizations can still be viewed as regular attractions at festivals such as those at Sidmouth, Cambridge and Billingham, and their acceptance by – and popularity with – the audiences of such festivals (which certainly include English folk musicians) is now well established. In fact, it is clear that many English folk musicians regard such large-scale, organized celebrations of indigenous traditional culture as something of an aspiration, since they represent governmental support for the maintenance of a national identity, something which is seen to be lacking in England. As has been shown in chapter 2, commentators on – and participants in – English folk music have now begun to lament with much bitterness the lack of state funding given over to the folk arts.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the altercations between the EFDSS and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport over the drafting of the Licensing Bill during 2002-3 saw a perceived governmental apathy (at least in relative, international terms) quickly escalate into what many folk musicians regarded an active negation of musical traditions in the country.

As the negative associations of modern history are rapidly waning, so too are the cultural motivations for the English people to avoid the systematic arrangement of their traditional music into some form of concerted institution or institutions. Few among the leaders of this movement are unaware or ignorant of the indictments of such publications as Harker's *Fakesong*, and Boyes' *Imagined Village* upon the

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<sup>17</sup> Of course, other nations currently governed by political extremists continue to engage with such activity, but their geographical and cultural remoteness to the West has resulted in such contemporary examples failing to find a place in the consciousness of English folk musicians.

<sup>18</sup> For example, in his online article *England, Whose England*, Mike Sutton finds himself compelled to reveal his opinions on the subject: "I'm not requesting lavish state funding for English traditional music and dance – though a fraction of the money that currently goes to opera and ballet would help"; Sutton, *England, Whose England*.

development of concepts of “folk music” over the last century. And yet the movement continues to gain momentum. Perhaps the class distinctions on which these works are based are less relevant to today’s more ambiguous cultural and social climate; it would certainly be difficult to compare Alistair Anderson or Laurel Swift to Sharp or Child in a social class context, and it seems difficult to interpret organizations such as Folkworks and Shooting Roots as the manifestation of bourgeoisie-orchestrated socio-political control, however indirect or subliminal.

## **Folk music education in the marketplace**

A central conclusion of this thesis is the complex and inalienable location of folk music education within a capitalist economic framework; that is, the distribution and evolution of folk music as a cultural commodity. Through the ethnographic study of Folkworks and Shooting Roots we have seen how many of the cultural systems established and promoted (be they repertorical, contextual or pedagogical) can be derived from closely monitored market research, and an underlying intention to maximize consumption of the product – folk music – through specialist provision in a niche market. This commercial awareness is able to coexist (at different levels of perpetual negotiation) alongside continuous and fully internalized discourses – genuinely held beliefs – of cultural philanthropy that remain definitive to the respective folk music cultures.

### *For music or for money?*

In the case of Folkworks, it is clear that economic considerations have been paramount from the very point of the organization’s conception as an autonomous



institution, a point motivated by the financial benefits of independence from local authority funding. I have shown not only that matters of business and market-reading have been a core theme throughout the history of Folkworks' early incarnations and developments and that such matters have been openly acknowledged in interview, but also that Anderson has actively *emphasized* his abilities in this field. This pride in mercantile prowess (personal and institutional) is particularly unusual in the context of a genre that has historically posited itself antithetically to the carefully orchestrated commercial manipulations of the Anglo-American popular music industry. Its relationship to the BBC Young Folk Award, and its role in the "creation" (and promotion) of young, professional performers implies that Folkworks is at the centre of a contemporary "folk music industry".

Shooting Roots, on the other hand, offers a striking contrast: rather than creating its own contexts, as in the case of Folkworks, this organization has remained conjoined to the milieu whence it originated (the folk festival). The inherently temporary nature of this context, in conjunction with the consequently transient, largely non-professional nature of its workforce, has resulted in Shooting Roots persisting as a relatively small-scale enterprise. However, its cogent understanding of its situation within the cultural and education marketplaces has ensured its steady growth: as well as promoting a pedagogical discourse of providing opportunity, Swift also recognizes her role as an economic facilitator; she, and FolkArts England, must necessarily deal in the financial products of increased attractiveness to arts funding bodies and long-term sustainability of audiences. In contradistinction to Anderson's discussions of Folkworks, however, Swift does not emphasize such economic motivations; weight is given to Shooting Roots' provision for the educational and experiential needs of its

participants, rather than its ability to exploit a niche in the market. This is also mirrored in the self-representation of FolkArts England, which makes no clear, public acknowledgement of its relationship to the commercially motivated activities of Mrs Casey Music, Mrs Casey Records or the Rocking Chair record store, all of which have been closely financially entwined with Shooting Roots. And this in spite of the obvious advantages to be reaped by Mrs Casey Enterprises of declaring public sponsorship of Shooting Roots (not least of all, advertising). Instead, we see a clear discursive and representational separation of business from education. Again, this contrasts strongly with Folkworks whose umbrella group, North Music Trust, declares its registered company number and charity number in the same sentence, on the back cover of each of The Sage Gateshead's programme booklets.

