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# The Aurality of Rhetoric: A Critical Hermeneutic of Cape Breton's Rhetorical Music Community

A Dissertation Presented

By

Gregory Joseph Dorchak

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
Of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

February 2016

Communication

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The Aurality of Rhetoric: A Hermeneutic Case Study of Cape Breton's Rhetorical Music Community

A Dissertation Presented

by

Gregory Joseph Dorchak

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## DEDICATION

To my partner, Alexandra

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my parents, Theresa and Greg. Without their many years of understanding, and sacrifice, I never would have had the opportunity to begin this project, let alone complete it.

I would like to thank Stephen Gencarella, who provided years of guidance. Without his direction in this project, there are many instances it likely would have languished due to my own meandering ways. Stephen was able to show me a path, both in this project, and in life.

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Finally, I would like to thank my partner, Alexandra, who was my grounding sanity during both the writing of the dissertation, and the passing of the bar exam. Few people have the patience to withstand a partner's suffering through one of these endeavors. Alexandra had the faith and strength to support me through both.

# ABSTRACT

THE AURALITY OF RHETORIC: A CRITICAL HERMENEUTIC OF CAPE BRETON'S RHETORICAL MUSIC COMMUNITY

FEBRUARY 2016

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Although the field of rhetorical studies has expanded from the notion that rhetoric only applies to speeches, there has been little attention paid to the rhetoric of sound. This project focuses on the rhetoric of sound, specifically the musical rhetoric of the community of Cape Breton Island, in Nova Scotia, Canada. Cape Breton has a long history of maintaining a traditional music community, with its origins in Scotland. The fiddle music of Cape Breton is renowned as a genre of Celtic music. This project looks at the rhetorical acts of the musicians and investigates how these acts of vernacular rhetoric help develop the community. It shows how the individual musicians are conditioned by the history and community they are born into, but also how these same musicians affect and change that community. This cycle allows for the community's understanding of its own musical properties and style to change through time. This project seeks to dispel the notion that the change in a community's culture over time is the result of inevitability. Change comes from rhetorical acts by rhetorical actors. Influential

musicians enter the community, and make a mark. Their influence is picked up by other musicians, who themselves add their own mark.

This project focuses on the notion of judgment as the locus for this change. The Cape Breton musical community provides spaces where musicians are able to gather and publicly exercise judgment. These judgments are not guided by a blueprint of preconceived action, but rather by a practical judgment, wherein the musician holds themselves accountable to the community. As such, drawing from hermeneutical theory, this project highlights the distinction between practical judgment and technical judgment. This project is a critical one, because it seeks to raise to the forefront the prejudices that allow judgment take place, and as such it is also a hermeneutic one. The critical focus concerns the possibility that practical judgment can be dominated by technical judgment. This project stands to guard against notions of essentialism and romanticism of culture that, if given enough credence, could disrupt the possibility of practical judgment in everyday life.

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# CHAPTER 1

# THE CASE FOR AN AURAL RHETORIC

In the early 1990s, the success of the pop-culture phenomenon *Riverdance*, alongside movies such as *Braveheart,* inspired a broad interest in Celtic music.[1] This brought new audiences to the music, creating markets for Scottish, Irish and Cape Breton musicians to tour across the world. As part of these new audiences, individuals with no previous contact desired to learn to perform Celtic music. In many cases, these aspiring Celtic musicians already performed classical music and simply wanted to apply their instrument to this newly discovered traditional music.

These musicians' aspirations to shift to a new music were not always met with success. While the musicians might have had mastery over their instrument, the attempt to perform a new genre revealed that musical performance requires musicians to make judgments. While the musicians' knowledge of the instruments aligned to the needs of the new music, the ability to make new judgments did not. Products targeting classical musicians emerged during this 'pan-Celtic' renaissance that attempted to teach Celtic music via books and videos. These products purported to provide rules for "how to play Celtic music."[2] But this notion that this music could be codified, ignores how traditional

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[1] The 1990s experienced a surge in the interest of all things Celtic, from the music of *Riverdance* to the words of Frank McCourt. See Dan Barry, "From Poets to Pubs, Irish Imports Are in Demand," *New York Times*, March 17, 1997, accessed January 4, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/1997/03/17/nyregion/from-poets-to-pubs-irish-imports-are-in-demand.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm.

[2] These products are targeted towards a diverse audience, from musicians who already know how to play an instrument to beginners picking up their instrument for the first time. The authors range from musicians established within the traditional music community to those unheard of within the traditional communities. As these books are

musicians actually make judgments during a performance.[3] While performing, traditional musicians usually make judgments not by applying a set of rules, but by applying a number of 'rules of thumb.' The traditional musician's fluid judgment could never be fully captured by a tune-book presented to the classical musician.

## 1.1. The Case for Aural Rhetoric

A trend of scholarship within American rhetorical studies focuses on the rhetorical capacity of the visual as a part of both oral and written communication.[4] While this visual movement opens space to consider rhetoric once unthinkable, other rhetorical paths away from the written and spoken word still exist and are still

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often commissioned by music publishers such as Mel Bay, they follow a similar format. They might first provide a background on the author, then present the sheet music to a number of tunes commonly performed by the musician. The musician may or may not provide commentary or notations as to how they might perform the particular tune. In other cases, the book might present sheet music for traditional Celtic tunes, but targeted at musicians playing instruments not traditionally used in the Celtic vernacular, such as Appalachian Dulcimer, the Viola, or the Harmonica. See, for example, Michael Hoffheimer, *Fiddling for Viola: Traditional Irish and American Fiddle Tunes Arranged for Viola* (Pacific, MOL: Mel Bay, 2000).

[3] As indicated in footnote 2, often the authors of the tune books are indeed respected musicians within the genre. But the very medium of the tune book closes possibility for the consumer to receive more than some commentary on the tune, so the range of possibilities as to how the musician actually do interpret the tune in practice is ignored.

[4] For more on visual rhetoric, see Linda M. Scott, "Images in Advertising: The Need for a Theory of Visual Rhetoric," *Journal of Consumer Research* 21, no. 2 (1994) 252-273; Mary E. Hocks, "Understanding Visual Rhetoric in Digital Writing Environments," *College Composition and Communication* 54, no. 4 (2003); Hanno H. J. Ehses, "Representing Macbeth: A Case Study in Visual Rhetoric," *Design Issues* 1, no. 1 (1984) 53-63; John Lucaites and Robert Hariman, "Visual Rhetoric, Photojournalism, and Democratic Public Culture," *Rhetoric Review* 20, no. 1/2 (2001) 37-42; Charles A. Hill and Marguerite Helmers, *Defining Visual Rhetorics* (London: Routledge, 2004); Lester C. Olson, Cara A. Finnegan, and Diane S. Hope, *Visual Rhetoric: A Reader in Communication and American Culture* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008); Lawrence J. Prelli, *Rhetorics of Display* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2006); Robert Hariman and John Lucaites, *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

overlooked. Recognizing visual rhetoric created new possibilities for rhetorical theory but also created an artificial tension presenting the oral as a contrast to the visual; ignored here is the overall goal of exploring what we should acknowledge as rhetoric.[5] This artificial gap hides links between oral rhetoric and visual rhetoric, one such link existing in *aural* rhetoric: the rhetorical capacity of sound.[6] This dissertation focuses on showing the possibilities for an aural rhetoric.

Admittedly, a focus on 'sound' could refer to a spectrum ranging from dissonance to orchestration. Thinking of sound as rhetorical can disorient scholars because sounds carry rhetorical properties that themselves baffle words.[7] Rather than attempting to theorize all possibilities for aural rhetoric, this dissertation focuses on one genus of aural rhetoric, the rhetoric of music, and specifically the species of the rhetoric of traditional Cape Breton music.

I am not implying that rhetoricians have ignored the rhetorical capacity of music. But rhetorical scholars have dabbled in music like Americans dabbled in the metric

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[5] In the Introduction to *Rhetorics of Display (2006)*, Lawrence Prelli refers to visual rhetoric as becoming the most dominant rhetoric of our time. Throughout this introduction, Prelli refers to visual rhetoric as that which conceals and reveals. He presents the idea that visual rhetoric only ties to the verbal when the verbal invokes visual, or vice versa. This points to a tension where, even though the two might have a relationship, they are here seen as separate. While one form of rhetoric might assist the other, Prelli conceives of the two forms as separate.

[6] This is not to say that aural rhetoric represents the *only* link between visual and oral.

[7] The eighteenth-century elocutionary movement within rhetorical studies did flirt with the idea of sound in regards to orality. But, as pointed out by Dana Harrington, these rhetoricians' role as theorists was dismissed and they were seen primarily as teachers. Dana Harrington, "Remembering the Body: Eighteenth-Century Elocution and the Oral Tradition." *Rhetorica* 28 (2010).

system.[8] Rhetorical studies of music tend to deviate little from standard rhetorical criticism; scholars apply methods of rhetorical criticism to the lyrics or composition of song as they might to a speech, or scholars might examine the emergence and maintenance of a musical genre as constitutive rhetoric. These strategies of examining musical rhetoric with methods designed for speech criticism might succeed in quelling resistance from rhetorical scholars who shudder at the very idea of musical rhetoric and also might succeed in revealing some rhetorical properties of music. But by not seeking new methods to address musical rhetoric, rhetoricians have failed to address the full rhetorical capabilities of music. To engage musical rhetoric more rigorously, rhetoricians need to locate musical performance within cultural and social contexts. The ephemeral quality of music may lie just beyond the grasp of articulation, yet music is still capable of being *understood*. Focusing on such understanding provides a possible foundation for approaching musical rhetoric. By beginning with the position that music, however ephemeral, is capable of being understood, this dissertation relies upon hermeneutic theory to develop a new possibility for examining the rhetoric of music.

## 1.2. Gaps in Musical Judgment

I return to my opening anecdote of the performance of Celtic music to show how hermeneutic theory would inform a rhetoric of music. Again, the performance of Celtic music by classical musicians reveals that musicians can be distinguished not only by their instrument or genre, but by how they make judgments within a performance. Musicians' use of judgment first depends on the activity the judgment is guiding, and

[8] In Chapter 2, I elaborate on scholarship linking rhetoric and music.

can be placed onto a spectrum spanning from practical judgment to technical judgment.[9] Musicians performing notes guided by technical judgment replicate a specific sound, informed by a mental blueprint.[10] Prior to the performance, the musician already knows what notes they will perform, and how they will perform it. To contrast, musicians performing notes guided by practical judgment have no blueprint of how any particular performance will unfold. While they have an idea of what will happen, each individual performance will be unique. They will make judgments within a performance, improvising in a way that attempts to balance the expectations of their audience with the musician's own expression of creativity.

The distinction between the notes within these two performances—the technical and the practical—cannot be heard within the music itself, at least not within a single performance. Over multiple performances, though, one can observe differences between these performances based on judgment. A performance with its notes informed by technical judgment might sound the same in the tenth performance as it did in the first. A performance with its notes informed by practical judgment, however, might evolve as the musician adapts to various audiences and explores new creative insights.[11]

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[9] As I will more fully elaborate later, the mode of judgment used to guide any particular action should not be seen in black and white but in shades of gray. Any act guided by technical judgment might also contain elements of practical judgment and vice versa. Any attempt to describe an act as purely technical or purely practical without recognizing the complexity needed to discuss judgment would also lack the needed sophistication to take the subject seriously.

[10] Note that I am referring to notes. I am not suggesting that all of the musician's actions will be informed by a blueprint, only the selection of notes.

[11] Yes, performances of classical music do evolve. It is important to understand that I am not saying that classical music is devoid of practical judgment. On the contrary, classical music fosters practical judgment, but in different ways that traditional music fosters practical judgment. The distinction being that practical judgment for classical musicians

To explore the distinctions between the two modes of judgment, within this dissertation I focus on the music community of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. Highland Scots settled the island of Cape Breton in the early nineteenth century bringing their traditional customs, including traditional Highland Scottish music and dance. Due to a number of factors, including the island's isolation, this community maintained these traditional practices. Over time, the island's music, which began as a transplanted Scottish music, developed into its own unique Celtic music style. The music of Cape Breton sits within the broader family of Celtic music, sharing many traits with other Celtic musics such as Irish music and Scottish music.[12]

While I have casually referred to several traditional musical genres, to label any of these distinct musics as a homogenous sound would distort the complexity inherent within each. The driving rhythm of an Irish fiddler from Donegal contrasts sharply with the ornamental flavor of an Irish fiddler from Galway.[13] Even as these regional styles

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might not necessarily relate to the choice of notes. It will guide other choices, though. More so, individuals in different roles within classical music have different opportunities to exercise practical judgment. I will discuss this more in depth later, but recognize that orchestras are led by a conductor, and the conductor makes many practical decisions concerning the sound of a performance, both within the performance it and beforehand. The conductor relies on the musicians to follow his instructions in regards to these judgments. In these cases, the conductor exercises practical judgment and relies upon the musicians to exercise technical judgment in following instructions.

[12] Due to the nature of traditional music, which I will explore later, Cape Breton music also shares traits with musics such as American and Canadian Old Time, Bluegrass, and Danish traditional musics.

[13] For example, contrast the music of the late Larry Reynolds who exemplifies the Galway fiddle style and the music of Liz Doherty, representing the Donegal fiddle style. See "ComhaltasLive #243 – 6: Session with Boston Fiddler Larry Reynolds", *Comhaltas,* last visited June 4, 2015, http://comhaltas.ie/music/detail/comhaltaslive_243_6_session_with_boston_fiddler_larry_reynolds/lang/lang/ga; and, "Liz Doherty – Reels", *YouTube,* last visited June 4, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2z31H_g0_6o.

become clear, individuals within regions sound distinct from one another as musicians hold different influences, teachers, and tastes. There is an idea of regional distinctions, but these are not set in stone. Musicians interpret how to perform informed by their own individual tastes as determined by these different inputs, but this interpretation is also anchored to the musicians' understanding as shaped by community.[14]

Traditional musicians generally learn their music aurally by listening to other musicians within their community.[15] This aurality brings with it a lack of codification—an absence that creates both possibilities and limitations. In this environment, a young musician learns music by listening to musicians already performing within the community; by listening to these musicians, the young musician begins to understand the possibilities for music within the community. When a traditional musician hears new musical ideas, she assesses them in how they fit into her understanding of possibilities; she judges whether the community will accept this new idea or reject it. Her judgment is based on her own practical understanding of the community's values, as again, the community has no codified set of rules. Musical ideas from outside a community might become part of the community in this way. One musician hears a musical idea elsewhere and judges it as compatible within his own community. The

[14] This balance between individual style and community expectations gives insight into how musical styles evolve. As certain stylistic elements infiltrate individuals' sense of style, gaining popularity within the community, other formerly popular elements begin to fade away; the community expectations evolve and the community's sound as a whole slowly changes.

[15] Cape Breton musician Alistair MacGillivray compiled a collection of mini-biographies of Cape Breton fiddlers in 1981. Each profile documented which fiddlers each particular fiddler grew up listening to. While this information itself offers an interesting musical genealogy, the immediate take away is that every single fiddler in the compilation grew up listening to fiddle music. See Alistair MacGillivray, *The Cape Breton Fiddler* (Sydney: College of Cape Breton Press, 1981).

musician would begin incorporating it into his own performances. Community values are constantly tested and reformed with each individual performance. This logic dispels the myth that innovation within a community must emerge from nothingness. Innovation can be tied to an individual musician's understanding of the community's sense of acceptability.[16]

Classical orchestral musicians contrast with traditional musicians in that the classical community relies on a more rigid notion of rules and limits the opportunity for musicians to exercise practical judgment when it comes to deciding what notes to play, and how and when to improvise.[17] This is not to say that classical musicians lack opportunity to exercise interpretation, but rather that those opportunities are confined and regulated.[18] Orchestra members rely on reading a musical score during a

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[16] An example can be heard in the piano playing of John Morris Rankin. Rankin grew up, not only listening to the many Cape Breton piano players within the community, but also listening to country music. He incorporated into his accompaniment of Cape Breton fiddle, chords and rhythmic syncopations not before heard within the genre that he had 'picked up' from country music. But these "innovations" made their way into Rankin's performances, not because of any attempt to change the community, but because to his sense of understanding the music, these chords and syncopations simply fit and would be heard as acceptable.

[17] I am not making a value judgment against classical musicians. Nor am I saying that those individuals who are classical orchestral musicians are incapable of practical judgment. Nor am I saying that classical music itself is devoid of the notion of practical judgment. On the contrary, most classical music performances do indeed exhibit instances of practical judgment. But the very nature of orchestration requires that *who* can exercise this practical judgment is limited. All I am doing in this section is pointing out that the two communities should be distinguished not only in how the communities' music might sound, but also by looking how judgment works within the community.

[18] I am not implying that there are literal rules and regulations in force, monitored by some notion of a classical music police. But due to the very nature of an orchestra requiring coordination between many musicians, the opportunities for a single musician to deviate and exercise individual judgment are limited. As a result, there is a more limited notion of acceptable behavior. The policing, in this sense, takes the form of a

performance, while one would rarely find a traditional musician reading music during a performance.[19] When reading a score, the page tells the solo classical musician exactly when to perform softer or louder and exactly when to perform faster or slower. The score provides the musician with prompts for decisions; the solo musician interprets these prompts. Many classical musicians grow up taking part in competitions where judges rate performances based on how faithfully the musicians interpret a piece.[20]

But even this opportunity to exercise interpretation is thrown out the window in an orchestral setting where the classical musician cedes musical judgments to the conductor. In conducting the musicians, the conductor dictates the tempo, dictates how loud and how soft musicians will perform, and makes every decision compelled by the musical score. Orchestral musicians are valued in their ability to follow the conductor's instructions. Here we see a distinction between an orchestral musician and a traditional musician. The orchestral musician is accountable to the classical music community for how well she follows another's instructions. The traditional musician, to contrast, must

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concertmaster's frown—a scolding that during my own time within a classical orchestra I received on more than one occasion.

[19] In the thousands of traditional music performances I have personally seen, I have never seen a single traditional musician perform with sheet music. It has been noted that on occasion Winne Chafe, a violinist living in Cape Breton has performed in traditional venues using sheet music. But Chafe came to traditional Cape Breton music as a classical musician, having performing in symphony orchestras in both the United States and Canada, and she teaches classical music.

[20] Here there can be extreme degrees of faithfulness that an orchestra must aspire to. In my own high school symphony, while performing a Beethoven piece in a competition, because our symphony lacked a bassoon player, we substituted a baritone saxophone into the part of the bassoon. The two instruments shared the needed notes on the scale, and were close enough in sound for our director to make the judgment that the substitution would be acceptable. Our symphony lost within the competition because a judge deemed the substitution unfaithful to the Beethoven piece.

himself decide both what to perform and how to perform, without a page to prompt *when* to make decisions, and what type of decisions to make. The traditional musician is held accountable to his community for his ability to make musical decisions that align with the community's standards, whereas in an orchestra, that burden shifts from the musician to the conductor.[21]

Because traditional and classical musicians have differing opportunities to exercise musical judgment, they draw from very different forms of knowledge. When a traditional musician makes decisions, she must apply her understanding of musical theory within each performance. A traditional accompanist, for example, when following a melody player,[22] must understand how chords work; she must understand the possible chord substitutions available within a chord progression and apply that knowledge when deciding what chords to use during a performance.[23] A classical

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[21] This is not to suggest that a classical musician and a traditional musician cannot shift between worlds. But that shifting is a matter of coming to understand a new community, not a matter of simply learning musical techniques.

[22] An accompanist 'follows' a melody player, because the melody player determines the tunes that will be played. Usually these determinations are made during the set itself. A fiddler will string together anywhere from three to as much as a dozen or more tunes in a row without stopping. The fiddler might call out key changes to the accompanist if the tunes move from one tonal center to another (i.e. if one tune is in G major and the following tune is in A minor, the fiddler might call out "A"). But the accompanist must listen to the tune itself to follow along as to where chord changes occur.

[23] A melody contains a structure, usually set within a particular musical scale. The structure of the notes within a particular melody help indicate the "proper" chord for a given measure. For example, a particular section of a tune might contain the notes 'A', 'D', and 'F sharp'. These are also the notes that make up the D major chord. But this does not mean that the D major chord is the only acceptable chord to play. One might chose to play a "D major 7" chord, or begin with a D major and switch to a "B minor 7", because these chord qualities align with the notes of the structure. These various chording possibilities are called 'substitutions.' As I will elaborate later, the art of determining when to make a substitution is a key area where the accompanist exercises practical judgment within a performance.

musician might have a more formal understanding of musical theory, but because he is performing notes from a score and interpreted by a conductor, is limited in applying this formal knowledge.[24]

The classical virtuoso demonstrates an alternative to conceiving of the classical musician as operating solely through the technical application of rules.[25] The virtuoso exhibits tremendous skill, and is valued by the classical music community precisely for exhibiting an ability to make musical decisions without rules to guide. These musicians have reached such a high skill level—and by virtue of this skill level can achieve possibilities with their instrument that others cannot. Classical music communities value these musicians for their individuality and agency, distinguished from how the community values orchestral members for their contributions to the collective sound of an orchestra. To say that classical music communities deny agency or practical judgment would be both false and overly simple. More precisely, these communities value agency, but restrict who may exhibit it, and when it may be exhibited. The virtuoso exhibits agency. The composer exhibits agency. More often than not, the conductor organizing the orchestra exhibits agency. Beyond that, little room exists within classical music

[24] One might compare this to language learners: on the one hand is the person who learns a foreign language immersed completely within a community and who speaks the language without the aid of books, on the other hand is the person who learns a foreign language completely through the use of books and without the contact of a community that speaks this language. The book learner might understand the formal use of subjunctive verbs or past participles, but might not draw from that understanding. The person who learns within the community might not have the formal understanding to label a verb as subjunctive, but might have a better applied understanding of how to use that type of verb.

[25] Again, my point is not to lump all musicians playing classical music as robotic automatons. Rather, the role of a musician within an orchestra is one of limited judgment. The orchestra director makes the practical judgments and dictates these judgments to the orchestra members, who then follow these instructions.

communities for other musicians to develop the faculty to make practical judgments within performance.