Particularly significant is the way in which this strong economic awareness is manifest or apparent in the concrete practices of the two institutions discussed in this thesis. Folkworks' multifaceted construction provides opportunities at a wider variety of levels and of very different natures, but all are designed to be complementary. The social aspect of folk music, emphasized as a defining element of the genre by Anderson, can be enjoyed by learning musicians through both the workshops and the slower, more technically accessible sessions run by the organization (although these are contexts bound by very strong social structures). However, these opportunities for a novice musician's public development and socialization are complemented by the very private prospects offered by learning materials such as the *Folkworks Session Collection*. The latter of Folkworks' services demonstrates an engagement with the contemporary privatization of cultural pursuit: here, a product is offered that enables



the – fundamentally bourgeois – consumer to learn folk music from the comfort of their own home, without the inconvenience of travel, nor the social unease of display.

From the mid-1970s on, much has been written on the subject of privatized consumption, from a variety of leisure-based orientations,<sup>19</sup> but the theme is rarely discussed in relation to folk music, with which the antithetical notions of tradition and community are so readily associated. Whilst concentrating on the spatial manifestation of privatized culture (the ‘home’ itself), Tomlinson contextualizes his discussion of the process within Brittan’s notion of “‘the dissolution of totality’”, which the former reads as referring to ‘the break up of community bonds’.<sup>20</sup> Later, Tomlinson refers to the ‘connoisseur consumer as recluse, leisure as a specialist monadic activity’.<sup>21</sup> Whilst largely incongruous with such a bleak vision of contemporary consumerism, Folkworks is able to offer learning materials for such a consumer.

It is, of course, important to remember that this privatization is not promoted within the majority of Folkworks’ activities: as has been shown, the very *socially* orientated workshops and sessions make up the majority of the institution’s total service. Individualist consumerism, however, can still be derived as a significant contributing factor to the comprehensivity of the Folkworks package: Folkworks makes it possible to engage with folk music at a number of different levels: one does not *need* to attend

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<sup>19</sup> See, for instance, Martin Pawley, *The Private Future: Causes and Consequences of Community Collapse in the West* (London: Pan Books, 1975); Arthur Brittan, *The Privatized World* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977); Alan Tomlinson, ‘Home Fixtures: doing-it-yourself in a privatized world’, in Tomlinson, Alan (ed.), *Consumption, Identity and Style: Marketing, Meanings and the Packaging of Pleasure* (London: Routledge, 1990) 57-73; Winter, *Reading the Exercise Video*.

<sup>20</sup> Tomlinson, ‘Home Fixtures’, 59.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 62.

sessions or workshops if one has the books; likewise, one does not *need* the books if one chooses only to attend the sessions and workshops. The organization's provisions are designed to offer the consumer a varied palette of options, attracting both maximum inclusivity and maximum revenue. One might even extend this reading of the institution to incorporate the nature of the music itself: as has been shown, the range of repertoires offered for consumption is extensive and constantly growing; whilst considerable effort has been made to demonstrate here that such inclusion is entirely congruous with the North East folk music culture's long-time inclination towards liberal musical absorption, it must also be considered as wholly in keeping with a motivation to maximize a consumer base. The subject of an individual's repertorial selection becomes all the more economically charged when a learner seeks to become a distinctive performer, as in the case of Tom Oakes.

The nature of Shooting Roots is relatively preventative of individualist marketing, but such marketing would also be incongruous with the cultural context of the organization, where the greatest emphasis is placed upon community: options are offered, but these are relatively broad, with a strong tendency towards *performing* in groups (not simply *learning* in groups). Unlike in the case of Folkworks, Shooting Roots offers social performance not as a goal to be attained, but as an immediate reality. Instead, the text of the organization's saleability resides in two of its key features: firstly, Shooting Roots shows a considerable ability to negotiate the dichotomy between social identification with a (broad) youth culture (for the benefit of the participants) and demonstration and articulation of educational goals (for the benefit of the parents and primary consumers – the festival organizers). Secondly (and in conjunction with the former element of that dichotomy), I have demonstrated



that the tutoring group maximize their popularity amongst their participants by making the musical texts of their activities both accessible to young people of the widest possible range of technical abilities, and also coherent within the socio-musical expectations of Western popular culture (e.g. via the use of devices such as riffs). However, by theorizing that repertorial selections have been made in order to maximize popularity and economic prosperity, the ethnomusicologist can run the risk of forgetting his/her origins in cultural anthropology: I have also demonstrated in chapter 5 that such musical relationships with Western pop music can also be observed elsewhere in contemporary 'English' folk music, suggesting a broader, culturally underlying acceptance of pop references. Thus the complexity of cultural evaluation within contemporary, Western society emerges: here, economic viability conceivably *becomes* cultural capital, illustrating the necessity of the ethnomusicologist's engagement with matters of commercialism and globalized Western popular culture.