While a musician might self-identify as being a traditional musician, they would be disappointed that self-identification alone does not anoint one a traditional musician. Traditional musicians must also interact with a community. It is not unheard of, for example, that a musician would take a few fiddle lessons learning some Cape Breton tunes, and then proclaim herself to be a Cape Breton fiddler. Here the musician understands the performance of music as applying a technique—the musician tries to precisely replicate the sound she has learned. When she performs her 'Cape Breton' music it is not actually informed by the Cape Breton community, and thus lacks accountability.[26] The traditional musician's performance requires more than understanding how to apply a technique to elicit a particular sound. This traditional musician understands the fluid changes within the community—that the makeup of the audience creates different expectations. Rather than informed by the desire to replicate a sound, the traditional musician's performance is informed by an understanding of individuals in the community.

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[26] Rather than be seen as a straw man, I am not referring to any one specific individual. But this characterization represents an archetype of a type of person who is encountered in traditional sessions. This person will self-identify as being a Cape Breton fiddler, but will identify as such because they've bought four or five Natalie MacMaster albums and learned every tune on the album. Granted, this person might play Cape Breton tunes, but their limited exposure to a single musician familiarizes this musician with neither the Cape Breton community, nor a session community in general. If these musicians frequent the session, they can, and often do, 'grow out of it' as they begin to acclimate to the community, and are held accountable by that community. I have seen examples of musicians emblematic of this archetype showing up at a session, and at every opportunity, beginning a set by playing "all the hits"--the flashy fiddle tunes that are the traditional music equivalent of an overplayed pop summer hit. While most sessions will tolerate a few instances of this behavior for newcomers, it is done with much eye-rolling.

To be fair, the classical musician's performance is also informed by an understanding of individuals within his community. But pay attention to this notion of accountability. When the classical musician performs, the norm is for that musician to be held accountable to the conductor. The conductor makes the majority of decisions for the musician, and the musician is held accountable based on how the musician follows the conductor's guidance. Here, I want to briefly frame "who" the classical musician is that I'm talking about, as this will help illustrate the notion of accountability.

The majority of classical musicians, at least in the United States, are not members of major symphony orchestras. They are members, or former members, of high school orchestras and local symphonies. These classical musicians begin learning their instrument around the fourth grade, and play through high school, and perhaps college. Rather than being seen as an elite class based institution, these classical musicians are drawn from all classes, and, in some cases, are a student's only chance to learn music within their grade school. Often, when this student graduates high school, the opportunity to perform music disappears. But perhaps five to ten years later, this former musician is sitting in a bar, and hears a group of people sitting in the corner playing traditional music. He sees a violin. He knows that he can play the violin. So the following week, he brings his violin, and sits down to join this group.

Think for a moment about how this student's decisions had been made for him as a classical musician. The conductor told him what music to play, how to play that music, and how to act. His practical judgment, when he could exercise it, was limited, and anchored to the accountability of this classical music community. Odds are, if he acted inappropriately, his conductor would smack him in the head with a rolled up score of

sheet music. But in this new environment, there is no single person to tell the musician what to play or how to play it. There is no one to tell him how to act. This musician is entering a new community, with new values, and a new system of judgment. But there is nothing to overtly indicate all of these differences to this musician.[27] To enter this community, this musician must adapt to the nuances of the conversation.

I must deviate for a moment to talk about community, and how the term will be used within this dissertation. Most importantly, place does not equal community. Likewise, a group of people is not necessarily a community. Instead, community needs to be seen as a conversation occurring between individuals. Individuals can enter this conversation. But just as importantly, individuals leave this conversation. Community needs to be seen as a process, and less as a 'thing.'[28] Throughout this dissertation I draw on 'conversation' as thought through by Hans Georg Gadamer.[29] Gadamer sees conversation a process that presupposes a common language while also creating a common language.[30] Neither language and meaning are understood as static.

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[27] I am not implying that this musician cannot enter this new community successfully. Further, I am not implying that this musician can't successfully straddle both worlds. Like anyone entering a new social system, this musician can recognize and adapt to the differences within each community. But he could also remain oblivious to these differences and not adapt.

[28] It would be too simple to say that community is a verb and not a noun. But it would be equally wrong to say that a community is solely a noun. It would be better to say that community is the act and state of a constituted group. The people might fall into and out of community. Simply because they are a constituted group, does not make them a community. Instead, acting as a community requires communication practices. I will elaborate more on this within a later section.

[29] Here I use 'conversation' as Gadamer elaborates within *Truth and Method,* which I will cover at length later. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* trans. Joel Weinsheimer & Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2004).

[30] *Ibid*., 371. Gadamer further elaborates: "…reaching an understanding on the subject matter of a conversation necessarily means that a common language must be first

Conversation is not limited to oral speech, but concerns *language*. The focus being not on the form a conversation takes, but on the process of "coming to an understanding."[31] Traditional musicians hold themselves accountable to an audience and other musicians through conversation using musical performance to communicate.[32] This musical language emerges within a performance, changing with each performance, but at the same time the presupposition of a common musical language exists at the outset of the performance.

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worked out in the conversation. This is not an external matter of simply adjusting our tools: nor is it even right to say that the partners adapt themselves to one another but, rather, in a successful conversation they both come under the influence of the truth of the object and are thus bound to one another in a new community. To reach an understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's own point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were." *Ibid*.

[31] "Conversation is a process of coming to an understanding. Thus it belongs to every true conversation that each person opens himself to the other, truly accepts his point of view as valid and transposes himself into the other to such an extant that he understands not the particular individual but what he says." *Ibid.*, 387.

[32] I am referring to a non-oral notion of the word 'conversation.' Simply put, musicians have conversations through music. Both non-musicians and beginner musicians often fall into the trap of assuming that the musician's primary concern when performing is the music that he himself produces with his own instrument. A competent musician is more actively engaged with listening than a concern for his own sound. Listening occurs on a few different levels for the traditional musician. The traditional musician is listening to the other musicians performing with her. The musician is also listening to the audience who react to performances both verbally and non-verbally. As a conversation, musicians respond to the others' actions with their performance. Applying Gadamer's quote from footnote 31 to music, let's say a fiddler is playing a reel in a somber mood, but the accompanist is chording to it upbeat. In a musical conversation, the two musicians are listening to each other to recognize their disparity, and they begin to perform in response to the other. They might swing one way or another, or find common ground in the middle. In this case, they have performed in such a way that they are open to the other musicians' point of view, and exhibit empathy in adapting their performances to the other. They have done so through a musical communication.

When traditional musicians began to perform outside of their local community, new audiences saw the music in isolation from community, they saw only single musical performances.[33] To classical musicians in this new audience, nothing indicated that the performance of traditional music required anything more than the technical knowledge of the instrument—technical knowledge these musicians already possessed. Nothing indicated that an understanding of community guided the traditional musician's performance. This is also not to accuse classical musicians of lacking community. Rather, this is to say that the classical musicians, while themselves a product of a community that guided their own judgments, did not *recognize* that the traditional musicians' community would influence the traditional musician's own judgments, and further that it was this notion of *judgment* which made the musical style unique. It is likely that these musicians did not even recognize their own community's influence on their own judgment within a musical performance.[34] The clash of musical communities does not emerge when a classical musician sits down to participate in the traditional music community. The clash arises when any musician enters another community failing to

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[33] Here, specifically, I am returning to my anecdote of Celtic music within the 1990s. But this could refer to numerous other examples. Another instance could be seen when The Clancy Brothers toured America in the 1960s. These were concerts that Irish-Americans flocked too, yet some would leave disappointed because the Clancy Brothers didn't sing "Danny Boy"—a song popularly identified in America as representing Ireland, whilst in actuality it is a song written in England in 1910, and popularized in America by the likes of Bing Crosby and Judy Garland. See Pete Hamil, "Forward" *The Irish Songbook: The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem* (Macmillan Publishing, 1969), available at, http://clancybrothersandtommymakem.com/ip_1969_sb.htm.

[34] These musicians are simply mistaken—not evil.

recognize that this new community possesses different values and practices than their own.[35]

Eliminating community from traditional music eliminates a form of knowledge that informs performance, and thus informs rhetoric. Traditional musicians act as epideictic rhetors, aurally proclaiming community values for community members to judge. This allows musicians to change the community's value rhetorically through music. Because practical judgment does not operate through strict application of rules, it allows for the possibility of newness.[36] Traditional communities' values and practices change when musicians both understand their audience's expectations, and then push upon that understanding.[37]

Because my project's focus is to outline how rhetorical theory can better conceive of aural rhetorics, I will first cover rhetorical scholarship that discusses music. From this I

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[35] One could argue that a musician from one community does in fact understand that other musicians possesses different values. She recognizes that the style of the music is different, and therefore the traditional community values a different style of music than their own. But these understandings of value concern the *form* of the music. The values and practices not recognized are those that cannot be observed superficially. These unrecognized are values and practices concern the mechanisms of how the community works, which is not solely determined by how the community sounds.

[36] If rules become the guiding post for judgment in any community, the community has the potential of slipping into dogmatism. This can be seen in traditional folk revivals that seek to revive a traditional practice. These revivals often base their resurrection upon sets of rules that guide the new participants. Here the revivals are better seen as museums mimicking a form of the traditional folk practice, not revivals of traditional communities.

[37] Classical musicians act as musical rhetors in the same capacity. The argument I am making is not that classical musicians are lesser, and therefore not rhetorical. I am attempting to illustrate that the rhetorical agent is limited in the classical music setting. Your rank and file orchestral member has no opportunity to exhibit agency through exercising practical judgment. Your virtuoso and maestro do. These roles can exercise judgment by pushing community boundaries.

will discuss how an aural rhetoric needs to take into account theories of community, beginning with notions of the vernacular and the everyday. I argue that the mechanisms of judgment are a key distinction between communities, hence, a key distinction between aural rhetorics. Therefore, I will spend time focusing on judgment, and how judgment relates to communities. Finally, I will discuss the community of Cape Breton itself, reviewing scholarship that has focused on music within the Cape Breton community.

# CHAPTER 2

# THE STATE OF MUSICAL RHETORIC

While the concept of aural rhetoric has yet to be breached by rhetorical theorists, there is somewhat of an acknowledgement of a rhetoric of music within rhetorical theory.[38] Yet this is a topic that has not been taken seriously. You can sometimes find a single panel that broaches musical rhetoric at the major rhetoric disciplinary conferences, and you might find solitary presentations on musical rhetoric scattered amongst other panels. A possible reason for such a bereft showing is the sheer difficulty in writing about sound in the first place, let alone attaching properties to that sound. Few published studies investigate the relationship between rhetoric and music, and of those that have, most focus on lyrical analysis of a song, using speech criticism to

[38] I say "somewhat" here, because, while I am about to point out a series of articles devoted to the relationship between rhetoric and music, not all rhetoricians have accepted that music is rhetorical. The reviewer of a recent chapter submission of mine that discussed the effects of musical rhetoric pushed back against my claim that music could be rhetorical, pushing for me to instead say that music is *like* rhetoric. This experience is not unique.

analyze lyrics. But using these traditional methods of rhetorical criticism, and equating music's rhetorical properties to the rhetorical properties of the written and spoken word might be the very reason that a more comprehensive aural rhetoric has not emerged. The square peg of lyrical criticism might fit into the round hole of musical rhetoric, but with enough gaps that leaves the experience unsatisfying. While relevant, given the sparse nature of rhetorical studies of music, such lyrical investigations do not correspond with the focus of my project because traditional Cape Breton music lacks words. Rather than concerning myself with the potential message of any one particular tune, my project looks to investigate the rhetorical mechanisms behind a genre of non-lyrical music.

That being said, I do not wish to dismiss the contributions to the rhetoric of music already conducted, since these authors have had to struggle with the difficulty of writing about music and its rhetorical properties. An honest discussion of aural rhetoric must begin with this existing work in order to understand what has worked as well as what has failed. As previously mentioned, rhetorical scholarship has focused on lyrics, and indirectly how the music shapes the meaning of the lyrics. Political lyrics of protest music have been the obvious targets of such rhetorical criticism.[39] Other studies look at the social impact of songs, such as Michael McGuire's analysis of Bruce Springsteen's lyrics as a medium promoting the virtue of responsibility.[40] Robert Root describes the

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[39] See, for example, Stephen King's examination of how the Reggae music sung by Jamaica's poor as protest music became usurped by the nation's tourism industry to market the island abroad. Stephen A. King, *Reggae, Rastafari, and the Rhetoric of Social Control* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2007).

[40] Michael McGuire, "'Darkness on the Edge of Town': Bruce Springsteen's Rhetoric of Optimism and Despair," in Medhurst & Benson (eds.), *Rhetorical Dimensions in Media: A Critical Casebook* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt, 1984), 233-250.

relationship between rhetoric and music as composed of three elements—speaker, subject, and audience—tracing the development of ethos, pathos, and logos within a song, using a neo-Aristotelian method of speech criticism.[41] Beyond looking at the lyric as an artifact,[42] other rhetorical studies have shown how lyrics create and maintain musical genre, appealing to authenticity within that particular genre's audience, such as Theodore Matula's investigation of how the band 'the Pixies' fit within the punk music scene.[43] This scholarship represents the bulk of studies focused on music and rhetoric. While they are strong in their own right, in adapting traditional modes of speech criticism to the lyrics of music and treating songs as artifacts, they are limited in this focus on lyrics.

Showing the potential for a rhetorical focus that moves beyond lyrics, Deanna Sellnow and Timothy Sellnow find a rhetorical capacity in the intersection between lyrics and musical arrangement.[44] The Sellnows briefly explain the rhythmic, melodic,

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41 Robert Root, "A Listener's Guide to the Rhetoric of Popular Music", *Journal of Popular Culture* 20 (1986), 15-26.

42 Studies investigating the rhetorical dimension of lyrics include Robert Walser, "Rhythm, Rhyme and Rhetoric in the Music of Public Enemy" *Ethnomusicology* 39 (1995), 193-217; G.P. Mohrman & F. Eugene Scott, "Popular Music and World War II: The Rhetoric of Continuation" *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 62 (1976), 145-156; Elizabeth Kizer, "Protest Song Lyrics as Rhetoric" *Popular Music and Society* 9 (1983), 3-11; and Mark Booth, "The Art of Words in Songs", *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 62 (1976), 242-249.

43 Theodore Matula, "Contextualizing Musical Rhetoric: A Critical Reading of the Pixies' 'Rock Music'", *Communication Studies* 51 (2000), 218-237. Other studies looking at musical genres include Edward Armstrong, "The Rhetoric of Violence in Rap and Country Music," *Sociological Inquiry* 63 (1993) 64-78; Robert Francesconi, "Free Jazz and Black Nationalism: A Rhetoric of Musical Style," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 3 (1986) 36-49.

44 Deanna Sellnow & Timothy Sellnow, "The 'Illusion of Life' Rhetorical Perspective: An Integrated Approach to the Study of Music as Communication", *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 18 (2001), 395-415.

and harmonic structures of music—a necessary component that any rhetorical analysis of music should contain. But the explanation they provide contains some ethnocentric assumptions of Western music: "[O]ur minds tend to crave metric order. Hence, music grouped in predictable duple patterns (as in a march) or triple patterns (as in a waltz) is calming and representative of release rather than intensity."[45] This represents one of the many generalizations made by the Sellnows that treats the rhetorical properties of music as universal. Contrary to the Sellnows' assertion, a waltz and a march are quite capable of carrying their own intensity, depending on the community and context where the particular form develops.[46] While notable in their attempt to explain rhetorical properties beyond lyrics, my own project differs in that it does not treat the rhetorical properties of music as a given. My goal is to show how rhetorical properties of music develop within musical communities.[47]

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[45] *Ibid.,* 403-404.

[46] Marches in particular being the best example to counter the Sellnows' description in the form's ability to build both intensity and release. The march is a form used in military music to actually lead an army on a march into battle. The form of many marches does nothing save build anticipation, and for some, dread. The mistake the Sellnows make is being overly deterministic regarding any one musical attribute. It is the interplay of a number of factors of an arrangement that will determine the rhetorical effect a particular piece of music might have, and this will also depend on the particular context of any given performance.

[47] The Sellnows hint at recognizing how different musical genres might contain different properties when they state that, "a good deal of Rap music uses syncopated patterns and might be more representative of intensity when compared to much of folk music, which tends to rely on consistent duple or triple beat patterns." *Ibid.,* 404. This recognizes a distinction between genres, but again, over-generalizes. I am not sure what they mean by "folk music", but if they are referring to the more modern American "folk" music of Bob Dylan or Pete Seeger, the duple patterns of both Seeger's *Which Side Are You On,* and Dylan's *Subterranean Homesick Blues* connote intensity. Meanwhile, I have heard early underground recordings of the Wu-Tang Clan played as background music at a coffeehouse in Corktown, Detroit, where the syncopation of the Wu-Tang Clan's rap served as a calming backdrop. I understand that they qualify their characterization of each genre, but even this qualifier is unfair to the diversity of rhetorical musical

The lack of engagement with both music theory and non-lyrical music is a limitation in the literature coupling rhetoric and music. Much like the study of oratory devolved from practical skills into technical examinations of elocution[48], the study of rhetorical music arrangement paints a picture of Western art music as shifting from a practical art to a technical art, where composers would dip into prescribed musical clichés in order to achieve desired effects. Gerard LeCoat[49] suggests that during the Baroque and Classical periods of music, composers based rhetorical appeals solely on compositional techniques. LeCoat argues that these composers saw musical devices, such as pitch modulation, as appealing to moods. When composers wishes to elicit particular moods, they would draw from a prescribed set of musical figures. [50] Also

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techniques within each community. The goal of distinguishing these communities should not be to stereotype musical genre, but to understand how these genres develop unique rhetorical mechanisms.

[48] Warren Guthrie outlines this transformation within "The Development of Rhetorical Theory in America 1635-1850—V The Elocution Movement—England." Here he examines the rhetorical treatises circulating during the Eighteenth Century, and their focus on delivery. For example, the anonymously written *Art of Speaking in Public*, devotes considerable time to gesture: "Use little gesture at the opening of a speech. Don't clap your hands, beat your breast, etc. Use the right hand only for gestures. Don't strike your breast, but place your hand gently upon it. Move all gestures from left to right. Never lift the hands higher than the eyes." Warren Guthrie, "The Development of Rhetorical Theory in America 1635-1850—V. The Elocution Movement—England", *Speech Monographs* 18 (1951), 17-31.

[49] Gerard LeCoat, "Music and the Three Appeals of Classical Rhetoric", *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 62 (1976), 157-166.

[50] Other sources examine rhetoric and musical composition, including Gregory Butler, "Music and Rhetoric in Early Seventeenth Century English Sources," *The Musial Quarterly* 66 (1980), 53-64; Carl Bryon Holmberg, "Toward the Rhetoric of Music: Dixie" *The Southern Speech Communication Journal* 51 (1985) 71-82; Dietrich Bartel, *Musica Poetica: Musical-Rhetorical Figures in German Baroque Music* (University of Nebraska: Lincoln, NE, 1997); Todd Borgerding, "Preachers, Pronunciatio, and Music: Hearing Rhetoric in Renaissance Sacred Polyphony," *The Musical Quarterly* 82 (1998) 586-598; James Irvine & Walter Kirkpatrick, "The Musical Form in Rhetorical Exchange: Theoretical Considerations," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 58 (1972) 272-284.

focusing on the Baroque and Classical period, Brian Vickers chronicles how musicians and composers were familiar with classical rhetoric, arguing that their music was shaped by rhetorical theory.[51] But Vickers is not of the mind to refer to music as itself rhetorical, instead arguing that the composer was only able to build analogies between rhetorical theory and musical theory. "No doubt the general processes of creation in rhetoric—*inventio, dispositio, elocutio, pronuntiatio, memoria*—could be adapted to music—given some ingenuity—without causing a great deal of distortion."[52] Vickers concentrates on how composers translated rhetorical figures, such as the *colon* and the *articulus* into music. As such, he catalogs how rhetorical figures could apply to music. The relationship Vickers paints between rhetoric and music, is a limited one, though, and part of this might be due to an understanding of rhetoric itself limited to classical rhetoric and elocution: "Like rhetoric, music can represent and arouse emotions, but unlike rhetoric, which is a highly systematized linguistic discipline that can combine the finite forms of rhetorical figures with an infinite combination of meaning... it may hope for insight, but rhetoric is inalienably about communication, and can only use words, and meanings."[53]

My project attempts to work against the prejudice shown by scholars such as Vickers—a blinding prejudice that prevents them from seeing music as rhetorical in its own right. To date, the majority of rhetorical scholarship on music has centered on music's lyrics, for understandable reasons. But this has prevented the possibilities of musical rhetoric being understood under its own terms. In this project, I attempt to

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[51] Brian Vickers, "Figures of Rhetoric/Figures of Music?", *Rhetorica* 2 (1984), 1-44.

[52] *Ibid.*, 18.

[53] *Ibid.*, 44.

move beyond the rhetorical analysis of lyrics, and show the possibility of aural rhetorics. The work of Deanna and Timothy Sellnow set the stage for acknowledging rhetorical effects of music require acknowledging the relationship between melody, harmony, and tempo, etc. But an understanding of how aural rhetorics work requires a practical understanding of how music works, and more precisely, how music works upon people. Musical effects are not universal. Instead, the rhetorical effects of music largely depend on the community that the music is performed within. To fully understand how music creates and shapes meaning, and aural rhetoric needs to begin with understanding 'understanding' itself. An aural rhetoric needs to ask how understanding occurs within particular communities. Rather than reducing specific musical attributes to generalizable universal characteristics and universal techniques, understanding aural rhetoric requires acknowledging the contingency of each performance as a weave of multiple musical and situational elements—only when seeing how these elements work together in a community, will the rhetorical properties of the weave become apparent.

# CHAPTER 3

# RHETORIC AND THE EVERYDAY

A comprehensive theory of musical rhetoric has failed partly because any consideration of it has not highlighted that music is contingent—it operates within a community,[54] and its effects are not universal.[55] This omission is ironic, because a strength of rhetorical theory is the recognition both of the contingent and of the communal. Rehabilitating an aural rhetoric should begin by attempting to incorporate rhetorical theorists' conceptions of community. This will begin to fill the gaps of an aural rhetoric, creating a theory that recognizes musical properties can have disparate effects on different communities.