Likewise, one cannot ignore the significance of both organizations' efforts to promote the – fundamentally socially interactive – “aim” of musical proficiency. The institutions' abilities to increase both audiences and learners of folk music do not go unappreciated; one informant's complaint to me about the potential for Folkworks to standardize repertory and style in the North East region was eloquently countered by another: 'I know what they mean, but at the end of the day, Folkworks has got more young people playing folk music than have done for years, and that's got to be the most important thing...'. This form of numerical determinism – the notion that more is good – has been a driving force behind the educational practices of England's various folk music cultures in general, and is most apparent in the justification of

Folkworks' activities (made clearest in Anderson's remarks about "widening the bottom of the pyramid").

The negotiation of economic successes and cultural objectives represents an intriguing discursive paradox which pivots on the notion of profile: it is apparently accepted that, for the pyramid to be widened, it must first be "heightened" (in terms of cultural visibility), in order to achieve Anderson's goal of providing 'inspiration'. Attainment of such an increase in profile is, furthermore, enveloped in a strong cultural aspiration for performance opportunity and status equal to that of other musics – specifically "classical" music, but also including jazz and even pop and rock – as is made explicit in Anderson's narrative on Folkworks' origins. Such goals are believed to be wholly beneficial to the folk and traditional music culture, but are only achievable via a close engagement with both the contextual and marketing features of these other musics (e.g., recontextualization to the concert stage, targeted market research, mediated advertisement, "star"-creation, competition, etc.). In other words, educational institutionalization is at the heart of a larger process – the development of a folk music industry in distinction to – and methodologically related to – a pop music industry and classical music industry. Thus, the signifiers of economic success through highly commercialized means become indicative of charitable accomplishment.

In the case of Folkworks, this aspiration of a popular music business construct might even be read as a Gramscian "universalization" of the interests of the dominant music politic: within this model, Folkworks can be regarded as a counter-cultural agency attempting to "compete" within a globalized marketplace; simultaneously, the



institution's transactions with the structures and methods of contemporary industry further socio-cultural hegemony, wherein the resistant element is processually incorporated.<sup>22</sup> Here, Folkworks represents what Storey refers to as an 'ideologically safe harbour[...]' for the channelling of a potentially antagonistic, "glocal" music, whilst achieving success through collusion with dominant agencies such as the BBC, the Arts Council England, various (regional and national) cultural development agencies, etc. This interpretation of Folkworks as 'ideological state apparatus'<sup>23</sup> is open to considerable extension and development, but such is beyond the immediate scope of the present study.

The inability to distinguish purely cultural endeavour from commercial enterprise represents a broader issue within the observation and understanding of cultural businesses. As in the case of many other such businesses, Folkworks' and Shooting Roots' aims are defined in terms of increasing participation, rather than simply providing a service to an existing clientele. But such increasing participation also denotes economic and political success, making the motivations of the organization's key figures (arguably the organization's greatest financial and/or political beneficiaries), less clear. Should a business of any other kind express a desire to maximize its clientele, the implication would be a desire to maximize economic and political revenue (it would take a great deal of social-awareness based image-campaigning to begin to temper that element of public perception). Folkworks, on the other hand, is able to present itself as providing a service *to the product* rather than to the clientele: it is doing something "for the music". From this position, financial

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<sup>22</sup> John Storey, *An Introduction to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*. 2nd ed. (London: Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1997) 124-5; 124.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 126.

gains may be regarded, by an approving audience, as a deserved by-product of culturally motivated, charitable labours. We have already seen how the motivations and interests of two institutions from closely linked, and often overlapping music cultures treat disclosure of monetary matters very differently, a point that serves to illustrate the ethnographic inscrutability of the relationship between artistic content and industrial context.

### **So what is this “folk music”?**

Perhaps the most significant – if somewhat unsurprising – point to be made about the examples of educational institutionalization discussed in this study is the way in which the constructs of “folk music” offered up by each contradict – often starkly – the vast majority of the common definitive elements discussed in chapter 1. The folk musics in these cases are certainly not the ‘music in oral tradition’ of Nettl’s definition,<sup>24</sup> since the use and circulation of ‘dots’ such as those in the *Folkworks Session Collection* is accepted as playing a central transmissionary role. Nor does it clearly tally with the constructions inherent in early- and mid-twentieth century processes of institutionalization instigated by extremist regimes: the central repertoires and stylistic content cannot be regarded as a clear canon of “national” or “regional” music, although both *Folkworks* and *Shooting Roots* engage very strongly with discourses of regionalism and nationalism, respectively, as shall be discussed later in this section.

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<sup>24</sup> Nettl, ‘Folk Music’, 315.



The study supports the findings of numerous texts of the late twentieth century in concluding that this “folk music”, far from representing the domain of the ‘unlettered classes’ as claimed by Sharp and his followers, is primarily the cultural pastime of the affluent middle classes: certainly, the growth of the activities discussed in this thesis has taken place due to the interest of a demographic that shares an inherent value of personal cultural development and the financial resources to purchase instruments, attend workshops and to generally engage in the commoditization process discussed above. Performances such as those by Tom Oakes at The Sage Gateshead, or by Shooting Roots participants at Towersey Village Festival also contradict definitions of the genre – by Bartók, Kodály and later the IFMC – as textually and contextually distinct from ‘urban’, ‘popular’ or ‘art music’.

The three central elements of the IFMC’s São Paulo resolution – continuity, variation and selection – can still be seen as relevant. A sense of history has been shown to be a key feature of the discourse surrounding Folkworks’ activities, albeit less explicitly important to the foundations of Shooting Roots. Both institutions appear to encourage individual variation, in the form of “making the tune your own” – as in Rob Harbron’s workshop, through improvisation as promoted by John Dipper, and through the derivation of new musical material from traditional tunes – as in Shooting Roots tutors’ riff-building techniques. Community selection, too, remains an important element of these music cultures’ belief systems. However, the concept of selection is less prevalent in the cultural constructs offered by these institutions; Folkworks and Shooting Roots are, after all, dealing in the selection of repertory at an organized and self-conscious – rather than a “natural” or “evolutionary” – level, and their selections are presented as provision to the community. These instances of educational

institutionalization are, therefore, necessarily involved – at a practical level – in the standardization of repertory and the erection of a hierarchy of profile or cultural visibility – if not a repertorial canon. Above all, it is worth noting that, as implied by the intentionally broad scope of Timothy Rice’s ‘Remodelling of Ethnomusicology’,<sup>25</sup> the basic cultural elements behind the IFMC’s resolution (the historic, the individual and the social), can be demonstrated as essential to the cultural construction of *all* musics, and are therefore unsatisfactory as the sole components of a definition of a single genre.

Clearly the categorization whence the term stems has been the processual act not of “folk” musicians, but of ethnomusicologists, folklorists, and other individuals often external to the cultures involved, and concerned with the collection and cataloguing of musical material. Perhaps the most basic foundation of the present study is the fact that the folk musician and the folklorist are now inalienably indistinct cultural identities: the “folk musician” *refers to him/herself as such*. The label “folk” is used at every level of the music culture’s profile, from the BBC Young “Folk” Awards, “Folk”-works and “Folk”-Arts England to grassroots activities like “folk” sessions. It would appear that this “folk music” must, therefore, exist as a musical element discernable amongst those within the music culture, implying delimitations of one form or another. The defining boundaries are clearly dynamic – that is, the rules governing the content of “folk music” are subject to change depending on context – and are constantly changing in renegotiation with other music cultures, media, contemporary performance and learning contexts. Nonetheless, the recent instances of institutionalization under such a heading must be accepted as evidence of a discreet

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<sup>25</sup> Rice, ‘Towards a Remodelling of Ethnomusicology’.



music culture. Whilst musics labelled as “folk music” worldwide are so multifarious as to belie ‘the stasis of definition’ as a single entity,<sup>26</sup> the characteristics of the two folk musics discussed here – though ambiguous and dynamic – must be open to some level of ethnographic identification. I shall now go on to discuss certain key features in the social construction of this musical and cultural identity.

### *Anti-Pop? Community and location*

It is now problematic to represent folk music in England as a culturally self-conscious alternative to globalized Western pop music. Whilst discursive emphasis is placed on historicism and human immediacy – in contradistinction to the modern artifice of Anglo-American pop – folk music is taking on the forms, structures and economic motivations (in the case of Folkworks) and the musical structures (in the case of Shooting Roots) of the pop music industry.

Musically, folk music in England has thus far maintained an identification with a largely alternative aesthetic: the music remains primarily “acoustic” in nature, and is visibly and audibly characterized by a number of instrumental signifiers: melodeon; fiddle; accordion; concertina; pipes; whistle; (wooden) flute; mandolin; bouzouki, etc. However, these instruments are becoming semiotic handles for the assignation of genre, rather than the only culturally permissible elements of folk music instrumentation. As has been discussed in chapter 5, contemporary folk music in England (whether in the ‘English’ or the North East folk music culture) is incorporating instrumentation more closely associated with pop musics: Tim Van

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<sup>26</sup> Bohlman, *Folk Music in the Modern World*, xviii.