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[54] I invoke 'community' as a concept here because the topic demands it. But the concept of 'community' is indeed problematic. Rhetorician Diane Davis draws from both Derrida and Nancy when she warns of using the term "with extreme caution..., and with a vigilance against the humanist, androcentric, and anthropocentric histories with which [it is] associated." Diane Davis, *Inessential Solidarity: Rhetoric and Foreigner Relations* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 167. As I will discuss at length later, defining a community can mask the complexity inherent in being with others. Using 'community' without regard to this complexity can destroy the concept of the individual within the community and can destroy the very notion of agency. Conceiving of a person as 'belonging' in a community has the danger of seeing the community as a container that holds and defines those within it. But to take this criticism and swing the pendulum in the other direction, rejecting any possibility of the concept of 'community' would be equally wrong and equally dangerous. While we need to recognize the individual, we need to recognize that individual as a being-with others. Rather than rejecting community outright, or embracing it utterly, we need to understand community as a set of relationships that can simultaneously acknowledge the individual and the group. As I will show throughout this project, understanding the individual within the group, and cautiously recognizing the 'community' that forms in this relationship, allows for a more dynamic conception of both, and rejects the essentialism of either.

[55] Here I am referring to music in its aurality. As I have previously shown, there are examples of scholarship on the rhetoric of music that discusses contingencies and communities, but solely through reducing the particularity of a song to its lyrics. This has ignored the contingency stemming from the *sound* of music.

Rhetorical theory has always confronted questions of an audience, with early rhetorical scholarship tying an audience to a specific text or calling for an orator to better understand how a speech might address an audience.[56] It is the recognition of the contingency of audiences that sets the stage for rhetoric's concern for the collective identity of groups. In an important move to direct the focus of rhetorical theory away from speech artifacts, Michael McGee called upon scholars to examine the relationship between rhetoric and social processes.[57] McGee traced the invocation of 'the people' as a rhetorical concept, deriding how "most rhetorical scholarship presupposes a 'people' or an 'audience' which is either (a) an objective literal extension of 'person,' or (b) a 'mob' of individuals who significance is their gullibility and failure to respond to 'logical' argument."[58] As an alternative, McGee presented 'people' as simultaneously both real and a rhetorical fiction. The people are no more than individuals who have been rhetorically seduced into a collective identity. This shifts seeing a people as a thing to seeing a people as a process. In this process, the people, "are conjured into objective reality, remain so as long as the rhetoric which defined them has force, and in the end wilt away becoming once again merely a collection of individuals."[59]

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[56] For example, Aristotle's *Rhetoric* calls for the orator to understand the needs and the moods of particular audiences. See also Edwin Black's seminal formulation of the notion of audience 'personas', which, in acknowledging how speakers can appeal to more than one auditor within the audience of a given speech and laid the groundwork for how speech can constitute ideology and identity. Edwin Black "The Second Persona" *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56 (1970) 109-119.

[57] Michael McGee, "In Search of 'The People': A Rhetorical Alternative", *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 61 (1975) 235-249.

[58] *Ibid.,* 238.

[59] *Ibid.,* 242.

While McGee doesn't refer to a community as such, his discussion of a people provides a springboard for rhetorical theorists to further explore collective identity and the idea of group formation, from which a rhetorical discussion of a community might evolve. Maurice Charland took up McGee's call by exploring the rhetorical constitution of the "*Peuple Québécois*" and explicitly invoking the idea of a community as "a term that masks or negates tensions and differences between members of any society."[60] Focusing on the process of how collective identity rhetorically comes to be, Charland develops a theory of 'constitutive rhetoric' wherein individuals become "political subjects through a process of identification in rhetorical narratives that 'always already' presume the constitution of subjects."[61] Individuals here are not persuaded necessarily to support the particular 'talking points' of the group they might identify with, but in identifying with the group itself, individuals assume a role within a rhetorically constructed group narrative.[62]

Charland illustrates constitutive rhetoric by focusing on a specific rhetorical artifact, the Quebec Government's 1979 *White Paper* which articulated the reasons for Quebec's independence. But the strength in Charland's constitutive rhetoric is not the power recognized within grand speech artifacts, but rather with his recognition of the constitutive power imbued within individual's mundane everyday events. "Persons are subjects from the moment they acquire language and the capacity to speak and to be

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[60] Maurice Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the People Québécois", *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73 (1987) 140.

[61] *Ibid.,* at 134.

[62] "Constitutive rhetorics are ideological not merely because they provide individuals with narratives to inhabit as subjects and motives to experience, but because they insert 'narratized' subjects-as-agents into the world." *Ibid.*, at 143.

spoken to. As such, constitutive rhetoric is part of the discursive background of social life. It is always there, usually implicitly, and sometimes explicitly articulated."[63]

The collective identity created by constitutive rhetoric is formed just as much by the rhetorical power of our "discursive background" as it is by the rhetorical power of specific texts. Charland implies that these background activities might have a greater role in shaping our narratives than any single articulation. This recognition of the background holds import for aural rhetoric. An individual's identification with a musical collective identity is not formed through the single performance but through exposure to a background repetition of many performances. The narrative of musical identity itself does not spring forth from the single composition, but is shaped over time by many compositions and performances, and is an identity usually touched by the hand of many composers and performers. Charland's recognition that constitutive rhetoric lies within our discursive background illustrates a need for an aural rhetoric to also grapple with understanding 'the vernacular' within a community—the vernacular being a locality's background everyday discourse. Incorporating how a community's vernacular works rhetorically will help a theory of aural rhetoric understand how music is capable of operating within the background of communities as a constitutive rhetoric.

### 3.1. The Vernacular

Recognizing the rhetorical nature of everyday exchanges departs from a classical notion of conceiving rhetoric as an intentional form of oral and written communication. Yet as Charland points out, our identification with groups is shaped more through everyday background exchanges than through the single oration. The ability of

[63] *Ibid.*, at 147.

rhetorical theory to recognize the rhetoric of the everyday in part comes from the aforementioned work of McGee and Charland, but also from the recognition that rhetoric has both epistemic and aesthetic roles.[64] After this move towards developing a

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[64] While I do not want to fall down the rabbit hole of detailing rhetorical theory's 'Rhetoric as Epistemic' debate, it deserves brief recognition as it helped set the stage for the possibility of conceiving a rhetoric of everyday existence. For lack of a better starting point, the debate began in 1967 when Robert Scott argued that rhetoric was a "a way of knowing." Under this view, rhetoric itself creates and shapes knowledge. Scott's assertion spawned a series of challenges and defenses, with critics arguing that rhetoric is not a way of creating knowledge, but a way of creating perspective upon an objective reality already there. Others attempted to mediate between the proponents of rhetoric as epistemic and those of rhetoric as perspectivism by arguing that knowledge was consensus determined through intersubjectivity, with Barry Brummett articulating this position thusly, "[I]f objective reality does not exist, where will we get the meanings we have? The answer is that people get meanings from other people through communication." Whitson and Poulakos enter the conversation by drawing from Nietzsche to label the goal of both the intersubjectivists and the perspectivists as an "arbitrary fiction." The fault of these views lie in approaching "intimate hidden worlds with intelligible structures, the totality of which can be known if only one follows proper epistemological procedures." By doing so, intersubjectivity and perspectivism ignores the aesthetic. Through Nietzsche's eyes, epistemology is "a sub-category of art" and rhetoric is the artistic act of "ordering the chaos of life."

After Whitson and Poulakos' entrance into the debate, but through no fault of theirs, it arguably devolved from an exchange concerning the substance of rhetoric into one concerning the merits of Nietzsche. But both the epistemic and aesthetic views of rhetoric that emerged from this debate helped rhetorical theory to recognize the rhetorical nature of 'knowing' as well as the rhetorical aspects of everyday being. While Charland and McGee and others investigating the constitutive rhetoric of collective identity did not explicitly draw upon this debate, the ripples of the exchange clearly influence theories of a rhetoric of the everyday, and should be acknowledged.

See Robert Scott, "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic," *Central States Speech Journal* 18 (1967) 9-16; Robert Scott, "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic: Ten Years Later," *Central States Speech Journal* 27 (1976) 258-66; Richard Cherwitz, "Rhetoric as a Way of Knowing: An Attenuation of the Epistemological Claims of the 'New Rhetoric'," *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 42 (1977) 207-19; Barry Brummett, "A Defense of Ethical Relativism as Rhetorically Grounded," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 455 (1981) 286-98; Barry Brummett, "On to Rhetorical Relativism," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 68 (1982) 425-30; Richard Cherwitz & James Hikins, *Communication and Knowledge: An Investigation in Rhetorical Epistemology* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1986); James Hikins & Kenneth Zagacki, "Rhetoric, Philosophy, and Objectivism: An Attenuation of the Claims of the Rhetoric of Inquiry," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 74 (1988) 201-28; Barry Brummett "A Eulogy for Epistemic Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of*

model of constitutive rhetoric, some rhetorical theorists, such as Gerard Hauser, Kent Ono, and John Sloop, attempted to take rhetoric's recognition of the discursive background of everyday talk one step further by developing models of vernacular rhetoric.[65] These models identify vernacular rhetoric through the local, recognizing that each community operates with its own rhetorical mechanisms.

> "The human world [...] is constituted by the ongoing social exchanges found in dress, manners, material culture, popular arts, social gatherings, and the like. Included in this extension is the rhetoric of the everyday—a 'vernacular rhetoric' of interaction within a discourse community that depends on local knowledge, concerns, meanings, modes of arguments, value schemes, logics, traditions, and the like shared among ordinary people."[66]

This description intimately links vernacular rhetoric and collective identity. We share the mundane social exchanges that operate at the background of our everyday life and to understand how to move amongst others who share this local logic is also to understand the vernacular rhetoric of the community.

Key to vernacular rhetoric is the question "what is a community?" Charland hints at the possibility of shared "everyday background discourses" as the mark of a

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*Speech* 76 (1990) 69-72; Richard Cherwitz & James Hikins, "Burying the Undertaker: A Eulogy for the Eulogists of Rhetorical Epistemology," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 76 (1990) 73-77; Steve Whitson & John Poulakos, "Nietzsche and the Aesthetics of Rhetoric," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 79 (1993) 131-145; James Hikins, "Nietzsche, Eristic, and the Rhetoric of the Possible: A Commentary on Whitson and Poulakos' Aesthetic View of Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995) 353-77; Kevin Ayotte, John Poulakos, & Steve Whitson, "Mistaking Nietzsche: Rhetoric and the Epistemic Pest," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (2002) 121-127.

[65] Gerard Hauser, "Vernacular Dialogue and the Rhetoricality of Public Opinion," *Communication Monographs* 65 (1998) 83-107; Kent A. Ono & John M. Sloop, "The Critique of Vernacular Discourse," *Communication Monographs* 62 (1995) 19-46.

[66] Gerard Hauser, "Attending the Vernacular: A Plea for an Ethnographical Rhetoric," in *The Rhetorical Emergence of Culture,* eds. Christian Meyer & Felix Girke (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 164.

community, but it is not enough to refer solely to these everyday exchanges without acknowledging that background discourses occur in our local surroundings. Also important is the recognition that belonging to a community requires more than mere identification with a group. One cannot simply declare, "I deem that I belong to this community, thus it is so." Through the lens of vernacular rhetoric, belonging to a community requires the ability to understand and function within that group's local rhetoric. "We belong to a community insofar as we are able to participate in its conversations. We must acquire its vernacular language in order to share rhetorically salient meanings."[67] More so, a model of vernacular rhetoric recognizes that these everyday discourses are not limited to oral, or even written exchanges. "[V]ernacular discourse is speech that resonates within local communities. This discourse is neither accessible in its entirety, nor is it discoverable, except through texts. However, vernacular discourse is also culture: the music, art, criticism, dance, and architecture of local communities."[68] Vernacular rhetoric allows us to conceive of a community defined as a collection of individuals who share everyday rhetorical exchanges of culture.

Recognizing that vernacular rhetoric extends to cultural texts such as music and art immediately lends itself to a theory of aural rhetoric. Conceiving of musical practice as a vernacular discourse is not limited to recognizing a community's discourse *about* music, but to also recognize that the music itself—even non-lyrical music—exists as a form of vernacular discourse. In addition to the import of recognizing cultural texts as vernacular discourse, Hauser defining a community through rhetorical exchanges is

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[67] Gerard Hauser, *Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 67.

[68] Ono & Sloop, "The Critique of Vernacular Discourse," 20.

almost as important. Through this definition, the classical musicians who take a few fiddle lessons and listen to a few Cape Breton fiddle albums do not belong to the Cape Breton fiddle community, despite labeling themselves as such. Self-identification with a community does not equate to adopting or understanding the rhetorical salience of discourse within the community—and it is the ability to understand and share in this discourse that makes someone a member of the community. These classical musicians might replicate the performance of a tune exactly as they have heard it on a recording, but that provides as much understanding of the communal rhetoric embedded into the recorded performance as a language learner might gain simply by reciting a speech from a transcript. The mere replication of a text or performance does not give insight into the rhetorical salience of that performance within the community that gave birth to it. Vernacular rhetoric provides the possibility to understand how aural rhetoric functions in an everyday background.

I have thus far delayed discussing the intimate relationship between rhetoric and judgment. But because vernacular rhetoric focuses on how rhetoric functions in the background, it concerns how background discourses affect judgment, and more specifically, on the notion of communal judgment. The community judges the merit of these background discourses, just as much as it judges the merits of formal discourses. "Civil judgment expresses a common understanding among diverse social actors primarily based on formal and vernacular exchanges enacted in and across public spheres."[69] In some exchanges, the opinions of a community might reach a critical mass,

[69] Hauser, *Vernacular Voices,* 74.

where a large enough number of community members share a particular opinion that the community can be said to have reached consensus.

These opinions contribute to the community's understanding, even amongst those who do not share in a generalizable opinion. "A public sphere may be defined as a discursive space in which individuals and groups associate to discuss matters of mutual interest and, where possible, to reach a common judgment about them. It is the locus of emergence for rhetorically salient meanings."[70] Note here that common judgment does not necessarily refer to a shared judgment in an argument's outcome. It could just as well refer to agreement over what is worth arguing about in the first place. Thus some communities might be marked in the rhetorical salience of arguments that concern fútbol while others are marked through the rhetorical salience of questions of music. While both types of arguments are of the sort that occur formally or in mainstream media—loci of traditional rhetoric—they are also the sort that occur around the dinner table, corner pub, or church hall—loci of the vernacular. These judgments include the very mechanisms of how we go about making both decisions and arguments. Shared judgments contribute to a community's collective identity. The commonality of community judgments that an individual moves within, shapes how that individual understands their own position within the world.

While the models of vernacular rhetoric of Hauser, Ono, and Sloop are notable in their efforts to integrate local background discourse into rhetoric, the models they offer are far from complete, and suffer from some notable flaws. I focus particularly on the work of Hauser, because he has contributed the most in attempting to establish a model

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[70] *Ibid.*, 61.

of vernacular rhetoric.[71] I have thus far outlined three characteristics of Hauser's vernacular model that are foundational to a theory of vernacular rhetoric: (1) that background discourses include cultural exchanges, such as music, art, and dress; (2) that communities are defined by the ability to share in rhetoric; and (3) that the common judgment formed in community exchanges contributes to a community's identity. But problematic to a theory of vernacular rhetoric that can truly grapple with how rhetoric works within local background discourses is Hauser's assertion that only the marginalized and working class.

> "The vernacular, by definition, is the aboriginal language used by the people of a country or district. It is the nonofficial language of the working class, peasants, certain ethnicities, and the marginalized—the indigenous general populous—that they use, along with other indigenous symbolic forms, in their everyday communicative exchanges. It is their symbolic resource for inventing the quotidian. Vernacular language is distinctive because it stands apart from official ones used for public transactions within power relations as occur in commerce, education, governance, law, and the professions."[72]

Hauser makes the mistake here of assuming that the non-working class is only capable of speaking in official discourse. While non-working class are more likely to engage and shape formal discourse, it is wrong to conceive that they do not engage in their own form of vernacular; the Earl of Grantham's rhetoric is not limited to the formal, nor is the

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[71] Hauser has written one book and five articles that contain 'Vernacular' in the title, but this isn't the limit to his contributions to vernacular rhetoric, as the theme can be traced through much of his recent work without such titles. Gerard Hauser & Erin Daina McClellan, "Vernacular Rhetoric and Social Movements: Performance of Resistance in the Rhetoric of the Everyday," in eds. Sharon McKenzie Stevens & Patricia Malesh, *Active Voices: Composing a Rhetoric of Social Movements* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009), 23; Gerard Hauser, "Vernacular Discourse and the Epistemic Dimension of Public Opinion," *Communication Theory* 17 (2007), 333-339; Gerard Hauser, "The Moral Vernacular of Human Rights Discourse," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 41 (2008), 440-466.

[72] Hauser, "The Moral Vernacular of Human Rights Discourse," 443.

footman Thomas' speech limited to the vernacular. Briefly diverting to the vernacular music of Cape Breton, while fiddler Donald Angus Beaton, a blacksmith, might represent an occupation worthy of Hauser's disempowered working class, his grand-nephew, fiddler Rodney MacDonald's résumé includes a three-year term serving as Premier of Nova Scotia—hardly the position of peasants.[73]

In noting that vernacular is distinct because it does not occur within "the professions," Hauser ignores that within these very enumerated professions and among the empowered elite there is both formal discourse and background vernacular discourse. Turning a blind eye to the study of how vernacular operates within "the professions" or among the empowered elites simply because it is not spoken by "common folk" ignores a project worthy of critical interrogation: the question of how the vernacular discourse of empowered experts shapes human affairs in the

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[73] Here, the obvious class based critique that recognizes the difference between the "high class" classical musician and the "low class" traditional musician rises to the fore, but jumping to this point would be problematic. While one might look at the stereotypes of both the classical musician and the traditional musician and immediately see issues of class, these issues collapse when moving past the stereotypes. Traditional music camps featuring every type of traditional music genre exist throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe (and presumably elsewhere). When looking at the class of those who pay thousands of dollars to attend these camps, the distinction between 'high class' and 'low class' begins to fall apart. Students who attend these camps must spend thousands of dollars in fees simply for tuition, not to mention the cost of travel, and for the adults, the cost of missing work. Further, the cost of the instrument itself is ridiculous. A serviceable fiddle will cost around $1,000. A bow, just as much (yes, just as much). If someone takes basic lessons, these will begin at $50 an hour. While traditional musicians can be underemployed, they can also just as likely economically succeed and be "well off." More so, there is an expense for the average musician to even participate. Meanwhile, the economic environment for the classical musician is not nearly as glamorous as it once might have been. Major symphony orchestras are folding under bankruptcy, and the classical musician is just as likely to have to struggle for employment as is the traditional musician. History aside, both categories of musician more likely reflect the demographic of the NPR listener, which is also the media outlet where both genres of music have been relegated.

background.[74] In defining vernacular, Hauser's focus has mistakenly shifted from a concern for a discourse's context to a concern for a speaker's wallet. "An account of public opinion formation and ownership that begins with societal conversation introduces an important shift in focus by including the dialogues among common people, rather than those exclusively among official and empowered elites, and to vernacular expression as their medium of exchange."[75] By taking the step of asserting that only commoners are capable of local background discourse, Hauser borders on romanticizing the very "peasants" he hopes to empower. Instead of focusing on who the speaker is, Hauser needs to return the focus of vernacular rhetoric to the context of the discourse itself: is it everyday background local speech, or is it formal public discourse?

Robert Glenn Howard sought to move vernacular rhetoric beyond the work of Hauser, Ono, and Sloop, with his examination of amateur "Sinner's Prayer" websites.[76] Noting the limitations of the vernacular model thus far portrayed in rhetorical scholarship, Howard drew from theories of vernacular culture discussed in other disciplines. Prime among these was the work of Leonard Primiano, a scholar of

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[74] While Ono and Sloop implicitly acknowledge that vernacular discourse is not limited to the working class, they make the same assumption as Hauser in asserting that the need to critique the vernacular of oppressed communities surpasses the need to critique the vernacular of the empowered. "Critics of vernacular rhetoric would look at discourse that resonates within and from historically oppressed communities. This is not to say that localized communities, generally, should not be studied, but that there is a specific need, given historical power relations, to study communities that have systematically ignored." Indeed, the vernacular of the oppressed is woefully under-acknowledged and deserves attention, but so too does the vernacular of the empowered—not for praise of the empowered, but for the critical project of understanding how the background discourse of the elite can affect the oppressed. Ono & Sloop, "A Critique of Vernacular Discourse," 20.

[75] Hauser, *Vernacular Voices,* 105.

[76] Robert Glenn Howard, "A Theory of Vernacular Rhetoric: The Case of the "Sinner's Prayer" Online," *Folklore* 116 (2005), 172-188.

vernacular religion, who recognized that vernacular discourse existed within institutions, contradicting Hauser.

> "In the field of communication, the vernacular approach to rhetoric has not been theorised in ways that adequately address Primiano's notion of a vernacular nature in even the most formal communications. Gerry Hauser has most famously explored the term's meaning among scholars of rhetoric. For Hauser, the concept helps to account for the way in which institutional publics are influenced by everyday discourse. Hauser, however, and those who have expanded on his ideas, continue to think of the 'vernacular' as simply one influence on a traditional conception of the 'public sphere' of discourse. Hauser does not seek to clearly define or explain his sense of the 'vernacular' as it comes to be either opposed to or to be part of a political 'public.' In fact, it remains unclear precisely how Hauser envisions the relationship between public discourse, politics, and what he calls 'vernacular voices.'"[77]

Howard did not limit this criticism to Hauser, as he also targeted Ono and Sloop: "Focusing on communities that seemed to them 'non-institutional,' Ono and Sloop failed to consider the very real vernacular characteristics of otherwise 'institutional' communities."[78] Recognizing that institutions are capable of producing a vernacular discourse rightly steers the onus of vernacular rhetoric towards a concern for the function of the discourse. By acknowledging that some agents are capable of both everyday background discourse and formal institutional discourse, Howard's vernacular rhetoric accounts for the possibility that the vernacular rhetoric of an institutional actor can influence the formal discourse of the same institutional actor.

Howard's exposure of rhetorical scholars' limited development of vernacular rhetoric is of no surprise. Ono and Sloop's contribution to vernacular rhetoric was a shot across rhetorical theory's bow, and succeeded in it's goal of calling for

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[77] *Ibid.*, 176.