Eyken makes extensive use of the quintessentially “popular” drum/bass/electric guitar combination, whilst Jim Moray has forged a performer identity around the employment of modern recording technology, live sampling, multi-tracking, etc.<sup>27</sup>

The acoustic guitar remains a ubiquitous feature of these folk musics, although its roles may differ (its use in ‘England’ is primarily for the accompaniment of song, whilst in the North East, it also plays an important part in the accompaniment of instrumental music). However, its rock ‘n’ roll provenance and equal ubiquity in contemporary ballad-style pop music results in an ambiguity of association; a cultural neutrality not shared with any other instrument. Notably, the piano would appear to be moving toward such cross-musical acceptance: having played a significant role in the recontextualization of Irish and Scottish traditional musics over the last few decades, it is now becoming accepted in the music cultures discussed here. Not only does it feature in performances by Tom Oakes as an indicator of cross-cultural instrumentation, it is also employed – without such conscious acknowledgements – as a leading instrument in the music of ‘English’ and North East folk acts such as Rachel Unthank and the Winterset.<sup>28</sup> Certainly, the piano’s progression into the realms of acceptability within folk music in England correlates pragmatically with the music’s recontextualization into the arts-venue context (where pianos are available, and electric keyboards easily accommodated), and would be a fertile ground for further ethnomusicological research.

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<sup>27</sup> Van Eyken, *Stiffs Lovers Holymen Thieves*; Moray, *Sweet England*.

<sup>28</sup> Rachel Unthank and the Winterset, *Cruel Sister* (Rabble Rouser, 2006).



Clearly, acoustic aesthetics (or associations with them) continue to play a role in the delimitation of folk music in these cultures, but the substance of those aesthetics appears to be decreasing in clarity. Thus, identification of “folk music” through textual analysis is becoming more difficult. Rather, the culturally defining elements of these folk musics reside in the discourse that surrounds them: both the ‘English’ and the North East folk music cultures referred to in this thesis assert alterity from other music cultures through a wider discourse of “community”. In discussion with key figures of the institutionalization processes featured in this thesis, the *social* context of folk music-making is emphasized far beyond the origins of the tunes or the use of specific instruments. In the case of Folkworks, the profound cultural value of a musical community as a social construct is expressed through the conscious desire of the main individuals to avoid the creation of an elitist hierarchy, rather than to avoid the standardization and canonization of repertory. As has been demonstrated in chapter 4, folk degree lecturers’ principal concerns and justifications for the existence of the folk degree have been expressed in terms of the social, rather than the musical. In the case of Shooting Roots, the significance of community as a cultural construct is made manifest in the numerous processes of identification (at both subcultural and broader youth cultural levels) undergone by the tutors with their participants. The active negation of textual authenticity by Shooting Roots tutors in favour of pop-related stylistic elements achieves an identifying bond with the participants, acknowledging a common engagement with multiple music cultures. Shooting Roots not only caters for all levels of ability, but also includes and combines all levels in the context of larger group workshops and performances.

The endurance of this social construction of community within the discursive framing of folk music in England is indicative of its significance to the music cultures' identities, since many of the methods and consequences of educational institutionalization appear to contradict the concept. As has been demonstrated, the far-reaching and comprehensive activities of Folkworks are instrumental in the establishment of a strong cultural hierarchy, compliant with the conventional pedagogical frameworks of wider Western society. Raising the cultural visibility of folk and traditional music (arguably the primary objective of Folkworks) can only be achieved through raising the profile of specific folk musicians (on the concert stage), which equates to the raising of *status* of those musicians. Whilst discussion of the workshop context concentrates on informality, the scenario is fundamentally based upon an establishment of teacher-learner relationships and role divisions. In the case of the folk degree, credentialism and recontextualization have combined, increasing the number of tiers in that hierarchy, as more learners (e.g. students) take on teacher status. Concern regarding this creation of hierarchy is voiced by the lecturers themselves, but is ultimately overruled by a belief that the pedagogical cycle can improve wider public knowledge and recognition of folk music, thus promoting *communal* music-making as the intended end product. Hierarchies appear less clearly in the smaller-scale and less officiated activities of Shooting Roots, but are largely similar, since direction and participation are articulated in the same terms of a teacher/learner dichotomy.

The brief comparative account of repertoires offered in this thesis have served to demonstrate the complex – chicken/egg – relationship between musical text and cultural value. The 'English' instrumental repertoire is materially inclined towards an



inclusive performance culture: if an instrumentalist of intermediate skill hears a tune for the first time in an 'English' session, he/she will probably be in a position to "busk" along in an acceptable manner (playing the more accessible elements of each phrase), or even play the tune in its entirety by the last repetition. Such an achievement is by no means expected of the average folk musician in the North East, when faced with an unfamiliar reel or rant played at proficient speed. Rather, the North East folk music culture operates on a framework of multiple repertoires, where the mastery of more complex repertoires and (to a lesser extent) higher speeds exist as clear milestones in the development of the folk musician. The high-ability 'English' folk musician, conversely, is likely to be playing tunes that are known and accessible to low-ability musicians; here, technical prowess is articulated through stylistic skills applied to the musical text, chiefly improvisation. The inclusivity that seems to be such a crucial aspect of the 'English' folk music culture is also meted out in the motivations and educational practices of Shooting Roots.

It is not ethnographically possible to identify whether the cultural traits of these two music cultures have become manifest in the musical texts of their respective instrumental repertoires, or whether the repertoires themselves have, at some point, become the foundations upon which systems of cultural value have been socially constructed. However, it would appear that the (technically) hierarchical nature of the North East folk music culture's over-all repertoire is, indeed, conducive to – and supportive of – the hierarchies inherent within its educative structures. Folkworks' separation of learner abilities and ultimate creation of a multi-tiered educational system are mirrored in the varying levels of technical exclusivity that serve to order the folk music of North East. Thus, the construct of community at the heart of

Folkworks (as an educational institution) remains intact, but can be read as incorporating conceptions and indications of proficiency and educative expertise that are wholly congruent with the wider North East folk music culture.

It is clear that notions of ethnicity and space have played central roles in the formulation of broad definitions of folk music (along with other folk arts). Certainly, synonymy of “folk” with “national” has endured long since its explicit establishment by Engels (whether the “nation” in question be politically or ethnically delimited), and folk music has played a central role in defining “regions”, particularly throughout twentieth century Europe. The considerations of Folkworks and Shooting Roots do not refute these notions. Issues of ethnicity, per se, are underplayed, although it is certainly true that the vast majority (although not all) of the participants involved in these organizations are white Caucasian; in the North East, Geordie, Celtic and English identities are present amongst participants, but are rarely expressed in terms of ethnicity; in the case of ‘England’, notions of “Englishness” as an ethnicity are only expressed by a small group associated with an extreme-nationalist political rhetoric.

However, the significance of location is particularly important to an understanding of the instances of educational institutionalization presented in this thesis. Folkworks is bound in a discourse of regionalism, where Northumbria is presented and discussed as somewhere quite separate from the rest of England; the organization’s role as an indicator of regional identity appears to have played an extremely important part in its success at a political level. Remarkably, Folkworks’ musical texts do not (as might be expected) directly administer this regionalism through the canonization of a strictly



Northumbrian repertory, although such a repertory does perform a central function in regionalist discourse. Instead, they are representative of a music culture exemplified by liberal, musical absorption based upon largely aesthetic judgements. This predilection for the open acceptance and incorporation of external repertorial and stylistic material has *become* the region's musical identity. The local ideal is one constructed around open-mindedness and the ability to engage with "foreign" – as well as local – repertories. Identities of locality are normally expressed in terms of alterity, and such a reading can be offered in this case: "national" canons, erected upon rigid and spatially founded concepts of authenticity, are at the very nuclei of neighbouring folk music cultures, making the North East cultural practices promoted by Folkworks entirely contradistinctive.

Whilst rather less explicit in its articulation, Shooting Roots is at the discursive periphery of a nationalist construction of 'England'. The organization's workforce rarely engages with such a construction in face-to-face discussion with participants, but emphasis of "Englishness" (in broad, cultural terms) underlies much of Shooting Roots' activities and contexts: its umbrella group is called FolkArts England; much of Shooting Roots' personnel have been involved in Morris Offspring's *On English Ground* tour with Chris Wood and the English Acoustic Collective; the context for Shooting Roots' activities are unquestionably '*English*' folk festivals (the institution do not generally practise in the North East region); and the musical texts are mainly drawn from specifically '*English*' folk repertories.

Especially fascinating is the fact that this construction of an 'English' folk music culture is continuously articulated in terms of a political nation (England), when a

large section of that nation (the North East) regards itself as virtually disengaged from the ‘English’ folk music culture. This cultural distance, whilst acknowledged by both parties, is made explicit as a conscious self-removal only by those on the North East side of the divide. In fact, the successes of The Sage Gateshead as a – *nationally* recognized – centre of folk music performance have caused the regional identity of the North East and the ‘English’ identity of the South and Midlands to interact very closely. In furtherance of North East folk music culture’s attitude towards plurality and multiple repertoires (and undoubtedly due in no small part to their relative accessibility), Folkworks employs well-known exponents of the developing ‘English’ instrumental style – such as Eliza Carthy, Chris Wood, John Dipper and Rob Harbron – at large scale workshop-based festivals. In this way, ‘English’ repertory and style are being promoted (and, thus, crystallized) from within the epicentre of the North East folk music culture. Conversely, The Sage Gateshead’s reputation as a core venue for the performance of – non-specific – folk and traditional performance resulted in its being chosen as the setting for the first night of the *On English Ground* tour by Morris Offspring and the EAC. In this way, The Sage Gateshead has both attracted and promoted “Englishness” in the cultural centre where such an identity is, arguably, asserted least.