[78] *Ibid.*, 177.

rhetorical critics to engage with vernacular discourse. Hauser heeded this call by continually returning to vernacular rhetoric. But vernacular rhetoric has advanced little beyond these initial offerings. Part of the reason for its slow advancement is that rhetoricians resolutely turned inward in defining vernacular, attempting to use the tools of traditional rhetoric. Kendall Phillips' aptly acknowledges this in his review of Hauser's *Vernacular Voices*, when he recognizes that, despite its title, Hauser's work touches little on actually drawing out the vernacular:

> "I believe this lack of the vernacular is indicative of a deeper tension within contemporary rhetorical theory, which has of late become increasingly interested in "unofficial" sites of discourse. Despite recent interests in vernacular discourse, the methodological tools and inclinations of rhetoric are still largely geared towards the analysis of 'official,' dare I say 'public,' texts. Hauser, I believe, is caught by this tension, interested in the voices of the everyday, but limited by rhetorical criticism's focus on what gets made permanent in official texts, newspapers, government reports and the like."[79]

Howard responds to these limitations by proposing for proponents of vernacular rhetoric to turn to folklore studies, which has historically focused on everyday background discourses. "Even the most studied and formal political debate has, at its core, vernacular rhetorical aspects that the special focus of folklore studies can help to elucidate. At the same time, attempting to theorise vernacular rhetoric builds a bridge between two fields of inquiry that are deeply invested in the study of human communication: folklore and rhetoric."[80] Supplementing rhetorical theory with folklore studies provide vernacular rhetoric with the tools to acknowledge informal texts and

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[79] Kendall Phillips, "Review of *Vernacular Voices,* by Gerard Hauser," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 38 (2001), 58.

[80] Howard, "A Theory of Vernacular Rhetoric," 177.

would expose rhetorical theory to a greater understanding of everyday discourse.[81] Vernacular rhetoric can look towards folklore, but do so without deviating from the rhetorical concern for discourse, power, and judgment.

Folklore studies offers that vernacular speech applies to "the indigenous language or dialect of a speech community."[82] This places an emphasis on locality, a trait already acknowledged in theories of vernacular rhetoric. Folklorists also point toward the informality of vernacular as a defining characteristic, and extends this informality to how an individual learns to participate in vernacular discourse. Richard Bauman characterizes vernacular thusly:

> "The vernacular is a communicative modality characterized by: (1) communicative resources and practices that are acquired informally, in communities of practice, rather than by formal instruction; (2) communicative relations that are immediate, grounded in the interaction order and the lifeworld; and (3) horizons of distribution and circulation that are spatially bounded, by locality or region. The vernacular, furthermore, can only be understood in dynamic relation to the cosmopolitan; they are opposing vectors in a larger communicative field. If the vernacular pulls toward the informal, immediate, locally-grounded, proximal side of the field, the cosmopolitan pulls towards the rationalized, standardized, mediated, wide-reaching, distal side."[83]

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[81] Stephen Gencarella makes the mirror case, calling for folklorists to recognize rhetorical theory in order to adopt a critical praxis. "A more intimate relationship between folklore and rhetorical studies would foster a deeper appreciation of folklore's political investment [...]. A rhetorical perspective, as I detail, provides a reminder that folklore is not something that a folk does; rather, it is something that, in its doing, constitutes a folk, as both an immediate audience and a political category." Stephen Gencarella, "Constituting Folklore: A Case for Critical Folklore Studies," *Journal of American Folklore* 122 (2009), 173.

[82] Leonard Norman Primiano, "Vernacular Religion and the Search for Method in Religious Belief," *Western Folklore* 54 (1995), 42. While Primiano is Professor of the Religious Studies program at Cabrini College, he has a dual Ph.D. in Religious Studies and Folklore, and his scholarship regularly engages with the Folklore studies community.

[83] Richard Bauman, "The Philology of the Vernacular," *Journal of Folklore Research* 45 (2008), 32-33.

Bauman understands vernacular defined in part by its transmission process, a key feature ignored in vernacular rhetoric. Also recognized is that the locality of vernacular discourse contrasts, not with the empowered, but with the cosmopolitan. With transmission in mind, vernacular rhetoric might grapple with the question of how one learns vernacular in addition to the question of what vernacular looks like. And contrasting vernacular with the cosmopolitan as opposed to the empowered allows an understanding of how empowered elites are capable of background discourse. This leaves us with a vernacular characterized by its place on two distinct spectrums: first, vernacular is acquired informally as opposed to formally, and second, vernacular is local as opposed to cosmopolitan.

Folklore studies also allows greater insight into how vernacular rhetoric relates to judgment. While Hauser acknowledges a relationship between and communal judgment, his analysis did not dig much deeper than offering that "Civil judgment expresses a common understanding among diverse social actors primarily based on formal and vernacular exchanges enacted in and across public spheres"[84], a discussion of judgment limited to the outcome of vernacular exchanges. But rhetoric has a double-sided relationship with judgment, and Hauser's analysis only represents one side: that of rhetoric affecting judgment. Bauman's characterizing of vernacular by an informal

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[84] Hauser, *Vernacular Voices,* 74. Hauser does offer a more complete discussion of judgment in Chapter 2 of *Vernacular Voices*, but in this section he engages with judgment only in an attempt to refute Jürgen Habermas's understanding of how judgment works in the public sphere, not in relation to vernacular discourse. Despite the book's title, within Chapter 2, the word "vernacular" only appears in the final sentence, when Hauser outlines what he will discuss in Chapter 3. The lack of vernacular in Hauser's book was a key feature of Phillips' criticism of the book in Phillips' previously cited book review. Lest I become distracted now, I will reserve a discussion of Habermas for when I cover judgment in a later section of this chapter.

transmission process implicates the second relationship between rhetoric and judgment: that of the judgment used by the rhetor in deciding how to act in a given situation. Roger Abrahams highlights this form of judgment by acknowledging that understanding vernacular discourse requires looking at how members of a vernacular community act based on how they perceive their particular audience in contingent situations.

> "Vernacular cultural practices can provide insight into the ways others, and we ourselves, operate on a daily basis and amid the most profound disruptions of social life. Vernacular forms and practices should be approached through actual examples of use at a specific time and place, taking into account the audience's expectations and the conventions of performance."[85]

In learning how to engage in a locality's rhetorically salient discourse, the vernacular rhetor informally acquires a rhetorical judgment. This is a judgment where the rhetor understands the community's expectations, and judges what rhetorical acts are acceptable based on that understanding. A vernacular rhetoric needs to account not only for how rhetoric affects communal judgment, but also how judgment affects communal rhetoric, and more so how that judgment is acquired.

Partly due to its informal nature, the judgment of vernacular rhetoric is dynamic and always in flux. The informality allows for newness to enter into everyday background discourse. Newness might arise through the use of slang, the availability of a new ingredient, or the discovery of a new instrument. Whether these introductions enter the vernacular through the creative agency of an individual within the community, or via the incorporation of a foreign idea, the newness dissolves into the vernacular

[85] Roger D. Abrahams, *Everyday Life: A Poetics of Vernacular Practices* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 38.

discourse as if it was always a part of it. That is to say, simply because an idea came from outside of the community does not mean that to the locals it represents a cosmopolitan idea.[86] To truly understand what is possible in a particular vernacular requires keeping up to date with the vernacular itself.

> "In recent ethnographic studies of expressive culture, *vernacularity* refers to the process by which the lowest and highest memorable voicings and revoicings are drawn upon, residing just below the surface of consciousness, containing the most recent slang and the most ancient and archaic turns of phrase that draw attention to themselves. Used in this sense, vernacularity is capacious enough to encompass the traditional and the innovative, the highbrow and the popular, and to enable us to trace these registers that occur in various social interactions."[87]

Recognizing the dynamic nature of vernacular dynamic carries an implication not yet overtly registered by proponents of vernacular rhetoric—vernacular communities can themselves be internally diverse. There might be those within a vernacular community who migrate towards the innovative while others hold fast to the established. There is no uniformity within any particular vernacular. This spectrum further implicates the relationship between vernacular and judgment. The informal nature of vernacular's transmission, combined with its residence just below our consciousness' surface, means that often, even when an actor is introducing newness into vernacular discourse, it might seem to that actor as if the innovation is anything but new. The new act might

[86] Look no further than the incorporation of the potato and the tomato into the vernacular food of Ireland and Italy. Both are new world vegetables that became staples of local old world communities. The banjo, now recognized as a mainstay of traditional Irish music was originally an African creation that traveled to Ireland by way of Irish musicians living in the United States during the early twentieth century. More recently, look at the Rodgers and Hammerstein show tune, *You'll Never Walk Alone,* that since the 1960s is traditionally by supporters of the Liverpool Football Club on match day.

[87] Abrahams, *Everyday Life*, 12.

seem as if it corresponds to the logic of the vernacular discourse in such a way that it was always at home within the community.

Aural rhetoric illustrates this hidden element of vernacular innovation nicely. It is easy to dwell on the more overt aspects of innovation in aural rhetoric, such as Bob Dylan's decision to use an electric guitar at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival. The controversy of this decision was both recognizable and understandable to even the musical novice. But aural rhetoric offers more subtle innovations, such as the incorporation of particular chord progressions, that might go unnoticed by the non-musically inclined. For example, in the 1950s, traditional music in Cape Breton was characterized by accompaniment that generally used only three chords. Local musicians such as guitarist Dave MacIsaac and pianist John Morris Rankin, who were also versed in performing other genres,[88] would let chord progressions from those genres infiltrate their Cape Breton repertoire. This infiltration was not the result of any conscious decision to bring foreign ideas into the community, but was based on how Rankin and MacIsaac understood the local music. To them, the newly introduced musical concepts seemed a natural fit.[89] These chord progressions were then adopted by the community as a whole, both by new musicians, and long-established musicians. Innovation here did not create any sort of disruption in the community, but seamlessly became a part of the local style.

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[88] MacIsaac was also a notable blues guitarist who played with such notable blues musicians as John Lee Hooker, and as a child Rankin accompanied his family, who sang both country and Irish songs at the local pig and whistle.

[89] I base this on conversations with MacIsaac himself, and with Rankin's sister, Heather Rankin.

Theories of vernacular provided by folklorists and other social theorists show that the distinction between vernacular and empowered institutions made by Hauser, Ono, and Sloop, was a distraction for vernacular rhetoric. These theories recognize that communities are not monolithic structures, and that any locality might also allow for a multitude of perspectives which itself allows for a more sophisticated understanding of institutions. While Ono and Sloop limited their project to the vernacular practices of the disempowered in order to promote a particular critical agenda, their limitation was an arbitrary one that failed to recognize the importance of an empowered vernacular's effect on the disempowered. Critical legal scholar David Kennedy expresses precisely why the vernacular of elites is worthy of a critical project:

> "[T]he relationship between rulership and exclusion remains as difficult to understand as that between global governance and the informal world of clandestine flows. The alchemy by which inequality becomes routinized through the vernacular of experts and hardens as law is tough to unravel, but the effects are everywhere on view."[90]

Institutions are capable having two faces, with both outward and inward sides. While an institution's outward actions might indeed be seen as a single formal voice, internal discourse within the institution can develop an informal vernacular. The vernacular of these informal internal interactions among the empowered are important for a critical project to recognize because these interactions can solidify into the agreed upon policy of the empowered.

In addition to the internal vernacular that occurs within institutions, the distinction between vernacular and institutions blurs when acknowledging that

[90] David Kennedy, "The Mystery of Global Governance," *Ohio Northern University Law Review* 34 (2008), 852.

institutional official positions are capable of influencing vernacular discourse just as much as vernacular discourse is influences institutional official positions. Primiano notes how this works within vernacular religion:

> "Vernacular religion takes into consideration the individual convictions of 'official' religious membership among common believers, as well as the vernacular religious ideas at the root of the institution itself."[91]

Such an understanding of vernacular can shift vernacular rhetoric's focus away from binaries of both institutional vs. grassroots and empowered vs. disempowered, towards focusing on foreground vs. background and local vs. cosmopolitan distinctions. While the background discourse in vernacular might be united by a common rhetorical salience, vernacular rhetoric should account for a rhetorical salience that is dynamic and allows for a diverse array of rhetorical agents. It would also allow vernacular rhetoric to recognize that a multitude of vernaculars can interact and influence one another, just as background vernacular discourse is capable of influencing foreground official discourse and vice versa.

Conceiving of the vernacular carries the danger of romanticizing and essentializing the community discussed. This romanticization can be seen in Hauser's limiting of vernacular rhetoric to the everyday discourse of peasants. It is a danger also lurking when describing any particular community's vernacular discourse as monolithic and not diverse. Vernacular rhetoric can guard against such a romanticization by drawing from folklorists and other social theorists.

> "The very terminology we use imprisons us, assuming for the moment that we believe etymology is truth and predetermines the thought even of the etymologically ignorant... The term vernacular, for its part, refers to a very

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[91] Leonard Norman Primiano, "Vernacular Religion and the Search for Method in Religious Life," *Western Folklore* 54 (1995), 47.

> particular and unprivileged mode of social identity—the language of the *verna* or house-born slave of Republican Rome—and is thus hobbled by its own particularity, since there is no reason to believe that every vernacular is the idiom of the humiliated demanding vindication."[92]

Sheldon Pollock offers this tongue in cheek commentary to counter any assumption that vernacular exists solely within the speech of the disempowered.[93] I have already illustrated why vernacular extends to non-marginalized groups, but romanticization extends to any essentialist description of a social group.

The danger of romanticization arises when scholars place the focus of vernacular on the group or person involved within a particular background practice, and not enough emphasis on the mechanisms of the practice itself. Not to dote on Hauser, but by defining vernacular as "... the nonofficial language of the working class, peasants, certain ethnicities, and the marginalized..." he reduces vernacular to the identity of the person speaking and sees vernacular discourse as vernacular simply because it is spoken by the marginalized. Pollock guides us away from the identity of the speaker and towards to characteristics of the action itself—a shift theories of vernacular rhetoric should readily embrace. Such a focus looks to define vernacular acts as distinct from cosmopolitan acts.

> "[M]y intention here is to think about cosmopolitanism and vernacularism as action rather than idea, as something people do rather than something they declare, as practice rather than proposition. This enables us to see that some people in the past have been able to be cosmopolitan or vernacular without directly professing either, perhaps even while finding it impossible rationally to

[92] Sheldon Pollock, "Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in History," *Public Culture* 12 (2000), 596.

[93] Roger Abrahams makes a similar point, focusing on the inherent bias of the term "vernacular" that must be overcome: "[V]ernacular carries its own problems into cultural discussions, for like *vulgar, popular,* and *common*, the word carries class connotations." Abrahams, *Everyday Life*, 12.

> justify either. By contrast, the attempt to vindicate cosmopolitanism or vernacularism—the production of the very discourse on the universal or the particular—seems to entail an objectification and abstraction, and their associated political practices, that have made the cosmopolitan so often take on the character of domination and the vernacular, that of inevitability."[94]

Pollock can guide rhetoricians towards a reemphasis of vernacular rhetoric as vernacular action as opposed to the rhetoric of a vernacular people. This allows us to return to Charland's initial recognition of the rhetorical power of the discursive background.

Hauser, Ono, and Sloop, recognized that a vernacular communities carry local knowledge, modes of argument, and logics, imbued with a particular local rhetorical salience. This vernacular discourse extends beyond the oral to the community's cultural practices, such as music, food, religion, art, and architecture. Those who have acquired the local rhetorical salience apply a particular local judgment within these vernacular practices—a dynamic judgment that evolves with the community. Drawing from folklorists and other social theorists allows vernacular rhetoric to emphasize the informal nature of these local practices, both in the acquisition and application. This informality directly leads to the fluidity and evolution of the local practices. More so, this informality allows for an internal diversity within each vernacular practice, and provides the potential for seeing how rhetorical agents are able to exercise agency within any particular practice. The ultimate focus of my project is to hone in on what an aural rhetoric might look like, thus, the everyday vernacular practices that concern me are a locality's everyday musical practices, and the rhetorical salience and judgment developed within such musical practices. In drawing from these various sources to flesh

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[94] Pollock, "Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in History," 593.

out what a vernacular rhetoric, and ultimately a particular type of aural rhetoric, might look like, I have suggested how vernacular are everyday practices, but have ignored defining what I mean by everyday practices—I turn there now.

## 3.2. Everyday Practices

Studying everyday life can be difficult to grapple with, partly because everyday life seems obvious; this obviousness hides everyday practices in plain sight. Some events that are the most commonly shared, such as birth and death, exist within both our everyday yet are also experienced as the most special of occasions. Would the practices that form around these moments that are simultaneously epoch and mundane be seen as everyday, or special? To simplify the complexities that this concept carries, everyday life should be seen as nothing more than an interpretive lens for social practices. An everyday mundaneness of background practices would sit on one end of a spectrum that seats foregrounded special events on the other. A researcher might classify an event or a practice within this spectrum depending on its context, the agents involved, and the interpretive purpose itself.[95] Giovanna Del Negro and Harris Berger explain:

> "... everyday life is an interpretive framework, and the reading of any social practice as everyday or special depends on a complex interplay of factors and the interpreter's own meaning-making process. The significance of this analysis, we believe, is that it clears away the fog that surrounds the notion of everyday life and can help to focus research on concrete human practices and reveal the differing ways in which everydayness is constructed."[96]

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[95] Giovanna Del Negro and Harris Berger explain the variability in identifying the experience of everydayness: "While the everyday life of many people in the industrialized world is controlled by schedules and routines, many others lead highly variable lives that are still experienced as 'everyday.'" Harris M. Berger and Giovanna Del Negro, *Identity and Everyday Life: Essays in the Study of Folklore, Music, and Popular Culture* (Middletown, Ct.: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 9.

[96] *Ibid.*, 14.

While classifying everydayness might seem arbitrary, Del Negro and Berger show how the classifying a practice as everyday conceptually allows an interpreter to gain a greater insight about that particular social practice by offering a perspective. Viewing a social practice as if it was a part of the everyday might reveal a deeper understanding of how the social practice fits within the community than if the practice were viewed as a special event, and vice versa.

When referring to concrete human practices situated within the everyday, Del Negro and Berger remind us that we are discussing human action. This might seem apparent, but conceiving of practice as action—and therefore everyday practice as action—indicates a relationship between rhetoric and everyday practices, both terms that describe a distinct form of human activity. We must draw out precisely what type of human action everyday practices refers to in order to understand where and how the two intersect as vernacular rhetoric. Michel de Certeau helps here as his own work on everyday life draws heavily from theories of rhetoric: "Everyday practices depend on a vast ensemble which is difficult to delimit but which we may provisionally designate as an ensemble of procedures. The latter are schemas of operations and of technical manipulations."[97] He also provides a more direct comparison between rhetoric and everyday practices: "Both rhetoric and everyday practices can be defined as internal manipulations of a system—that of language or that of an established order."[98] De Certeau offers everyday practices as a repertoire of operations and technical manipulations occurring within an established system.

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[97] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 43.

[98] *Ibid.*, 23-24.

Seen through De Certeau's eyes, a community operates as a routinized mechanism of social actions undertaken within a network of social relations. We engage with the community when we engage in these routines, situated as an expected set of actions. Oft-cited in de Certeau's work is his example of walking within a city, and the social expectations of such a routine practice.[99] Those who walk within the city enact a practice that relates to the structure of the space in which they reside. The act of walking can be seen as an everyday practice for those who reside within the city, but might just as well be situated as a special event for the suburbanite who only occasionally travels to the city. The community who resides within the city, and experiences it as part of everyday life, carries a set of social expectations for engaging with the surrounding space and those within it. The city's physical structure can reveal the city planners' official set of expectations, as seen in the sidewalk, the traffic light, the walk signals, the street, etc. These expectations and regulations are not met with rigid adherence though, as those who engage in this everyday practice understand how and when to manipulate the established order, such as by jaywalking. Those who do not engage with this practice within the everyday might not understand the social implications of slowly walking down a busy city street during rush hour.[100] They might not even recognize that they are interfering with a social practice at all. The routine nature of this social practice hides it

[99] *Ibid.*, 91-110.

[100] Not to gripe, but as a longtime resident of Boston's Fenway neighborhood, I am routinely confronted with suburbanites and tourists who feel inclined to make a baseball pilgrimage to my area. Residents of the neighborhood must constantly grapple with "outsiders" who walk slowly or block the sidewalk while either posing for pictures or staring at maps, oblivious to our attempts to navigate home from the store laden down with groceries. For us, walking this space is part of our everyday, and we carry certain expectations of behavior—expectations unrecognized by those simply traveling through who do not experience this space as part of an everyday practice.

in the background. More so, while participation in the action is routine, it is not precisely repeated. The routine of walking to the grocery store confronts an individual with infinite variables, each calling for the individual to make judgments as to how to manipulate the established order, with each judgment making that particular adventure both unique and routine.

Recognizing the importance of context plays out within vernacular communities situated around musical routines. During the summer in Cape Breton, you can't trip without stumbling into some sort of live musical performance. During six nights of the week, there are regular square dances held at various parish halls and community centers. Other non-dance performances are scattered on a regular schedule throughout the week, and nearly every weekend at least one town holds a town festival which features non-stop entertainment. On the day that I write this, a summer Saturday, there are exactly fifty live performances being held on the Island.[101] These performances are part of the everyday routines of this community.[102] Contrast this with a generic Midwestern suburb of Cleveland, which may have a few bars that feature cover bands on the weekends. Here, musical performance is present, but pushed towards a special event. Even the music being performed in these two instances reveal a contrast. While the Cape Breton musician is performing the music of Cape Breton, in the Cleveland suburb, the music might be the same cover songs performed at a thousand other American bars on the same night. Rarely is the music performed in these bars born of

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[101] I reference the website *Music Cape Breton*, which is the local's choice for identifying events on the island. "Daily Digest", *Music Cape Breton*, last visited August 23, 2014, www.musiccapebreton.com.

[102] Music from the locals is even piped through the speakers at the various grocery stores, convenience stores, and restaurants throughout the island.

the same community. Both examples are musical performances, but for Cape Breton, these performances are routines embedded into the community's everyday—if they disappeared, the community would operate differently, while if the occasional performances of cover bands disappeared, suburban social expectations might continue unscathed.

Categorizing a practice as everyday implicates how the activity is experienced. When an activity is experienced as part of one's everyday, it contributes to one's story, filling the gaps exist between the experience of special, marked events. "Both the flow of activity and distinctive, marked-out acts and events go under the name of experience. Moreover, the very flow of the everyday assures the continuity between routine activities and extraordinary ones."[103] The special event and the everyday practice are linked, in that each shapes meaning of the other. Everyday practices create a backdrop of routines that might give meaning to special events, and the marked nature of special events can contextualize the routine of the everyday. It also helps to situate our own place within the story of our community.[104] While the special marked events might be experienced as intimate and personal, even when amongst others, the routinized

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[103] Abrahams, *Everyday Life*, 123.