## **Folk music, England, and future scholarship**

As has been acknowledged in the introductory chapter, this thesis has been unusually broad in scope, certainly in comparison to most contemporary examples of “ethnomusicology at home”. Consequently, many topics have been touched upon for which extended and detailed discussion have fallen beyond the possibilities of the



present study. I should now like to close by considering the potential areas that this thesis has presented as ready for expansion, but that have not been highlighted thus far.

During the writing of this thesis, I have been made extremely aware of a lack of a body of work that might draw together the contexts, motivations, methods and legacies of the educational institutionalization of folk or traditional musics at a global level. Such an undertaking would be sizeable, relying heavily on socio-historical as well as ethnographic methodologies, but its role in informing contemporary debate on the development of modern folk music cultures would be invaluable. At present, however, much of this information remains inaccessibly submerged in broader discussions of music, generally, with “art” music receiving the vast majority of attention.

Also within the generic field of folk music scholarship, resides a further need to expand the ethnomusicological record as it concerns the transmission and education of folk music in the contemporary West. The extensive use of written resources (including manuscripts, as well as books on technique and history), has been for some time joined by an extended commoditization incorporating instructional CDs, DVDs, and internet-based resources that enable immediate and fully privatized access to educative – and purely repertorial – materials. Whilst research has been conducted in to the use of these – non-oral – methods of transmission,<sup>29</sup> a concerted discussion

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<sup>29</sup> Keegan-Phipps, *The Pub Session in Durham*; There would also appear to be much of interest in Vicki Swan, *An Enquiry in to the Teaching and Learning of Folk Music Through Podcasting*, MA Dissertation (Anglia Ruskin University, forthcoming).

of the effects of these methods on folk music performance and discourse remains largely unwritten.

Beyond the possibilities for further research into contemporary folk music in general, there are many areas of the specifically English context deserving of directed academic attention. This thesis has been, in some large part, motivated by a desire to engage with a *contemporary* ethnography (rather than historiography) of England.

Whilst the anthropology of Britain appears to be gaining in momentum, concentration is still directed at the peripheries, and those sub-cultures most distant from the white, middle-class, English “mainstream” whence a large proportion of the “British” population originate and reside. For the reasons of global and local politics previously discussed in this thesis, the issue of identifying “Englishness”, and of recognizing and contextualizing the articulation of an “English” identity is now particularly pertinent, and deserving of multidisciplinary interest; ethnomusicology is able to play an important role in that body of research.

Within the arena of defining “Englishness”, it would be especially interesting to chart the growth of high-profile personalities (such as that of Chris Wood), and question how these individuals posit themselves within the historical context of a “great man” construct of English folk music, as is offered in this thesis. Meanwhile, greater understanding of the musical repertoires situated in the folk music of England could be achieved through a more detailed examination of the material itself. Specifically, the ‘English’ instrumental and morris related repertoires are severely lacking in academic consideration, having been historically neglected in favour of the song repertoires and dances themselves: great potential exists in the possibility of



researching the values, interactions and musical selections of the English morris dancing culture, which has been regarded – since as long ago as the works of Mary Neal – as a comedic curio, relegated to works of journalistic amusement.<sup>30</sup>

The Northumbrian repertoires are also open to greater scrutiny, although musicians such as Matt Seattle have done much to initiate this research.<sup>31</sup> Equally interesting, however, would be ethnomusicological research into the maintenance of diasporic identity in the North East of England, which is – for instance – manifest in the proliferation of Irish traditional music (including its use in the accompaniment of the apparently “indigenous” dance form of Rapper dancing), and of Highland pipe bands. This, too, has largely featured in historical accounts of the region, but the interaction between these cultural identities and the articulation of a North East regional identity would play an important role in a broader ethnography of the region’s contemporary political context.