[104] De Certeau finds stories to be a vehicle that describe everyday practices, alluding to a more direct relationship between narrativity and everyday practices: "... stories provide the decorative container of a narrativity for everyday practices. To be sure, they describe only fragments of these practices. They are no more than its metaphors. But, in spite of the ruptures separating successive configurations of knowledge, they represent a new variant in the continuous series of narrative documents which, from folktales providing a panoply for action to the *Descriptions des Arts* of the classical age, set forth ways of operating in the form of tales. This series includes therefore the contemporary novel as well as the micro-novels often constituted by ethnological descriptions of the techniques of craftwork, cooking, etc. A similar continuity suggests a certain theoretical relevance of narrativity so far as everyday practices are concerned." De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* 70.

everyday experience can reveal how our actions situate us as individuals within a broader community:

> "On the one hand, we have a sense of disjuncture between the flow of everyday experience; an experience; a typical experience that is reportable about ourselves as a means of playing out our having entered, individually, into life's recurrent problem situations; and a large-scale Experience in which we recognize that the progress and pattern of our activities are part of a much larger story that began long before we were born and will continue after our death."[105]

Abrahams notes here that by participating in a community's everyday practices, one steps into a series of routines that took shape before one's own contribution to the practice. This allows us to recognize that as we exert our own individuality into a practice, that practice already bears the scars of countless individuals who have proceeded us.

One can take the idea that when we participate in a community's everyday practice we enter into an already existing routinized activity, and conclude that everyday activities are static—such a conclusion would be a mistake. When we manipulate the system of an everyday practice we also exercise agency and creativity. Manipulating this system is not to subvert the community, but on the contrary, is to directly participate with the community. The cumulative effects of exerting agency can subtly change the community's practice over time, all the while masking those very changes.

> "Everyday life, when it changes, evolves according to a rhythm that does not coincide with the time of accumulation and in a space that cannot be identified with that of cumulative processes. Thus an illusion is created of the unbroken

[105] Abrahams, *Everyday Life*, 124.

> continuity of houses, buildings, and cities from the oriental town of proto-history to the present day...."[106]

This recognition by Lefebvre is key, and goes hand in hand with de Certeau's description of everyday practices as the internal manipulation of a system—a description that bears upon an individual's ability to exert agency. Accounts of everyday practices, vernacular rhetoric, and aural rhetoric, must account for the routine and system of a community on the one hand, but also the exercise of individual agency on the other. Any account of such a system that does not allow for an individual to exercise agency within such a system would be hindered when accounting for change. The problem is that—as Lefebvre indicates—everyday practices evolve at such a subtle pace that it might be easy to ignore change as it occurs.

The subtlety of change in the everyday can mask agency because this subtlety also can easily cast those who engage with a community's practices into anonymity. From the outside looking in, when a community's practices evolve, it is easier to conceive of that evolution guided by an invisible hand than to think that Larry from next door might have placed his own mark upon the change. This potential anonymity is a root cause for any romanticism that can occur when discussing traditional social

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[106] Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, trans. Sacha Rabinovitch (London: Continuum, 2002), 61. Lefebvre devotes his research to a critique of modernity seen in the loss of everyday practice in his native France. My previous example comparing how the loss of an everyday routine of music in Cape Breton would also result in a loss of community identity while the loss of cover bands in the Midwest would carry no corresponding identity loss illustrates Lefebvre's work. But where the focus of my work is on a community that maintains everyday practice, Lefebvre focuses on the loss of practice, and subsequent loss of identity. See also, Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life: Volume I, Introduction*, trans. John Moore (London: Verso Publications, 1991); and Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life: Volume II, Foundations for a Sociology of the Everyday*, trans. John Moore (London: Verso Publications, 2002).

practices. For example, when describing the vernacular rhetoric of a Greek political parade, Hauser describes the expressions of public sentiment exhibited by "honking horns," and "street corner debates"[107] as if these practices were enacted by a faceless mob. But those within the community who experienced it as an everyday could have recognized the identity of those participating. Clifford Geertz offers that, even though communities identify as collective groups, recognizing identity and agency exhibited in community practices is important when interpreting the everyday:

> "The everyday world in which the members of any community move, their taken-for-granted field of social action, is populated not by anybodies, faceless men without qualities, but by somebodies, concrete classes of determinate persons positively characterized and appropriately labeled. And the symbol systems which define these classes are not given in the nature of things—they are historically constructed, socially maintained, and individually applied."[108]

Geertz and de Certeau show the need to consider a balance between the individual and the group when looking at everyday practices. Too much emphasis on the group can lead to romanticism while too much emphasis on the individual ignores agents are situated in systems that preceded that agent's involvement.

Despite the illusion that change does not occur while we experience it, a backwards glance can reveal not only the changes that occur to everyday practices, it can also reveal agents' role in these changes. Looking at the aural rhetoric of Cape Breton, the music performed today bears a marked difference between the music performed a century ago. This does not mean that the practices are new ones, but rather that the social expectations within these practices have evolved during that time. There are a

[107] Hauser, "Vernacular Dialogue and the Rhetoricality of Public Opinion," 90.

[108] Clifford Geertz, "Person, Time, and Conduct in Bali," in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1973), 363-364.

number of reasons for this evolution, but the agency of many individuals plays a role, and Cape Breton offers the possibility to save these agents' effects from obscurity. For example, Winston Fitzgerald, a virtuosic fiddler, introduced a clean style of fiddling into the Cape Breton music that contrasted with the "dirty" Mabou Coal Mines style more prevalent at the time.[109] His performances were rhetorically influential, and young fiddlers who grew up listening to Fitzgerald emulated his smooth style which now partly defines the community's style. The introduction of this style into the community can be attributed to Fitzgerald, yet, this change did not necessarily mark a break in the practice. Fitzgerald entered into this community practice that existed before him, and manipulated the system that he found there. The practice itself changed because of Fitzgerald's agency, as it does because of the agency of countless other individuals. Accounting for the everyday practices within this system requires the balance of recognizing the agency of individuals such as Fitzgerald, but also the practice as a system that preceded these agents' own involvement.

This leaves a number of considerations when interpreting everyday practices, and conceiving of them as vernacular rhetoric. Background practices are routines within a community that also carry social implications—however hidden. Constant engagement in this routine is not a constant repetition of the same exact acts. An individual enacts routine within the community understanding the possibilities to

[109] Designating these playing styles as 'clean' and 'dirty' is an adjective used often by Cape Bretoners. There are certain embellishments a fiddler can employ that are more characteristic of the 'dirty' style and those that are more characteristic of the 'clean' style. The same distinction extends to tune selection. The distinction can be heard when comparing the more 'clean' style of fiddler Buddy MacMaster with the 'dirtier' style of fiddler Donald Angus Beaton.

maneuver within the community's expectations. As individuals push upon these expectations, the collective exercise of individual agency within the community shifts the community's expectations, and gradually changes the nature of the routine. Berger and Del Negro propose a threefold focus to encompass the needed considerations: "... practice encompasses three elements: social context, which both constrains and enables the practice; social consequences, which can be intended or unintended; and the practice itself, which is influenced by context and oriented toward consequences, but itself depends at least partially on agency, a person's active involvement in the world."[110] Each of these three focal points—social context, social consequences, and the practice itself—bear upon the others and help the interpreter to balance the relationship between the agent, the act, and the system. An agent's acts create social consequences which themselves affect the social context, and cyclically, that social context can then inform the agent's acts.

Berger and Del Negro are not alone in identifying context as essential to understanding an everyday practice. De Certeau breaks down what should be considered when taking context into account by looking at how language itself exists as an everyday practice of enunciation:

> "By situating the act in relation to its circumstances, 'contexts of use' draw attention to the traits that specify the act of speaking (or practice of language) and are its effects. Enunciation furnishes a model of these characteristics, but they can be din the relation that other practices (walking, residing, etc.) entertain with non-linguistic systems. Enunciation presupposes: (1) a realization of the linguistic system through a speech act that actualizes some of its potential (language is real only in the act of speaking); (2) an appropriation of language by the speaker who uses it; (3) the postulation of an interlocutor (real or fictive) and thus the constitution of a relational contract or allocution (one speaks to

[110] Berger & Del Negro, *Identity and Everyday Life,* 25-26.

> someone); (4) the establishment of a present through the act of the "I" who speaks, and conjointly, since "the present is properly the source of time," the organization of a temporality (the present creates a before and an after) and the existence of a "now" which is the presence to the world."[111]

Here the speaker performs an act within a preexisting system, and when acting, manipulates the system for the speaker's own purposes. Enacting the practice situates the agent not only within a system, but relationally towards others; in this act, the agent asserts their own identity at that moment. De Certeau goes on to clarify that in enacting the practice of language, "the speech act is at the same time a use *of* language and an operation performed *on* it."[112] This reiterates a theme already discussed concerning everyday practice: when an individual engages in a preexisting everyday practice, that individual also rhetorically impacts the very nature of the everyday practice.

A further difficulty in discussing everyday practice stems from the relationship between practice and judgment. I have already discussed De Certeau's description of everyday practices as the internal manipulation of a system. To manipulate the system, an individual needs to make decisions of how to act. For a researcher to describe how these judgments work requires the researcher to understand the system as a whole, and then how the practice corresponds to the system. Understanding the complexities of any given practice within a community is no small feat, in part because each practice operates under its own system of rules, and no system is alike. "Practice has a logic which is not that of logic, and thus to apply practical logic to logical logic is to run the risk of destroying the logic one wants to describe with the instrument used to describe

[111] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 33.

[112] *Ibid., 33.*

it."[113] Pierre Bourdieu suggests here that even attempting to describe the rules of any practice is a Sisyphean task. He elaborates elsewhere:

> "The language of rules and models, which seems tolerable when applied to 'alien' practices, ceases to convince as soon as one considers the practical mastery of the symbolism of social interaction—tact, dexterity, or savoir-faire—presupposed by the most everyday games of sociability and accompanied by the application of a spontaneous semiology, i.e. a mass of precepts, formulae, and codified cues. This practical knowledge, based on the continuous decoding of the perceived—but not consciously noticed—indices of the welcome given to actions already accomplished, continuously carries out the checks and corrections intended to ensure the adjustment of practices and expressions to the reactions and expectations of the other agents."[114]

Bourdieu cautions against attempts to model how judgment works within practice. While researchers might assign such models when interpreting the practices of others, the same researchers would recognize the problems in assigning these models to their own social practices. The practical judgment enacted within a practice, thus described, is informed by a myriad of input; the very existence of any given input as an input may just as likely be hidden from the very actor whose judgment is informed by the input.

In attempting to establish a theory of aural rhetoric, I have pointed out the importance of linking aural rhetorics to community. This has led me into rhetorical theories of constitutive rhetoric, and specifically the constitutive rhetoric of vernacular discourse. As music is capable of existing as a background everyday practice in certain communities, I have attempted to supplement a discussion of vernacular rhetoric by expanding into theories of everyday practice. A common thread

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[113] Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press: 1998), 82.

[114] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 10.

throughout each of these discussions is the notion of judgment. An individual engaged in an everyday practice acts makes decisions informed by community expectations, but the individual's own acts also help to shape community expectations. Central to this dynamic process is the role of judgment, for both the individual whose judgment is informed by the community, and the community judgment being molded by the individual's act. Bourdieu offers a warning against any attempt to model practical judgment, but that does not mean that general principals cannot be gleaned. The folklorists, rhetoricians, and other social theorists who provided insight within this section have discussed the centrality of judgment to these concepts. But in order to understand the principals of how judgment works in the everyday practices of a vernacular community, and specifically how aural rhetoric can exist as such a vernacular, I must discuss judgment in its own right.

# CHAPTER 4

## HERMENEUTICS AND THE EVERYDAY

Developing a theory of aural rhetoric depends on developing a theory of vernacular rhetoric. Aural rhetoric is contingent upon the community wherein the musical practice is performed. In many communities, music largely sits in the background of the everyday, so the music's rhetoric does not readily align with formal rhetoric. Vernacular rhetoric attempts to account for the rhetorical properties that might not only exist in oral communication, but also in other everyday practices such as food, music, and sport. Because theories of vernacular rhetoric are limited, to understand the vernacular and the everyday requires borrowing from folklorists and other social theorists who traditionally devote more attention to the everyday. These theorists consistently remarked on a relationship between everyday practices, and a particular kind of practical judgment. But this discussion of judgment is itself incomplete, and can be supplemented by yet another turn—this time towards the work of hermeneutic theorists who devote considerable attention to the study of judgment. Such a shift is not without precedent; folklorist Jay Mechling has called for folklore studies to better incorporate the work of hermeneutic scholars and political scholars due to a shared concern for an understanding of the everyday, and to acknowledge the relationship between folklore and the political:

> "We folklorists have a great deal to learn from the scholarship linking twentieth century philosophy with twentieth century "interpretive" theory and practice in the humanities and social sciences. Philosophers Richard J. Bernstein and Richard Rorty clarify how intertwined is the thought of Peirce, James, Dewey, Mead, Bergson, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Husserl, Wittgenstein, Gadamer,

> Ricoeur and others in the emergence of an interpretive or hermeneutical approach to human cultures."[115]

While folklorists and other social theorists acknowledged that both practical judgment and community evolution occur and are essential to the everyday, incorporating hermeneutists allow for an understanding of how practical judgment works and how community evolution occurs. In incorporating hermeneutic theory, I turn specifically to the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Hannah Arendt. Gadamer's work elaborates the intimate relationship between judgment and hermeneutics, and Arendt's work—woefully ignored[116]—helps to explain the politics embedded in the everyday. In relying on these two theorists, I also draw from hermeneutic theorists such as Richard Bernstein and Ronald Beiner who expand upon Gadamer and Arendt's work, as well as a necessary brief turn to Martin Heidegger, whose work strongly influenced both Arendt and Gadamer. I begin with a discussion of practical judgment, including how it is informed by community, concerns deliberation and action, and is incorporated within hermeneutic theory. Finally, I discuss how practical judgment is tied to the politics of the everyday.

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[115] Jay Mechling, "Introduction: William James and the Philosophical Foundations for the Study of Everyday Life," *Western Folklore* 44 (1985), 303. See also, Jay Mechling, "Folklore and the Civil Sphere: The 1997 Archer Taylor Memorial Lecture," *Western Folklore* 56 (1997), 113-137.

[116] There has been a tendency to dismiss Arendt's work in part due to her relationship with Martin Heidegger—a dismissal Seyla Benhabib attributes to Arendt's gender. Benhabib notes that some theorists, such as Richard Wolin, display this sexism in the open, given the title of a book chapter Wolin devoted to Arendt: "*Kultur*, 'Thoughtlessness', and *Polis Envy.*" Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), xx.

## 4.1. Practical Judgment

I have already alluded to the distinction between technical judgment and practical judgment. As I am drawing from the body of work related to Arendt, Gadamer, and Heidegger, I must begin with Aristotle, for no better reason than the foundation of these theorists' work itself rests upon Aristotle. Aristotle describes the distinction between technical and practical judgment within book VI of *Nicomachean Ethics.*[117] To grossly simplify, technical judgment—sometimes referred to as *technē* —describes the knowledge of a skill, or technique...the technical 'know-how' of performing an action.[118] Whereas practical judgment, or *phronesis,* guides the knowledge of when to perform this know-how within concrete situations, and corresponding to an ethical know how, *technē* represents a technical know-how. This form of knowledge guides action when we recognize that a given situation presents competing claims making the best course of action uncertain..

Gadamer contrasts *technē* from *phronesis* in three ways. First, techniques can be forgotten, "... we can 'lose' a skill. But ethical 'reason' can neither be learned nor forgotten... man always finds himself in an 'acting situation' and he is always obliged to use ethical knowledge and apply it according to the exigencies of his concrete

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[117] Aristotle provides a useful starting point, but is not infallible in his critique of judgment. Nor does his philosophy necessarily ring true today. Aristotle's notion of judgment has been picked up by Heidegger, his students, Gadamer and Arendt, and theorists responding to these works. While this work rests upon Aristotle, it expands and evolves Aristotle's work to reflect on a modern state of affairs. Each of the theorists that expand upon Aristotle's understanding of judgment also offer critique of his work. See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996); Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Gadamer, *Truth and Method*; Richard Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983).

[118] Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, 147.

situation."[119] Second, *phronesis* and *technē*, conceive of means and ends in different ways. With *technē* the means used will always be the same, and the, while for *phronesis*, each instance of practical judgment requires reassessing the proper means to be used. *Technē* is always guided by a particular ends result, that will result in a particular "thing" or product, while *phronesis* guides the actor to deliberate over means with an understanding that the ends "are not perfectly fixed beforehand."[120] Finally, while *phronesis* requires the actor to understand social relations and other individuals, *technē* requires no acknowledgement of others. "The question here, then, is not of a general kind of knowledge, but of its specification at a particular moment. This knowledge also is not in any sense technical knowledge... The person with [*phronesis*] does not know and judge as one who stands apart and unaffected, but rather, as one united by a specific bond with the other, he thinks with the other and undergoes the situation with him."[121,122]

Recognizing that the ethical know-how of *phronesis* requires a social awareness of others, as well as deliberation over the means of particular action, to act with practical

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[119] Hans Georg Gadamer, "The Problem of Historical Consciousness" in *Interpretive Social Science: A Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow & William M Sullivan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 140.

[120] *Ibid.*, 143.

[121] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 288.

[122] The similarity in thought between Gadamer and Arendt becomes apparent with Gadamer's elaboration of the distinctions between *technē* and *phronesis*. Gadamer explains *technē* much as Arendt describes her conception of 'work' as part of the *Vita Activa* within *The Human Condition* which I will further elaborate later. While Gadamer's requirement that *phronesis* must occur in recognition of others corresponds to Arendt's account of 'action' as activity corresponding to "...the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world." Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 7.

judgment requires the actor to have "insight into rhetoric."[123] Rhetoricians continue to develop the relationship between rhetoric and practical judgment—a relationship recognized since the origins of rhetorical thought.[124] Aristotle understood that rhetoric does not necessarily seek to persuade, but to affect judgment. His definition of rhetoric as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion"[125] presents a double-sided relationship between rhetoric and judgment. The one side existing when the rhetoric judges the means of persuasion within a given situation, and the other side in the judgment that the rhetor seeks from the audience.[126]

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[123] Ronald Beiner, *Political Judgment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 83.

[124] Due to the relationship between rhetoric and judgment lying at the heart of rhetorical studies, providing a complete list of rhetorical scholarship focusing specifically on judgment would itself be impractical. For a representative sample of scholars focusing on the relationship of rhetoric and practical judgment through the lens of Aristotle, Heidegger, Gadamer and Arendt, see: Arash Abizadeh "Passions of the Wise: Phronesis, Rhetoric and Aristotle's Passionate Practical Deliberation," *The Review of Metaphysics* 56 (2002), 267-296; John Arthos, "Gadamer's Rhetorical Imaginary," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 38 (2008), 171-197; Jeffery L. Bineham, "Displacing Descartes: Philosophical Hermeneutics and Rhetorical Studies," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 27 (1994), 300-312; Daniel Gross & Ansgar Kemmann, *Heidegger and Rhetoric* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006); Robert Hariman, *Prudence: Classical Virtue, Postmodern Practice* (Penn State University Press, 2004); Robert Hariman, "Prudence/Performance," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 21 (1991), 26-35; Michael J. Hyde & Craig R. Smith, "Hermeneutics and Rhetoric: A Seen but Unobserved Relationship," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 65 (1979), 347-363; Walter Jost & Michael Hyde, *Rhetoric and Hermeneutics in Our Time: A Reader* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Allen Scult, "Aristotle's Rhetoric as Ontology: A Heideggerian Reading," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 32 (1999), 146-159; Louis S. Self, "Rhetoric and Phronesis: The Aristotelian Ideal," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 12, no. 2 (1979), 130-145; Thomas Farrell, *Norms of Rhetorical Culture* (Yale University Press, 1993); Nola Heidlebaugh, *Judgment, Rhetoric, and the problem of Incommensurability: Recalling Practical Wisdom* (University of South Carolina Press, 2001); and Leslie Paul Thielle, *The Heart of Judgment: Practical Wisdom, Neuroscience and Narrative* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[125] Aristotle, *Rhetoric,* trans. W. Rhys Roberts (New York: Modern Library, 1954), http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/a/aristotle/a8rh/, 7.

[126] "Knowing that 'the intellect alone moves nothing,' that emotions can 'warp' judgment, and that the relationship of speaker and audience is crucial, Aristotle developed a rhetoric which, when most artfully practiced, balances these modes of

Such an understanding of practical judgment corresponds with De Certeau's discussion of how everyday practices work discussed in the previous section. De Certeau sees practices as the internal manipulation within an established order. The established order corresponds to social expectations within a given community. The actor within a practice acts in a way to manipulate the established order. This manipulation is only possible because of the actor's ethical know-how. The actor has a social awareness of the community within which they act. The actor must understand not just social expectations in general, but the social expectations in that concrete and contingent situation. Incorporating Gadamer alongside De Certeau allows us to see how De Certeau's manipulation of a system corresponds to a focus on means over ends. While the actor might act with a goal in mind, the actor understands that the possibilities correspond to the constraints in how the system itself works—the means of the system.

### 4.2. Appropriateness

The relationship between rhetoric and judgment recognized by Aristotle makes Aristotle's *Rhetoric* a study of political judgment—itself a mode of *phronesis*.[127] Beiner draws from both Hannah Arendt's work on judgment[128] and Gadamer's understanding

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proof. The Rhetor when functioning ideally as an artist facilitates good judgment in hearers who are treated with certain respect." Self, "Rhetoric and Phronesis: The Aristotelian Ideal," 142.

[127] Beiner, *Political Judgment*, 85.

[128] The majority of Arendt's work concerns articulating a theory of judgment. While her seminal work of *The Human Condition* presents her most recognized understanding of judgment, lesser cited works present a more thorough focus on judgment, including *Between Past and Future, Responsibility and Judgment,* and *The Promise of Politics.* Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2006); Hannah Arendt,

of rhetoric and hermeneutics to develop a theory of political judgment.[129] In this contemporary political judgment, *appropriateness* becomes the cardinal virtue of judgment in rhetoric.[130] When rules cannot guide the best action, the actor's practical judgment must lead:

> "Judgment allows us to comport ourselves to the work without dependence upon rules and methods, and allows us to defeat subjectivity by asserting claims that seek general assent. In this way political reason is liberated, and the common citizen can once again reappropriate the right of political responsibility and decision-making that had been monopolized by experts."[131]

This presents a way of thinking of action as guided not by dogma, but by a range of possible appropriate actions from which a rhetor might select. The rhetor would select what they see as the best action with the understanding that they must ultimately appeal to the community. In this judgment the actor recognizes they do not exist in isolation, but are accountable to others. Political judgment occurs when individuals make decisions using practical judgment while understanding themselves as citizens—

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*Responsibility and Judgment* (Berlin: Schocken, 2005); Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics* (Berlin: Schocken, 2007).

[129] Beiner's political judgment is form of practical judgment that acknowledges the aesthetic, the hermeneutic, and the moral in informing a judgment that focuses on questions of the collective. "[F]or political judgment entails an implied responsibility for the assumption of what may be termed a shared way of life. All political judgments are—implicitly at least—judgments about the form of collective life that it is desirable for us to pursue within a given context of possibilities." Beiner, *Political Judgment,* 138.

[130] "*Phronesis* is not one virtue among others, but is the master virtue that encompasses and orders the various individual virtues. Virtue is the exercise of ethical knowledge as elicited by particular situations of action, and to act on the basis of this knowledge as a matter of course is to possess *phronesis.* Without *phronesis* one cannot properly be said to possess any of the virtues, and to possess *phronesis* is, conversely, to possess *all* the virtues, for *phronesis* is knowledge of which virtue is appropriate in particular circumstances, and the ability to act on that knowledge." Beiner, *Political Judgment*, 72.

[131] *Ibid.,* 2.

individuals who make judgments within a community concerning the very nature of the community.

Appropriateness as conceived of by Beiner explains how accountability can inform the traditional musician's performance, especially when we acknowledge the traditional musician's role in shaping the aesthetic sensibilities of the community. Traditional musicians draw from what is aesthetically appropriate for their community, but musicians also help to make this collective appropriateness evolve. Beiner draws from Arendt and Gadamer in noting the importance of the aesthetic in collective identity.

> "It is not at all coincidental that both Gadamer and Arendt concern themselves with judgment, with taste, and with 'common sense'. Both thinkers derive their essential inspiration from Heidegger. One of Heidegger's major accomplishments is his de-subjectivization of aesthetics. Both Arendt and Gadamer share this impulse, and Gadamer, especially, bases his hermeneutics on Heidegger's re-establishment of the foundation of aesthetics upon a new basis, namely his idea of the 'truth' of art developed in 'The Origin of the Work of Art'. It therefore becomes necessary to deny the 'autonomy' of art (what Gadamer labels 'aesthetic differentiation', the 'abstraction' of aesthetic consciousness), so that beauty is asserted to be a matter, not of private satisfaction, but of public quality. Art and beauty, rather than being aesthetically divorced from truth, from reality, from the world, assume responsibility towards the public realm, and issue in the public meaning of a culture."[132,133]

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[132] *Ibid.*, 23.

[133] The understanding of aesthetics as presented by the theoretical lineage tracing from Heidegger through Gadamer, Arendt, Beiner, and others, explains why in this project I approach explaining a musical community, not primarily through the work of folklorists or ethnomusicologists, but through the work of political and hermeneutic theorists. While I might share the same subject as ethnomusicologists or folklorists, my interest in that subject is not the same. This is a project about the role of judgment in the rhetorical practices of a community. It just so happens that the community I focus on is also a traditional music community.

This recognition also ties to previously discussed concepts of everyday practices and vernacular rhetoric by recognizing the public qualities of everyday practices of aesthetics. While I discussed the evolution of a community when drawing from theories of vernacular and the everyday, by incorporating discussion of beauty and satisfaction, hermeneutics offers a mechanism for how this community evolution occurs. Simply put, some aesthetic practices are judged by community members as better than others.

These better performances are better in part because of the decisions made by the performer. When the community recognizes these more aesthetically pleasing choices, the choices filter back into the community's understanding of how to judge the practice itself. Thus, the decisions made by the traditional musician within a performance both draw from and contribute to the public meaning of that traditional community. The musicians base their decisions on their understanding of the audience's aesthetic values. When the musician makes a choice informed by an understanding of her own community membership, it reflects an acknowledgment that the musician holds herself accountable to her community. But those decisions also in turn affect the community's understanding of appropriateness.

Beiner is not alone in recognizing the relationship between appropriateness and rhetoric. Walter Jost and Michael Hyde see this relationship as the key to the ethical nature of rhetoric.

> "Rhetoric offers itself as a response to the contingent demands of a situation; it functions with an eye and ear attuned to the needs of others in the midst of disputational contests it provides an opportunity for collaborative choice; its ultimate aim is not merely manipulation and persuasion but the enactment of deliberation and judgment and the cultivation of practical wisdom and *kairotic* appropriateness. Rhetoric in other words, helps promote civic engagement and

civic virtue; it thus lends itself to the task of enriching the moral character of a people's communal existence."[134]

Appropriate rhetoric first requires the rhetor to possess empathy to understand the audience—itself implicating hermeneutics—but also the practical judgment to not only understand the other, but also to use that understanding to guide rhetorical decisions. A community of rhetors seeking not necessarily to persuade, but to deliberate and affect judgment, has the effect of cultivating the community itself. Rhetoric contains the ability to enrich a community's moral character by encouraging individuals to make rhetorical judgments that acknowledge others, and in the exercise of that judgment, to facilitate the judgment of others. The empathy needed to participate in this rhetorical community attunes the rhetor to a more cultivated notion of appropriateness and judgment.

### 4.3. Deliberation and Action

*Phronesis'* focus on particular situations limits any universal description its mechanisms. This illusiveness gave birth to a debate between Hans-Georg Gadamer and Jürgen Habermas concerning the nature of hermeneutics.[135] Their debate traces to their

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[134] Walter Jost and Michael J. Hyde, "Rhetoric and Hermeneutics: Places Along the Way," in eds. Walter Jost & Michael J. Hyde, *Rhetoric and Hermeneutics in Our Time: A Reader* (Yale University Press, 1997), 28-29.

[135] The Gadamer-Habermas debate began with Habermas' review of Gadamer's *Truth and Method.* While *Truth and Method* was first published in German in 1960, it was unavailable in English until 1975. Habermas' review of Gadamer's work, while released in German in 1966, appeared in English in 1970, prior to the English availability of *Truth and Method*. Gadamer responded to Habermas with "Reply to My Critics." Habermas replies with "The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality" which is followed by Gadamer's "The Universality of the Hermeneutic Problem." While other works by both theorists might have indirectly targeted one another, these works represent the core of the Gadamer-Habermas debate. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (2004); Jurgen Habermas, "A Review of Gadamer's *Truth and Method*", in eds. Gayle Ormiston & Alan Schrift, *The Hermeneutic Tradition: From Ast to Ricouer* (SUNY Press, 1989); Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Reply to My Critics" in eds. Gayle Ormiston & Alan Schrift, *The Hermeneutic Tradition: From Ast to Ricouer* (SUNY Press, 1989); Jurgen Habermas "The Hermeneutic Claim to

interpretations of Aristotle's model of *phronesis* emphasizing the *phronimos'*[136] deliberation of the good decision.[137] Like Arendt and Gadamer, Habermas seeks to protect the practical from the technical, not only in overtly political decisions, but in everyday practices.[138] Habermas borrows Gadamer's version of *phronesis* to be used as a tool for communication. But by locating *phronesis* as a tool, Habermas differs sharply from Gadamer, who embodies *phronesis* in the deliberation of the actor situated in a historical moment and context—itself a hermeneutic situation.[139] As a tool for coming to understanding through communication, Habermas sees the potential of *phronesis* applied as a method through the use of rules.[140] This idea of a rules driven *phronesis*

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Universality", in eds. Gayle Ormiston & Alan Schrift, *The Hermeneutic Tradition: From Ast to Ricouer* (SUNY Press, 1989); Hans Georg Gadamer, "The Universality of the Hermeneutic Problem" in eds. Gayle Ormiston & Alan Schrift, *The Hermeneutic Tradition: From Ast to Ricouer* (SUNY Press, 1989).

[136] Aristotle did not conceive of *phronesis* as something easily exercised but as a mode of judgment available only to the *phronimos*, or 'moral expert'. This causes some to dismiss Aristotle's understanding of *phronesis* in reaction to its taint of elitism. While it would be wrong to throw Aristotle's *phronesis* out with its tainted bathwater, it would be equally wrong to not confront Aristotle's elitist ways.

[137] Aristotle addresses this in Book VI of his *Nicomachean Ethics.* Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W.D. Ross (Kitchener, Ontario: Batoche Books, 1999).

[138] "But at a time when the threat of total annihilation no longer seems to be an abstract possibility but the most imminent and real potentiality, it becomes all the more imperative to try again to foster and nurture those forms of communal life in which dialogue, conversation, *phronesis,* practical discourse, and judgment are concretely embodied in our everyday practices. This is the *telos* that is common to the visions of Gadamer, Habermas, Rorty, and Arendt." Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, 229.

[139] "Understanding is to be thought of less as a subjective act than as a participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated. This is what must be validated by hermeneutic theory, which is far too dominated by the idea of a procedure, a method." Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* 291.

[140] "Practical knowledge orients by way of rules of interaction. These transmitted rules are acquired by training; but the historically changing conditions of their use call for an

counters the very point of Gadamer's development of the practical—that in particular situations rules cannot govern us, and we must instead deliberate over the means of action by relating the particular to the universal.[141] In relying on rules to guide *phronesis,* Habermas eliminates deliberation from the actor, focusing only on action. Rather than weighing the situation's possibilities and deliberating over the proper means, a Habermasian *phronesis* instead requires applying a given pre-determined method.

Gadamer borrows from Aristotle in hinging *phronesis* on deliberation over future action.[142] This deliberation concerns not only the best means, but requires the agent to act upon that decision. Knowledge of what justifies an action as 'proper' requires an

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application that, for its part, further develops the rules through interpretation." Habermas, *A Review of Gadamer's Truth and Method,* 232.

[141] These points of contention do not encompass the entire debate between Habermas and Gadamer, only the portion relevant to my project. Much of the debate concerns how Gadamer's understanding of hermeneutics contrasts with Habermas's notion of the ideal speech situation and prejudice. Gadamer sees prejudice as the fore-structure that guides our understanding, and that prejudice itself is not negative. One goal of hermeneutics is to reveal to ourselves our own prejudices so that we might assess which prejudices are legitimate and which are illegitimate. Habermas disagrees, seeing prejudice itself as a distortion to realizing an ideal communication. The two also disagree about the status of positivism in the social sciences—a friction that stems from their disagreement about the role of method in interpretive understanding, with Gadamer seeing method as an interference with the contingency of the interpretive situation, instead advocating for the researcher to employ practical judgment, and Habermas attempting to anchor interpretation within a structure of rules.

Much attention has been given to this debate. Michael McGee covers it nicely in his essay, "Phronesis in the Habermas vs. Gadamer Debate." Much of McGee's discussion elaborates the various characteristics of both Gadamer and Habermas's *phronesis* that I already discuss here. Michael McGee, "Phronesis in the Habermas vs. Gadamer Debate," in *Rhetoric in Postmodern America: Conversations with Michael Calvin McGee*, Carol Corbin, ed. (New York: The Guilford Press, 1997). See also, Jack Mendelson, "The Habermas-Gadamer Debate," *New German Critique* 18 (1979), 44-73; and Ingrid Scheibler, *Gadamer: Between Heidegger and Habermas* (New York: Roman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000).

[142] "This leads us to the fundamental Aristotelian concept of deliberation, for if political judgment is defined in terms of the future; this at the same time defines deliberation: what is deliberated is a course of action to be undertaken." Beiner, *Political Judgment,* 90.

understanding of the community where this action occurs. But *phronesis* requires more than just understanding the community. It also concerns the actor's attitude approaching the action, as well as the way that act is ultimately performed. And since *phronesis* always concerns action, it is always embodied. Action cannot be seen separate from the judgment.[143] Because these decisions concerning action are always contingent on the particular, the exercise of *phronesis* cannot be taught. There is a clarification to be made here. While *phronesis* cannot be taught it can be learned, or perhaps it is better to say that it can be developed, and environments that cultivate the learning of *phronesis* can be arranged. To say that a subject can be taught presupposes that there are rules, methods, or information that a teacher can impart upon a student. Rules, though, are not a component of *phronesis.* Instead, *phronesis* concerns agent centered judgment embodied in action where the actor deliberates over contingent situations. An actor can learn *phronesis* over time through exercising judgment, and developing an understanding of what constitutes good action within a community. So in the case of a Cape Breton musician, a teacher cannot provide a student with a set of rules of how to perform that will apply to every audience and every performance. But the student could participate within sessions, ceilidhs, and other interactions within the community, and in these situations learn to practice enacting judgment. Treating these situations as dialogues, the student could gain a greater understanding of the proper actions within each setting, developing their ability to exercise *phronesis.*

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[143] "*Phronesis* is the union of good judgment and the action which is the fitting embodiment of that judgment." *Ibid.*, 75.

Stating that *phronesis* concerns good, or proper, action begs question, "what is good?" Gadamer proposes that a communal good emerges when a community engages in dialogue as *sensus communis,* or a common faculty of taste.[144] This community acquired sense of the good contributes to an individual's prejudices which in turn shapes an individual's understanding—prejudices here not carrying the negative connotations typically associated with the term.

> Prejudices are not necessarily unjustified and erroneous, so that they inevitably distort the truth. In fact, the historicity of our existence entails that prejudices, in the literal sense of the word, constitute the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience. Prejudices are biases of our openness to the world. They are simply conditions whereby we experience something—whereby what we encounter says something to us. This formulation certainly does not mean that we are enclosed within a wall of prejudices and only let through the narrow portals those things that can produce a pass saying, "Nothing new will be said here." Instead we welcome just that guess who promises something new to our curiosity.[145]

This helps to show the relationship between hermeneutics and *phronesis*. Hermeneutics concerns understanding, whether it be understanding a text, a person, a situation, or a tradition. Understanding itself is only possible because of our collective prejudices that shape our identity. *Phronesis* is a form of judgment that puts the particular in relation to the universal,[146] as such, *phronesis* is a form of understanding where the 'thing' confronted is related to the actor's prejudice.

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[144] "[T]he *sensus communis* [...] is a sense that is acquired through living in the community and is determined by its structures and aims." Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* 20.

[145] Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics,* 9.

[146] "The interpreter dealing with a traditional text seeks to apply it to himself. But this does not mean that the text is given for him as something universal, that he understands it as such and only afterwards uses it for particular applications. Rather, the interpreter seeks no more than to understand this universal thing, the text, i.e., to understand what this piece of tradition says, what constitutes the meaning and importance of the text. In

It might seem like I am confusing two concepts, since hermeneutics is usually acknowledged as the study of understanding and interpretation, and *phronesis* is a particular form of judgment embodied in action. But in addition to understanding and interpretation, hermeneutics encompasses application. In seeing these three elements as essentially intertwined, Gadamer links *phronesis* and hermeneutics. "They are internally related; every act of understanding involves interpretation, and all interpretation involves application. It is Aristotle's analysis of *phronesis* that, according to Gadamer, enables us to understand the distinctive way in which application is an essential moment of the hermeneutical experience."[147] A picture showing hermeneutics itself as a form of judgment encompassing deliberation, understanding, and application as action emerges.

Understanding is shaped by an individual's prejudices, and these prejudices in turn are in part shaped by an individual's dialogue with their communities. Gadamer's develops hermeneutics with the goal of protecting practical judgment from a domination of technical judgment. Key to understanding the distinction between the practical and the technical, is that, while the two are opposed in operation, they are not locked in conflict. *Phronesis* and *technē* need each other to coexist: "...we can even appeal to the Greeks in order to point out that both for them and for us *technē* without *phronesis* is blind, while *phronesis* without *technē* is empty."[148] Actions usually involve both *technē* and *phronesis. Technē,* representing the knowledge of a skill while *phronesis* as judgment

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order to understand that, he must not seek to disregard himself and his particular hermeneutical situation. He must relate the text to this situation, if he wants to understand at all." Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* 289.

[147] Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism,* 38.

[148] *Ibid.*, 161.

guides the *technē*.[149] While both Gadamer and Arendt caution against the modern reliance of *technē, technē* itself is not their concern— their concern is domination by *technē*.

> "That is the point of philosophical hermeneutic. It corrects the peculiar falsehood of modern consciousness: the idolatry of scientific method and of the anonymous authority of the sciences and it vindicates against the noblest task of the citizen—decision making according to one's own responsibility—instead of conceding that task to the expert. In this respect, hermeneutic philosophy is the heir of the older tradition of practical philosophy."[150]

This presents a very different trajectory of *phronesis* than that of Aristotle, because no longer is it a form of reasoning restricted to an elite class of *phronimos.*

Instead, *phronesis* represents a form of understanding that everyone is capable of. Arendt not only ties judgment to public relationships, she finds it to be an essential faculty for the participating in the public. "Judging is one, if not the most, important activity in which this sharing-the-world-with-others comes to pass."[151] *Phronesis* becomes tied to one's communal relationships. It demands an attunement towards these relationships and requires a space for an individual to practice this judgment amongst others within the community. The fear that *technē* would dominate *phronesis* stems from these requirements. If individuals do not have a space to exercise *phronesis* within everyday practices, they will lack the ability when they need it most. In ceding public

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[149] Here the violinist's knowledge of the instrument is itself *technē*. They have to understand how to elicit certain sounds from their instrument, requiring a technical knowledge of the instrument as a tool. *Phronesis* could guide the violinist's judgments of when and how to use that technical knowledge within a performance.

[150] Gadamer, *Hermeneutics and Social Science*, 316.

[151] Arendt, *Between Past and Future,* 221.

judgment to experts guided by *technē*, *phronesis* would disappear.[152] Instead everyday practices that require or promote the exercise of *phronesis* would allow individuals to develop a faculty of public judgment. "If all human beings share a faculty of judgment that is sufficient for forming reasoned opinions about the political world, the monopoly of the expert and technocrat no longer possesses legitimacy. Political reason, from being a technical science, is restored to a practical science."[153]

The distinction between classical orchestral musicians and Cape Breton musicians becomes somewhat clearer. It is not that orchestral musicians are not capable of *phronesis.* On the contrary, in their community, these musicians make practical decisions within their own everyday practices. Their prejudices informing these practical judgments are shaped in part by their own dialogue with the classical music community. In the practice of orchestral musical performance, the possibility for enacting practical judgment is limited by the notes on the page and the director's instructions, but this does not mean that the musician does not exercise *phronesis* in other practices, or even in other ways within this practice. The classical musician just happens to enact practical judgment through different practices. The everyday practices of the classical musician are different than the everyday practices of the traditional musician, so what counts as a good practical decision for the classical musician differs than what counts as a good practical decision for the traditional musician. It is their engagement

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[152] Again, this is not to disparage *technē* as a mode of thought. Gadamer and Arendt are not cautioning against a scenario where we use expert knowledge to inform our own *phronetic* decisions. Such a scenario would acknowledge a needed balance between *technē* and *phronesis.* Rather, they caution against the domination of *phronesis* by *technē*—a scenario where we would blindly cede our judgment to the expert.

[153] Beiner, *Political Judgment*, 3.

with their community that form part of the classical musicians' prejudice, and thus shapes their understanding of musical performance.

Informed by their own community, orchestral musicians understand certain elements of performance as guided by their own everyday practices within their community—and some of these practices, such as which notes to play, are not guided by practical judgment. When these same musicians enter the Cape Breton music community, they enter a community with quite different everyday practices. When the classical musician exercises judgment within the Cape Breton musical community, their judgment is not informed by the prejudices or norms of the Cape Breton community, but by the norms of their own classical music community. This ignores the Cape Breton tradition. "Every work of art, not only literature, must be understood like any other text that requires understanding, and this kind of understanding has to be acquired."[154] This classical musician first entering the Cape Breton community cannot demonstrate *phronesis* in this new encounter, because their prejudices can hide the very notion that they are engaging within a community practice with very different values than their own. Even if the orchestral musician recognizes that this new community carries a different set of values, these newly encountered norms do not automatically reveal themselves to the musician. These norms would make themselves known slowly, and only if the orchestral musician engages in an open dialogue with the Cape Breton community.

The reason that the norms of Cape Breton's musical practices could only reveal themselves to an orchestral musician over time lies within the concept of prejudice itself.

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[154] Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* 146.

The classical musician's prejudices can never be dissolved or bracketed through the force of sheer will, or self-reflection, because prejudice is involved in all understanding. "This recognition that all understanding inevitably involves some prejudice gives the hermeneutical problem its real thrust."[155] So for the orchestral musician to gain an understanding of the norms of the Cape Breton musical community, it is not enough to say that the musician needs to 'lose" their prejudices, because one cannot lose prejudice. Instead the prejudices of the orchestral musician would need to incorporate the prejudices of the Cape Breton community. Returning briefly to discussion of vernacular rhetoric, the rhetorical salience of the Cape Breton community would have to carry similar salience with the orchestral musician. For this to happen, the orchestral musician would need to approach encountering the Cape Breton musical community with an openness where they might test their prejudices. This process of testing is where, for Gadamer, our own prejudices are revealed to us as either blinding or enabling.[156]

To understand this testing, it is important to see the testing process in relation to Gadamer's dialogue. The orchestral musician would need to encounter traditional practices of the Cape Breton community in such a way where the musician is open to testing their own preconceptions of how the Cape Breton practices work—all while open to changing some beliefs while solidifying others. In such a way, the musician's understanding of the community's norms can somewhat align with the native Cape Breton musician.

> "[I]t is in and through the encounter with works of art, texts, and more generally what is handed down to us through tradition that we discover which of our prejudices are blind and which are enabling... [O]nly through the *dialogical*

[155]*Ibid.*, 239.

[156]*Ibid.*, 247.

> encounter with what is at once alien to us, makes a claim upon us, and has an affinity with what we are that we can open ourselves to risking and testing our prejudices."[157]

This is a task that can never be completed. To assume that a perfect alignment of understanding could be achieved would be to reify communal norms—an assumption ignoring the process whereby a community's norms constantly evolve. "A living tradition not only informs and shapes what we are but is always in the process of reconstitution. When tradition is no longer open in this manner, we can think of it as "dead," or as no longer a tradition."[158] But to say that the task of testing one's own prejudices in an effort to understand communal norms can never be completed is not to say that an outsider cannot learn to enact *phronesis* within the community. Not all classical musicians entering the Cape Breton musical community do so with an openness where they test their own biases, and this speaks more to the hidden nature of prejudice than any stubbornness on the part of the classical musician. An outsider's ability to learn community norms in order to enact *phronesis* within that community is a hermeneutic process.