Now that the topic has been opened up to academic scrutiny in this thesis, there is now considerable potential for further, more in-depth ethnographic minutiae of the multifaceted activities of Folkworks. The Folkworks calendar is extensive, with much of interest falling outside the possibility of detailed discussion in this thesis. In particular, many of the institution’s educational events include elements of participant residency (e.g. the Folkworks Summer Schools, the Hexham Gathering, etc), of which

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<sup>30</sup> Theresa Buckland has done a great deal to discuss morris dancing from the standpoint of dance ethnography, but tends towards the historiographical; a wider anthropological and ethnomusicological study would still be of considerable benefit. See Theresa Buckland, ‘Black faces, garlands, and coconuts: exotic dances on street and stage’, *Dance Research Journal*, 22/2 (1990) 1-12; Theresa Buckland, ‘Dance, authenticity and cultural memory: the politics of embodiment’, *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 23 (2001) 1-16.

<sup>31</sup> Seattle, *Master Piper*.

smaller-scale ethnographies would provide further detail on the creation and assertion of a concept of community amongst participants. The BMus in folk and traditional music at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne has been viewed in this thesis during a period of relative infancy. Regular observation and reconsideration of the folk degree will offer continued understanding of the role and acceptance of educational institutionalization within the North East and 'English' folk music cultures, allowing an ongoing cartography of the dynamic developments of definitive cultural capital, values and attitudes.

Above all else, this thesis has been intended as support of the opinion that the future of "Western" ethnomusicology lies in the performance of ethnographic research on "big musics" as well as Slobin's 'small musics'.<sup>32</sup> Firstly, this research suggests that engagement with broad-scoped issues of pedagogical theory, media analysis, global economics and postmodernist theory (more commonly associated with sociological and philosophical methodologies) can be employed in combination with standard ethnographic methodologies of participant observation and interview to achieve a meaningful anthropology of a contemporary, Western (and Westernized) culture. Secondly, the thesis has argued that such multidisciplinary research must be regarded as essential to the ethnography of majority of the world's population as we enter the 21st century. Worldwide communications, global homogeneities and "glocal" identifications are quickly negating the anthropological discipline's dependency upon the microcosmic; Western musics, even "folk" musics, no longer exist purely at the

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<sup>32</sup> Slobin, *Subcultural Sounds*, ix. By "big", I am not referring so much to the music's status or representation within a national population, but its nature in terms of mediation, geographic coverage and industrial claims and provisions. The classing of folk music in England as a "big music" in these terms does not negate earlier suggestions that the 'English' folk music is marginal in comparison to other ("popular") musical genres in England, and relative to other traditional musics in their respective countries of origin.



scale of the “traditional” “community”, and haven’t done for some time. Industries have developed, whose *raison d’être* is the expansion of musics beyond the old-world boundaries of the familial, the local, the regional and the national. Whilst it is possible to identify subcultures at all of these levels, all are inalienably engaged with – and in constant communication with – global movements and identities. If it is possible to experience music at the macrocosmic level, it must be both possible and essential to undertake ethnographic study of that music in those terms.

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## **Media Broadcasts**

*A Place Called England* (London: BBC Radio 3, 19th March 2003).

*Big Brother 2004* (London: Channel 4, 29th May – 24th July 2004).

*Kathryn Tickell's Northumbria* (London: Channel 5, 14th March 2006).

## Appendix: Audio CD

### Track Number

- 1 'The Black Cock of Whickham'. Extract taken from Horseplay, 'The Black Cock of Whickham / Stay a While Bonny Lad / Little Wat Ye Wha's Coming', *Roughshod* (Independent, 2006).
- 2 'Ninety Three Not Out' (A. Anderson). Recorded at the Black Swan Session, Greenside, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2007.
- 3 'The Morpeth Rant'. Recorded at the Dun Cow Session, Durham, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2007.
- 4 'Drowsy Maggie' and 'Tam Lin'. Recorded at the Dun Cow Session, Durham, 14th November 2003.
- 5 'Morrison's Jig'. Recorded at the Dun Cow Session, Durham, 13th September 2007.
- 6 'Lexy McAskill'. (Dr. J. McAskill). Extract taken from Horseplay, 'The Jar of Lentils / Lexy McAskill / Good Drying' *The Leadgate Sessions*. (Independent, 2003).



- 7           ‘Hexham Races’. Oliver, David, *Folkworks Session Collection, Volume 2: Extending Your Repertoire* (Folkworks, 2000).
- 8           ‘Arlo’. (T. Oakes). Performed by Tom Oakes, Andy May and Ian Stephenson. Recorded in Hall 2, The Sage Gateshead, on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2005.
- 9           ‘Gallopede’, ‘Bonny Breast Knot’ and ‘The Princess Royal’. Recorded at the Dun Cow Session, Durham, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2007.
- 10          ‘The Moon and Seven Stars’. Recorded at the Dun Cow Session, Durham, 25<sup>th</sup> October 2007.
- 11          Extracts from a workshop by John Dipper at the *Fiddles on Fire Festival*, The Sage Gateshead, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2005.