While this might begin to explain communal understanding, I still have yet to address what the 'good' is, other than recognizing it is developed within the community. As I have presented it, understanding what is good within a community could border upon moral relativism. But hermeneutics offers a notion of good for *phronesis* that sits between relativism and the universal. Gadamer's development of the dialogue defends against relativism. Bernstein elaborates:

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[157] Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism,* 128.

[158] *Ibid.*, 130.

> "I have argued Gadamer is really committed to a communicative understanding of truth, believing that 'claims to truth' always implicitly demand argumentation to warrant them, but he has failed to make this view fully explicit....For although all claims to truth are fallible and open to criticism, they still require validation—validation that can be realized only through offering the best reasons and arguments that can be given in support of them—reasons and arguments that are themselves embedded in the practices that have been developed in the course of history. We never escape from the obligation of seeking to validate claims to truth through argumentation and opening ourselves to the criticism of others."[159]

Clearly not all communal norms would qualify as "the good" that anchors this understanding of *phronesis.* To acknowledge so would be to potentially recognize a tradition's racist norm of hatred towards a particular minority to count as "the good". Bernstein and Gadamer assert that a tradition operating with such solitary and closed thought would be incapable of *phronesis* in the first place. A living tradition as Gadamer defines it is not homogenous in thought but essentially open.[160] If it were not open and uncertain, then tradition would be no different than a blueprint that guides technical judgment.

Understanding 'good' as a communal norm requires recognizing where arguments exist within the tradition, and also what wins these arguments. The openness of tradition also recognizes that what might win an argument today might lose tomorrow. Such a view of the good combats relativism by recognizing that understanding informed by a living tradition is both limited and open. This is an understanding of the 'good' that exists not as a binary, but on a spectrum. It acknowledges that there are better arguments and worse arguments, not simply right

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[159] *Ibid.*, 168.

[160] See the quote associated with footnote 158.

arguments and wrong arguments. It is this spectrum of good that can be most easily seen within musical performances.

> "Of course, a Beethoven sonata consists of the notes written down by Beethoven, but the sonata is also the realization of the written score. We not only recognize that different musicians will perform a work differently but even that on each occasion the performance of a given artist will itself be different. But in this instance, acknowledging the variety of different interpretations does not invite us to speak of relativism or to think that all performances are of equal merit. And we certainly judge better and worse performances, making judgments that are not to be assimilated to the expression of private likings (even though we do acknowledge that there can be conflicting judgments.)"[161]

A Cape Breton musician's rhetorical performances are judged within the Cape Breton community. Each performance features a musician's claim to communal values. As the community judges some performances as "better" or "worse," the limitations of how the community judges aural rhetorical arguments are shaped. But because each performance will bring something new, these limitations of communal value judgments are always morphing. The limits of what counts as 'good' are never solidified. This etherealness of what counts as good, does not push the values of the Cape Breton community into relativism, because, while uncertain, these values are anchored to the judgments already made—just in a way that allows for constant reevaluating what counts as a good performance.

Hermeneutic theory's ability to acknowledge that some performances of everyday routines are better or worse than others is an important characteristic that

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[161] Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, 125. I want to reinforce that it has never been my assertion that Classical musicians are incapable of *phronesis.* In fact classical solo virtuoso musicians embody the ideals of *phronesis,* and Classical music conductors regularly exercise *phronesis.* But not all classical musicians are given the opportunity to enact judgment. When playing in an orchestral setting, judgment is ceded to the conductor. Some classical musicians operate solely within this role, without the opportunity to develop their own faculty of judgment during communal performances.

vernacular rhetoric and aural rhetoric should account for. It helps to guard against romanticizing that all performers of given community are equally skilled. The romanticism begins through ignoring the agency of individual members, instead viewing the practice as if it were performed by a faceless population. But members within a community internally recognize that certain performers of a given practice lack ability—a deficiency that can be partially attributed to a lack of good judgment—and that other members excel in ability, helping in part to shape the community's norm.

## 4.4. Politics of the Everyday

Gadamer and Arendt's concerns for ordinary practices have been neglected and deserve attention, and it is precisely through the window of judgment that this neglect can be seen. They can expand upon theories of vernacular and everyday practices that recognize the importance of judgment but neglect to explain how practical judgment is exercised. Arendt is generally recognized as tied to politics through her work on judgment, revolution, and totalitarianism, and Gadamer is recognized for his work on philosophical hermeneutics. Both recognize the political nature of judgment that occurs within ordinary communal practices, and both are concerned for the relationship between practical and technical judgment within communities.[162] Their politics of the everyday easily aligns with fleshing out an elusive vernacular rhetoric.

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[162] Bernstein's quote from note 138 is apt again here to help begin unpacking why Arendt and Gadamer are concerned with judgments made everyday, "But at a time when the threat of total annihilation no longer seems to be an abstract possibility but the most imminent and real potentiality, it becomes all the more imperative to try again to foster and nurture those forms of communal life in which dialogue, conversation, *phronesis,* practical discourse, and judgment are concretely embodied in our everyday practices. This is the *telos* that is common to the visions of Gadamer, Habermas, Rorty, and Arendt." Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, 229.

It is understandable why both Arendt and Gadamer's concern for judgment in ordinary practices is overlooked. Neither explicitly discuss everydayness as such. And while Gadamer discusses 'community' and 'tradition', Arendt rarely does. One could attribute Arendt's exclusion from the work of folklorists and other theorists concerned with the 'everyday' to Arendt's use of terms more readily seen used by political theorists. But digging into what these overtly political terms mean for Arendt reveals that Arendt's concern for judgment and the political exists precisely within the ordinary. One must begin with Arendt's focus on the *polis*, a term that immediately might invoke the legacy of a classical Greek understanding of the term. But Arendt's *polis* is much more than a place for land-owning Athenian citizens to debate:

> The *polis* properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be.[163]

There is a very particular kind of activity that occurs within the *polis* for Arendt, namely what she defines as 'action'—the activity that goes on "... between men..." and corresponds "... to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world."[164] Action represents *the* condition of all political life, and this activity that recognizes others is the root of Arendt's contribution to a theory of 'community'.

Arendt does not explicitly invoke the everyday or the ordinary, but she presents a picture of a community founded on action. A community exists when people appear together to act and speak. Action and speech here corresponding to the activity that acknowledges others. And this form of action occurring in the presence of others and in

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[163] Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 198.

[164] *Ibid.*, 7.

acknowledgement of others is what Arendt conceives of as the political. Key to Arendt's view about this particular kind of activity, action, is that, while action is performed in recognition of others, it is simultaneously performed to reveal oneself:

> In acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world, while their physical identities appear without any activity of their own in the unique shape of the body and sound of the voice. This disclosure of "who" in contradistinction to "what" somebody is—his qualities, gifts, talents, and shortcomings, which he may display or hide—is implicit in everything somebody says and does.[165]

This quality of action might give pause to any notions of Arendt's 'action' contributing to a theory of 'ordinary', as it seems to represent a complete shift from the mundane towards the marked. The *polis* becomes any place where individuals appear in the presence of others, and act in recognition of others—these acts have the twofold characteristic of recognizing others while disclosing oneself. Appearing in the presence of others and acting in recognition of others is part of some communities' everyday practices.

Arendt's recognition that the actor within the *polis* sought immortality emphasizes the *polis* as a space for performance.[166] But the twist in Arendt's theory of action, and more precisely of the immortality sought through action, is that this constant quest to perform extraordinary acts in the *polis* is also the realm of the ordinary.

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[165] *Ibid.*, 179.

[166] Arendt makes an important distinction between immortality and eternity worth clarifying. Eternity is concerned with a theological or philosophical eternal which, whether it be concerned with the divine or the contemplative, exists outside of the world of others. A concern for immortality, though, is a concern precisely for the world of others. An actor concerned with immortality acts in a way hoping that the acts are great enough to endure in time through the memory of others. See *Ibid.*, 17.

> "The *polis* was supposed to multiply the occasions to win "immortal fame", that is, to multiple the chances for everybody to distinguish himself, to show in deed and word who he was in his unique distinctness. One, if not the chief, reason for the incredible development of gift and genius in Athens, as well as for the hardly less surprising decline of the city-state, was precisely that from beginning to end its foremost aim was to make the extraordinary an ordinary occurrence of everyday life."[167]

This is a key insight into Arendt's *polis*; as the realm of speech and action, the *polis* is a place where the extraordinary is an ordinary occurrence. Special events are not necessarily cleaved from the everyday, but in communities that allow for a space of appearances where individuals act amongst one another, the extraordinary can be part of the ordinary. This corresponds with theorists of the everyday who note the context in defining whether a particular experience is part of the everyday or part of special events, and how categorizing a performance should sit on a spectrum between the two. Recall my discussion of fifty musical performances occurring on Cape Breton on one particular summer evening, but remember that this number represents a routine for the Island. Each of these performances offer the possibility for action, and offer the potential for a given musician to achieve such a great performance that they win fame within the community.[168]

Arendt's possible contribution to a theory of ordinary community comes to light with her development of action and the *polis*. Her vision acknowledges the political within an everyday community, seeing the community as a place where individuals

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[167] *Ibid.*, 197.

[168] Mention to Cape Bretoners the names Winston, Buddy, Natalie, Ashley, Dan Hughie, Dan R., John Morris, Howie, Jerry, Kinnon, Donald Angus, and so on, and they will immediately recognize that musician's role in shaping the Cape Breton music community. Even though some of these musicians are long since deceased, their performances are still remembered and talked about.

come together in a space of appearance and disclose their identity through speech and action. But my project focuses on a particular kind of community, and a particular kind of action, namely a musical community and musical action—an aural rhetoric. While Arendt has not developed a theory of music and community, she has acknowledged the role of performing arts as action:

> "The performing arts... have indeed a strong affinity with politics. Performing artists—dancers, play-actors, musicians, and the like—need an audience to show their virtuosity, just as acting men need the presence of others before whom they can appear; both need a publicly organized space for their "work," and both depend upon others for the performance itself. Such a space of appearances is not to be taken for granted wherever men live together in a community."[169]

This is not the only opening Arendt gives indicating the potential of music as action. Again, Arendt's action corresponds to activity that acknowledges that "men, not Man live on the Earth and inhabit the world."[170] While not every instance of musical performance might acknowledge the other, it can hardly be refuted that some music is performed in acknowledgment of others. More so, through the musical performance itself a musician can express thoughts and values, and thus disclose identity. Rather than arguing that all music equates to Arendt's concept of action, I am pointing out that Arendt's conception of action might allow for a greater insight into music, and more specifically ordinary musical communities, and that Arendt's potential contributions here have been overlooked.

The Cape Breton music community might be seen to have traditional venues used regularly: the various square dance halls throughout the island; the Red Shoe

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[169] Arendt, *Between Past and Future,* 154.

[170] Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 7.

Pub,[171] with its regular performances both planned and spontaneous; and the regular concert halls throughout the island. But rather than focus on the form of these venues, it is better to see this musical community itself as Arendt's *polis*. Whenever they come together in a space of appearances, there is the potential for action. The spontaneous sessions and dances that occur at the Red Shoe Pub illustrate this well.[172] The Red Shoe Pub represents a regular space of appearances for the people within the Cape Breton musical community. Here individuals from the community come together to socialize with another, and musical performances are scheduled. Despite this planned schedule, it is also frequent for musicians to sit down with one another during unscheduled times, simply to perform with one another in front of the crowd.[173] The *polis* is not limited to such a regular space though. Individuals routinely throw house parties that, for all intensive purposes, are open to the entire music community, and where musicians perform for all hours. Arendt's *polis* allows seeing this community as existing not in any one such place, but in any space where the people of the Cape Breton music community come together for the purpose of performing and speaking together.

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[171] While the Cape Breton musical community spans the entire island of Cape Breton and extends onto Antigonish on the mainland of Nova Scotia, the area between Judique, Cape Breton, and Cheticamp, Cape Breton is probably the most active concentration of this musical community. The Red Shoe Pub in Mabou sits near the center of this span and is a popular space for individuals within this community to gather.

[172] I will later expand on my methodology and experience with this community on a whole, but to clarify, I lived across the street from the Red Shoe Pub, in Mabou, Cape Breton, during the first two summers it was open. I was in the Pub nearly everyday during these summers, and lived with the Pub's staff.

[173] One such session I witnessed on Father's Day in 2005 saw musicians sit down to perform at noon with the music continuing nonstop well past closing time at midnight. At least twenty musicians performed during this session.

Arendt's insights into the *polis* and more specifically action also expand on how to perceive the music of Cape Breton's musical community, and allows this music to be seen as political. These musicians perform in a space of appearances that the *polis* provides in recognition of others within the community. But while performing in recognition of others within their audience, these musicians also perform to distinguish themselves. As I will detail later, Cape Breton fiddlers usually perform solo and are generally accompanied by a piano player. Cape Breton music allows for the musicians to apply their own style and nuance to each performance. Community members are familiar with each musician's style, and judge them accordingly. Some musicians might consistently pack a dance hall beyond its capacity, while other musicians draw the bare minimum.[174] This community allows these musicians to distinguish themselves with each performance, so that, not only are they recognizing the community, they are revealing themselves with each performance. Each performance has the potential to rise to a level of greatness, and be judged as such. Some fiddlers develop cults of personality, whose performances have arguably achieved immortality to this community, while other musicians are just as soon forgotten.[175] But the very nature of this community

[174] Cape Breton Fiddler Howie MacDonald, in addition to being a fiddler, also regularly produces and acts in an oft-quoted live sketch comedy show that satirizes the Cape Breton community. In one infamous sketch, two older gentlemen, representative of the music community's seniors, debate the virtues of two fiddlers. As with most satire, this scene contains a kernel of truth, as I have witnessed many such debates between community members. One man says to the other, "I agree with you but you're wrong... I wouldn't walk across the street to hear him play." The kernel of truth here lies in the level of criticism that these musicians subject themselves to, and the constant debate within the community concerning musicians' styles and abilities.

[175] For example, the performances of fiddler Winston Fitzgerald who passed away in 1987, are still regularly discussed by the Cape Breton community. Other musicians are likewise revered.

allows for such extraordinary performances to be an ordinary occurrence. This warrants how notions of the good, and likewise, Arendt's concept of immortality, can be incorporated into discussions of vernacular rhetoric.

Understanding that the political exists for Arendt as activity acknowledging others sets the stage for Arendt's concern for judgment, and specifically for concern that technical judgment could dominate practical judgment. Because Arendt saw the political as capable of being part of the ordinary, Arendt's concern for practical judgment being dominated by technical judgment also extended to ordinary practices. Arendt alludes to such domination of practical judgment by technical judgment throughout *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*.[176] The work focuses on the trial of Adolf Eichmann, architect of the Nazi's 'Final Solution.' Her criticism of Eichmann's brutality stemmed not from a monstrous evil, but from Eichmann's incapability of thought and practical judgment. This incapability stemmed from Eichmann's ability to think being subsumed by bureaucratic procedure and the thoughtless repetition of clichés.

Arendt saw this lack of thought and practical judgment as the result of bureaucracy's ability to replace individual judgment with technical procedure within the ordinary. Simply put, ordinary bureaucracy has the potential to destroy one's ability to think for oneself, and while this thoughtlessness originates in the bureaucratic environment, it transfers to other areas of life. Arendt focuses on Eichmann's use of technocratic speak, quoting his admission that, "Officialese is my only language."[177] With this admission, Eichmann recognizes an inability to communicate outside of the

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[176] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil,* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994).

[177] *Ibid.*, 48.

use of bureaucratic clichés. These clichés show a domination of the practical by the technical. "All these clichés have in common that they make judgment superfluous and that to utter them is devoid of all risk."[178] It is not bureaucracy itself that Arendt targets, nor technical judgment. Rather, it is *domination* of practical judgment by technical judgment. The officialese of Eichmann's speech has only become Eichmann's only language because the technical everyday bureaucracy he worked within destroyed the possibility of practical judgment and thought. Instead, bureaucracy mandates the following of rules, itself demanding technical judgment.[179]

To protect a domination of practical judgment by technical judgment, Arendt calls for a space of appearances where judgment can be exercised. This space was the virtue of Arendt's conception of a *polis* as an everyday community. The *polis* of the everyday is a space to publicly exercise judgment about concerns that acknowledge others. Arendt distinguishes between this ideal *polis* wherein individuals appear before each other to exercise judgment and engage in action, and the *social* or *society*, a space that was "neither private nor public".[180] The social is a place where we appear before others, but we do not engage in activity that acknowledges others, and we lose the ability to distinguish ourselves before others:

> "It is decisive that society, on all its levels, excludes the possibility of action, which formerly was excluded from the household. Instead, society expects from each of its members a certain kind of behavior, imposing innumerable and

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[178] *Ibid.*, 297.

[179] In a sense, Arendt here gives a critique of the vernacular of the bureaucrat, as seen in the "officialese." This bolsters David Kennedy's argument that the vernacular of experts needs to be the subject of critical study that I discuss in footnote 90. Arendt's concern for dominance of the practical by the technical offers a telos for such a critical project. See Kennedy, "The Mystery of Global Governance."

[180] Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 28.

> various rules, all of which tend to "normalize" its members, to make them behave, to exclude spontaneous action or outstanding achievement... with the emergence of mass society, the realm of the social has finally, after several centuries of development, reached the point where it embraces and controls all members of a given community equally and with equal strength. But society equalizes under all circumstances, and the victory of equality in the modern world is only the political and legal recognition of the fact that society has conquered the public realm, and that distinction and difference have become private matters of the individual."[181]

Without the public activities of action and the exercise of judgment, the social exists as a place where technical judgment dominates practical judgment. Arendt saw the social as a pseudo-public place that could devour the political. Foreshadowing her later commentary on Eichmann, Arendt labeled this domination as its own form of evil: "As we know from the most social form of government, that is, from bureaucracy, the rule by nobody is not necessarily no-rule; it may indeed, under certain circumstances, even turn out to be one of its crudest and most tyrannical versions."[182]

As much as Arendt's conception of the *polis* can contribute to theories of the ordinary and community, so too can Arendt's development of the social. Both require a focus on questioning how judgment is exercised within public appearances. While the *polis* recognizes a space for a plurality of individual agents, and their subsequent exercise of judgment, the social presents the alternative. In the social, action is replaced by behavior, and practical judgment is replaced by rule-following. It is not itself practical to assume that any community can entirely fit Arendt's ideal *polis*, or even her society devoid of judgment. It is more realistic to say that communities exist on a spectrum, where certain ordinary community practices allow for the exercise of

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[181] *Ibid.*, 40-41.

[182] *Ibid.*, 40.

judgment while others call for the application of rules. But these distinctions offer insight into identifying where the political exists within everyday communities and where technical judgment has the potential to encroach upon practical judgment.

To reiterate once again, I do not wish to present the Cape Breton community as a *phronetic* utopia, nor am I equating classical musicians with technocratic automatons. But I am saying that the practices in the Cape Breton music community that draw upon practical judgment does not correspond to the same activity within the classical music community. As such when Classical musicians enter into traditional music communities, they do not necessarily recognize the place of practical judgment. This is not to suggest that traditional music communities are in eminent danger of collapse due to an impending domination by the likes of classical music infiltrators. Simply that these musicians are distinguished by modes of judgment, and that as more classical musicians seek to perform traditional music, there should be a recognition of this practical judgment. One might respond, "So what, Greg? We are only talking about music. Not the eminent collapse of civilization." But Arendt shows us that the ordinary practices where practical judgment is enacted in the everyday are important. These practices help develop a faculty of judgment that can extend elsewhere. The practical judgment enacted in Cape Breton music is important precisely because it is mundane and occurs everyday.

Gadamer is more likely to be cited within studies of the everyday than Arendt because of his contributions to hermeneutics. While his work on both tradition and conversations have been explored at length, underdeveloped has been how Gadamer saw an individual's relationship with tradition itself as a conversation. When seen as a conversation, this relationship between the individual and the individual's tradition

reveals Gadamer's concern for the domination of practical judgment by technical judgment within one's everyday community. Gadamer sees tradition as a relationship between individuals—a set of relationships that shapes an individual's prejudices.[183] These relationships that make up tradition are where the distinction between practical and technical come into play for Gadamer: tradition shapes an individual's understanding, but this itself does not close off the possibility of other understandings. When an individual sees a tradition as a set of rules guiding behavior, that individual's understanding has been closed. Seeing tradition as a set of rules is, for Gadamer, a result of technical judgment dominating practical judgment.

Conversation sits at the fore of Gadamer's development of understanding. Individuals come to an understanding through conversation, which itself both presupposes a common language and creates a common language.[184] To conduct a conversation is not more than in the act of talking with another person, because talking with another person can easily become the mutual "talking at" other people. A conversation requires a particular orientation towards the other:

> "To conduct a conversation means to allow oneself to be conducted by the subject matter to which the partners in the dialogue are oriented. It requires that one does not try to argue the other person down but that one really considers the weight of the other's opinions. Hence it is an art of testing. But the art of testing is the art of questioning. As against the fixity of opinions, questioning makes the object and all its possibilities fluid. A person skilled in the "art" of questioning is

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[183] See my above discussion on Gadamer's use of prejudice, beginning with the quote associated with footnote 145.

[184] "Conversation is a process of coming to an understanding. Thus it belongs to every true conversation that each person opens himself to the other, truly accepts his point of view as valid and transposes himself into the other to such an extant that he understands not the particular individual but what he says." Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 387.

> a person who can prevent questions from being suppressed by the dominant opinion."[185]

There is an openness on the part of a conversation's participants. But each participant also begins from a particular perspective. So while each is open to testing the position of the other, they can only test each other's position with the perspectives available from their own starting position. In other words, while conducting a conversation allows the testing of the other's position, there is no guarantee that the other's position is completely understood. But in questioning and testing the other's point of view, an individual's own perspectives can themselves change as the individual reevaluates their own position. It is this reevaluation of one's position that is central to Gadamer's understanding of tradition.

Understanding a relationship with tradition can be a participation in a conversation rather than the following of rules provides insight into how tradition relates to the exercise of practical judgment. When Cape Breton musicians perform, they draw from a repertoire of tunes that might have been played hundreds of times by most of the musicians to have participated within the tradition. Take the fiddle tune *King George IV* for example.[186] This is a strathspey[187] that is part of nearly every Cape Breton musician's repertoire, and rarely does a dance go by without the tune being heard. This history sets a heavy precedent for expectations of how the tune is to sound and forms a prejudice for the members of the Cape Breton community. But this history does not form

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[185] *Ibid.*, 361.

[186] Here performed as the first tune in a set by Buddy MacMaster and his niece, Natalie MacMaster. "Natalie MacMaster - King George Medley" *YouTube*, last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbY-LpV3K-k.

[187] A strathspey is a type of fiddle tune, like a reel, or march. The properties that distinguish these tunes I will discuss at length in a separate section.

a set of rules. While this tune is performed thousands of times a year, each performance is different.[188] Yes, there is a similarity between each performance—a set of parameters that guide the musician. But even with the parameters of prejudice, the musicians approach each performance with an openness to precisely how these parameters sit. Audience members who are part of the tradition also approach each performance with an openness that tests their prejudices. Listening to the general style of Cape Breton music over the past fifty years shows an undoubted shift in prejudices, even amongst musicians active during that entire span.[189] Seen from Gadamer's perspective, this shift comes about through the openness in testing and questioning prejudices.[190] This offers a mechanism for how practices and communities evolve. I am not suggesting that all traditions and every participation with a community is capable of openness and testing. Rather, that it is a characteristic possible within communities. And when present, this openness is one characteristic that facilitates the evolution of tradition.

To be clear, Gadamer is not arguing for tossing tradition aside as if it were a burden. Simply that an ideal relationship with tradition exists as a conversation, "For tradition is a genuine partner in dialogue, and we belong to it, as does the I with a

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188 Even the above example of Natalie MacMaster and Buddy MacMaster performing *King George IV* illustrates this, when in the B-part of the tune, an attuned ear will note that Natalie uses a scale with an F sharp while Buddy uses a note between an F natural and an F sharp. I'll discuss the significance of this more in later sections.

189 Cape Breton music has evolved since the first fiddlers stepped onto the island, not just the past fifty years.

190 Don't jump quickly against this by saying, "Clearly not everyone participating in the tradition is open. What about the crotchety old man ambivalent to any change?" Be careful that you are not confusing 'openness' with 'picky.' Openness towards new possibilities does not mean that the listener will accept all interpretations. Further, be careful that you do not confuse everyone as 'participating' in the tradition.

Thou."[191] And like a conversation with an individual allows for the testing of one's own beliefs, so to does the dialogue with tradition. What Gadamer sees as a practical relationship with tradition requires first, admission that the prejudices of tradition influence us—that we understand from a certain perspective, and that sometimes the biases within that standpoint are hidden to us. And it is through a conversation with tradition, that the individual can evaluate the value of the prejudice. Gadamer's relationship with tradition is one where the individual constantly tests the perspectives of one's own tradition:

> "a person who does not admit that he is dominated by prejudices will fail to see what manifests itself by their light. It is like the relation between I and Thou. A person who reflects himself out of the mutuality of such a relation changes this relationship and destroys its moral bond. *A person who reflects himself out of a living relationship to tradition destroys the true meaning of this tradition in exactly the same way....* to be situated within a tradition does not limit the freedom of knowledge, but makes it possible."[192]

The domination of technical judgment sits on both ends of one's relationship with tradition. If one were to accept every tenant of tradition as if it were fiat, then they would be dominated by technical judgment. But so too would the individual who, upon coming to understand the prejudice of tradition's sway over themselves, disavow such a prejudice simply for the sake that it is prejudice. Gadamer sees tradition as sitting in between these two poles, and it is through the conversation that one evaluates the strength of the beliefs that originate via tradition.

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[191] Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* 352.

[192] *Ibid*, 354.

Given Martin Heidegger's influence upon both Gadamer and Arendt, it is important to briefly discuss Heidegger's own notion of everydayness.[193] Heidegger introduces the term *Dasein* to refer to human existence—the very Being of human—and his analysis of *Dasein* begins with its everydayness.[194] Central to Heidegger's *Dasein* is understanding itself. "*Understanding of being is itself a determination of being of Da-sein.*"[195] But the understanding of being that belongs to *Dasein* necessarily implies an understanding of *more* than just one's own being. To understand being requires the understanding of a world that being exists within: "Thus the understanding of being that belongs to *Da-sein* just as originally implies the understanding of something like "world" and the understanding of the being of beings accessible within the world."[196] The everydayness of an individual creates the lens that allows the individual to

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[193] Heidegger undertakes the project of developing *Dasein* within *Being and Time*. To avoid the distraction that a full discussion of Heidegger and Heidegger's work would carry, I will focus here only on his work that impacts everydayness, and not being in general, as well as restricting this discussion to everydayness as developed within *Being and Time*. Heidegger's *Being and Time* was published in 1927 and represents his early, Aristotelian influenced thought. His work would evolve towards a more Platonic-centered thought.

I restrict myself to the early thought represented by *Being and Time* because it was during this period that both Gadamer and Arendt attended Heidegger's seminars at the University of Marburg. Daniel Gross and Ansgar Kemmann's *Heidegger and Rhetoric* cover this earlier work by Heidegger where they discuss the chronology of Heidegger's thought. Included within this work is an interview with Gadamer concerning this early relationship. Daniel M. Gross & Ansgar Kemmann, eds., *Heidegger and Rhetoric* (SUNY Press: New York, 2006).

[194] "By looking at the fundamental constitution of the everydayness of *Da-sein* we shall bring out in a preparatory way the being of this being." Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time,* trans. Joan Stambaugh, (SUNY Press: New York, 1996) 15.

[195] *Ibid.*, 10 (Emphasis in original).

[196] *Ibid.*, 11.

understand. We only understand things in relation to what we already understand.[197] This everyday process of understanding that allows us to interpret something as something is conceived of by Heidegger as a *fore-structure* of understanding, which includes *fore-having*, *fore-sight*, and *fore-conception*.[198]

It is through this fore-structure that anything with meaning for an individual gained meaning for that individual. In the fore-having, I have an understanding of possibilities of meaning. These possibilities are limited by the language I use within my everyday. The fore-having does not refer to an interpretative moment, but a cache of possible understandings that I have. But these possibilities are largely determined by the language used within my community, hearkening to a notion of understanding and likewise a notion of being that necessitates the influence of others. My fore-sight works from my fore-having, but includes the interpretations I already have, such as my preferences or my points-of-view, or likewise, my understanding of the points-of-view of others. I can only have preferences or points of view for things that I have already understood. So while my fore-having shaped the various possibilities for how I am capable of understanding, my fore-sight shapes how previous understandings and interpretations contribute to how I understand present and future experiences. Fore-conception builds upon fore-having and fore-sight. So while fore-having is the totality of possibilities that I understand as figured by my language, and fore-sight is a point of

[197] "As the appropriation of understanding in being that understands, the interpretation operates in being toward a totality of relevance which has already been understood." *Ibid.,* 140.

[198] "The interpretation of something as something is essentially grounded in fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception." *Ibid.*, 141.

view, my fore-conception is the application of that point of view towards the particular moment and experience at hand.[199]

I can illustrate how this fore-structure works by breaking down the statement, "The hammer is too heavy" used often by Heidegger throughout *Being and Time.*[200] Within this statement, the possibility of heaviness as a quality represents my fore-having; the point of view that something, anything, could be *too* heavy represents my fore-sight, and the application of that fore-sight of something as *too* heavy, applied to this particular hammer, seeing this hammer as a thing that is too heavy represents the fore-conception. While the hammer represents a mundane application of the fore-structure of understanding, applying the fore-structure elsewhere might provide insight into how our culture affects understanding. Take the statement: "The music is too fast." This illustrates a fore-having of the concept fast as well as the concept of music. The point of view that music could be too fast, and the point of view that organized noise exists as music represent a fore-sight. Finally the application of these points of view to the situation at hand—that this noise is music, and furthermore that this music is too fast—represents a fore-conception.[201]

While *Dasein* understands new experiences based on this fore-structure, these experiences also influence this fore-structure, in a hermeneutic circle.[202] New experiences

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[199] There are some similarities here between Heidegger's fore-structure and De Certeau's notion of 'enunciation' that I reference on page 61. Both demonstrate an intersubjective mode of understanding that presupposes a linguistic system.

[200] *Ibid.,* 144-150. Heidegger also discusses the hammer to refer to the *handiness* of things. *Ibid.* 64-67.

[201] What one community perceives as music could easily be interpreted by another community as 'noise' devoid of the aesthetic and organizational properties of music.

[202] Stambaugh translates Heidegger as using the term "circle of understanding." Here Heidegger states that "this circle of understanding is not a circle in which any random

change our concepts for what is possible, altering our fore-having, for our potential points of view, altering our fore-sight, and for our applied conceptions, altering our fore-conception. In doing so, new experiences alter the way in which we understand itself, and can alter our understanding of past-experiences. So that while we might experience a similar situation again, we might understand it very differently. Given this, the fore-structure of understanding is not static, but fluid and always changing.

Heidegger's ontological project can be seen at the root of both Gadamer and Arendt's normative projects. The fore-structure of understanding offers nothing overtly political, but Gadamer and Arendt, in basing their politics on the need to guard against the domination of practical judgment by technical judgment, rely on a Heideggerian understanding of how judgment works. Gadamer's development of 'prejudice', for example, can be seen within Heidegger's fore-structure.[203] Gadamer prescribes guarding against a domination from technical judgment by constantly seeking out one's own prejudices that guide one's judgment, and evaluating whether these prejudices were valid. Gadamer's notion of prejudice can be seen within each component of Heidegger's fore-structure, as they can limit the possibilities of fore-sight, and shape the points of view that guide fore-having and fore-conception. Likewise Arendt's concern for argument and reliance upon uncertainty lies within the fluidity of a hermeneutic circle. The lack of argument and the rigidity of given norms that would come from a technical

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kind of knowledge operates, but it is rather the expression of the existential fore-structure of *Dasein* itself." Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 143.

[203] This link is recognized by many. See, Dmitri N. Shalin, "Hermeneutics and Prejudice: Heidegger and Gadamer in Their Historical Setting," *Russian Journal of Communication* 3 (2010): 7-24; and, Jeff Mitscherling, "Philosophical Hermeneutics and 'the tradition,'" *Man and World* 22 (1989): 247-250.

domination of practical thought, would work against a hermeneutic circle that seeks to reassess pre-conceptions. Arendt's work embraces the communicative possibilities that Heidegger's hermeneutic circle can open.[204]

In discussing 'the ordinary', both Arendt and Gadamer discuss an aspect of the ordinary that deserves its own attention: common sense.[205] Common sense is a type of reasoning formed through the individual's relationship with their community, existing somewhere between the poles of universal reason and individual reason. Because

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[204] It is difficult to find scholarship that explores a theoretical link between Heidegger and Arendt that doesn't also become overly distracted by their romantic relationship. Yet, the link between Heidegger's hermeneutics and Arendt's concern for argument is explored by a few authors. See, Dana Villa, "Arendt, Heidegger, and the Tradition", *Social Research* 74 (2007), 983-1002; see also the chapter in Seyla Benhabib's *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* entitled "The Dialogue With Martin Heidegger: Arendt's Ontology of *The Human Condition*". Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003).

[205] There are again many paths that could be taken to talk about common sense. I could focus on the theorists who discuss *sensus communis*, as articulated by Giambattista Vico, but while notable in its own right, this would be a digression from my project. Gadamer himself draws from Vico in articulating his own notions of common sense, as does fellow Heideggerian student Ernesto Grassi. Given Grassi's own propensity for rhetorical theory, it might seem natural that I would explore his work here, but I chose to stay away from Grassi for a very simply reason. Grassi differs from Gadamer and Arendt drastically in where they place *sensus communis*, and this difference does not correspond with the purposes of my project. Gadamer and Arendt place this common sense within the community and the relationships and communication occurring within the community. But Grassi places *sensus communis* within the work—not the community. For Grassi, it is in "the 'ingenious' structure of work, and not within the sphere of rational thought, that common sense originally functions." This places Grassi counter to Arendt and Gadamer for the purposes of my project. Grassi sees work as the thing from which common sense springs forth, where I focus on the action within the community as the place where common sense is developed. Ernesto Grassi, "The Priority of Common Sense and Imagination: Vico's Philosophical Relevance Roday," in *Vico and Contemporary Thought,* eds. G. Tagliacozzo, M. Mooney, and D. P. Verene (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1979), 175. See also John D. Schaeffer's discussion of the distinctions between Gadamer and Grassi in their interpretations of Vico. John D. Schaeffer, "Vico's Rhetorical Model of the Mind: Sensus Communis in the De Nostri temporis studiorum ratione", *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 14 (1981): 152-167.

individuals live with one another day-to-day, they develop an understanding of the common practices, opinions, and arguments that exist within their community, and these practices, opinions, and arguments contribute to the individual's own understanding of a subject. Even if the individual might disagree with a communal norm, that individual is still aware and influenced by the common sense of their community.[206] The community, through it's daily interaction, develops a shared taste, and this very consensus helps to identify itself as a community.

> [...] the unity of an ideal of taste that distinguishes a society and bonds its members together differs from that which constitutes the figures of aesthetic culture. Taste still obeys a criterion of content. What is considered valid in a society, its ruling taste, receives its stamp from the commonalities of social life. Such a society chooses and knows what belongs to it and what does not. Even its artistic interests are not arbitrary or in principle universal, but what artists create and what the society values belong together in the unity of a style of life and an ideal of taste."[207]

Here Gadamer discusses common sense relating directly to how a community values its artwork. This makes sense as artists of a community who create or perform for that community attempt appeal to the community's aesthetic sensibilities.[208] For this reason, Arendt places taste and common sense at the center of the public sphere. "Taste, insofar as it, like any other judgment, appeals to the common sense, is the very opposite of

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[206] Looking at Heidegger's fore-structure of understanding, this common sense impacts an individual's fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conception, as it shapes an individual's various points of view, as well as develops an individual's understanding of possibilities.

[207] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 73.

[208] Even artists who attempt to disrupt the aesthetic sensibilities of a community do so with an understanding of those sensibilities. The act of breaking or challenging a community's taste is a de facto acknowledgment of that taste.

'private feelings.'"[209] This relationship between art and taste reinforces the political capacity of artists within a community: artists act publicly to appeal to communal judgment.

When the artist acts to appeal to the public, that artist is attempting to say "value this." If the performance is accepted by the community, it contributes to the community's common sense of taste. But it is not only the artist who gains validity in having a performance accepted by the community. The community members who judge in agreement also gain validity in belonging to the community by sharing this judgment.

> "wherever people judge the things of the world that are common to them, there is more implied in their judgments than these things. By his manner of judging, the person discloses to an extent also himself, what kind of person he is, and this disclosure, which is involuntary, gains in validity to the degree that it has liberated itself from merely individual idiosyncrasies. Now, it is precisely the realm of acting and speaking, that is, the political domain in terms of activities, in which this personal quality comes to the fore in public, in which the "who one is" becomes manifest rather than the qualities and individual talents he may possess."[210]

Arendt makes a critical link between action and judgment here. Rather than seeing judgment and action as distinct activities, Arendt sees judgment as a form of action capable of disclosing identity—specifically those judgments regarding "the things of the world that are common". This paints the picture of a community sense formed through the disclosure of the judgments in response to acts, and recognizes the disclosure of judgment to be action unto itself. The disclosure of these judgments share the identity of

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[209] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 222.

[210] *Ibid.*, 223.

the individual, but taken collectively, these disclosures begin to form the identity of the community.[211]

The effects of this disclosure of judgment obscures boundaries between the artistic and the political. Here it is important not to linger on the relationship between art and the disclosure of truth.[212] To help embrace this shift, it might be better to drop the clichéd 'work' from a 'work of art', and instead approach performance art as an 'act of art.' Seen as an act, Arendt offers a view where art's importance stems from its role as action within the public sphere—action that itself prompts debate and dialogue. Rather than being distracted by art's potential to unconceal truth, Arendt places the onus on art's ability to generate opinion. By both acting as medium of debate and an act debated about, art is part of the political.

> "Culture and politics, then, belong together because it is not knowledge or truth which is at stake, but rather judgment and decision, the judicious exchange of opinion about the sphere of public life and the common world, and the decision

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[211] Bernstein elaborates: "...taste is a kind of *sensus communis*: it is a "community sense," the sense that fits us into human community. What Arendt is struggling to discriminate and isolate for us is a mode of thinking that is neither to be identified with the expression of private feelings nor to be confused with the type of universality characteristic of "cognitive reason." It is a mode of thinking that is capable of dealing with the particular in its particularity but which nevertheless makes the claim to communal validity. When one judges, one judges as a member of a human community." Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism,* 217.

[212] For an example focusing on the truth quality of art, see Heidegger's later essay discussing Van Gough's painting of a peasant's shoes, *The Origin of the Work of Art* which centers on the ability of a work of art to unconceal the truth about being in general. Truth, here for Heidegger, "does not mean that something present is correctly portrayed; it means, rather, that in the manifestation of the equipmental being of the shoe-equipment, that whish is as a whole—world and earth in their counterplay—achieves unconcealment." Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Off the Beaten Track*, eds. Julian Young & Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 32.

> what manner of action is to be taken in it, as well as how it is to look henceforth, what kind of things are to appear in it."[213]

This is not to deny the undoubted relationship between art and truth, but to acknowledge that art is much more than a work that reveals truth. Art is also a medium of communication, and this communicative quality allows art to create a community through collective judgment. And by collective judgment I do not mean that you and I might come together to vote upon how we judge an act of art, but that you and I each judge an act of art independently. When you and I and others disclose a similar judgment of an artwork, we share a common sense of taste that begins to form an identity. Living within a shared place where we disclose these judgments, we develop a sense for what judgments are accepted within this community, and that, in some ways, shapes how we make future judgments.

The political capacity of an aesthetic performance underscores the artist's own ability to exhibit agency in shaping communities. While artists can be constrained by appealing to a common taste, at the same time they have a role in forming this taste. This agency helps to explain how artists evolve the aesthetic standards of community through innovation. Nineteenth century violinist Niccolò Paganini illustrates this. Paganini transformed Romantic Europe's understanding of human ability through his music's virtuosity, thereby changing the community's ideals for human action.[214] He performed with skills that people did not realize physically possible on the violin.[215] His

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[213] Arendt, *Between Past and Future,* 223.

[214] See David Palmer, "Virtuosity as Rhetoric: Agency and Transformation in Paganini's Mastery of the Violin," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84 (1998), 341-357.

[215] Paganini's 24th Caprice demonstrates the exceptional level of skill required to play his compositions which feature a combination of both complex bow-work and position work. Paganini composed variations to his own compositions as well as the

new and advanced violin techniques changed the public's idea of musical possibility. Arendt, who saw artistic performance as action, saw that artists could disclose their identity to the community through performance. This disclosure of identity highlighted the political role that artists as agents capable of action held for Arendt.

Individuals within the Cape Breton music community live with one another and share everyday practices. This is not simply a location where individuals share only the practices involving their music, but they also dine together, drink together, shop together, and attend church together. In these associations, these community members disclose their judgments to one another, both verbal and aural. They likewise develop an understanding of the opinions of others within their community. These collective disclosures help shape the community's identity, as well as shape the notion of what is acceptable for musician's of the community. Seeing these disclosures as part of a dialogue between individuals and their communities shows how practices are maintained yet evolve. Drawing from Arendt and Gadamer helps me to focus on how the collective judgments exercised within the Cape Breton music community contribute to developing a common sense within the community. In this, they add to contributions from theorists of the vernacular and of the everyday. Arendt and Gadamer also allow me to focus on the performative nature of this art, seeing musical performance as 'action' rather than work. Their theories of understanding, communication, and

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compositions of others, complicating the original pieces in order to demonstrate his talent. As a showman, Paganini would also ensure his violin's strings were weakened, ensuring they would break during performance. Upon breaking, Paganini would hardly miss a beat, compensating the loss of a string though using another string in a higher position. Jascha Heifetz's notable performance of Paganini's 24th Caprice shows the complexity of Paganini's variations. "Jascha Heifetz plays Paganini Caprice No. 24", *YouTube*, last visited June 6, 2015, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vPcnGrie__M.

judgment within the everyday help to demonstrate how individual musicians are able to maintain a unique identity and exercise agency, even while operating within the parameters of a community sense. Further, Gadamer and Arendt allow me to explain how traditions evolve through the contributions of each new individual who performs within the community, as well as through the constant judgments that take place within the community—judgments of both the audience and the performer. In this, they do not detract from theories of vernacular and the everyday that an aural rhetoric could be built upon, but instead help to flesh these theories out. This leaves me with a framework built upon theories of vernacular rhetoric and the everyday that are informed by rhetoricians, folklorists, and other social theorists such as Bourdieu and De Certeau. I supplement notions of community built by these theorists with theories of judgment and action as conceived of by hermeneutists such as Gadamer and Arendt. These theories of judgment help supply the mechanisms by which the everyday operates. With this framework, I intend to develop a picture of what Cape Breton's aural rhetoric looks like. While I have already woven discussion of Cape Breton throughout this review of literature, I turn now to a review of scholarship devoted specifically to Cape Breton culture and music, before fully outlining my methodology.

# CHAPTER 5

# THE STATE OF CAPE BRETON MUSIC STUDIES

Cape Breton music traces its roots to Highland Scots who settled the island in the late 1700s and early 1800s. The music these Scots brought with them evolved in its own trajectory to become a distinct musical style.[216] Through the end of the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries, Cape Breton's economic focus on steel production and coal mining attracted a diverse array of immigrants. As a result, Acadian, New England, Micmac, and Irish musical traditions all influenced the Cape Breton music community. Even though the Island drew many immigrants, it remained both physically and culturally isolated from mainland Nova Scotia until the mid-twentieth century.[217] As the transportation became easier, many Cape Bretoners moved to Boston, Toronto and Detroit in search of work.[218] These expats returned to Cape Breton during the summer months, bringing mainstream American and Canadian popular culture with them. This influx of cultural and demographic changes occurred in a relatively short period of time, and drastically affected the Island's traditional communities.

A division exists within Cape Breton studies between those attempting to locate a cultural *authenticity* within musical performance[219]—often an authenticity based on the

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[216] Elizabeth Doherty discusses the evolution from Scottish music to Cape Breton music at length. See, Elizabeth Doherty, *Paradox on the Periphery,* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Limerick, 1996), 50-62.

[217] Burt Feintuch, "The Conditions for Cape Breton Fiddle Music: The Social and Economic Setting of a Regional Soundscape," *Ethnomusicology* 48 (2004), 74.

[218] *Ibid.*, 90.

[219] Regina Bendix shows how authenticity has long been a focus within folklore studies, both from an attempt to justify 'the authentic' and from an attempt to critique the concept of authenticity. Regina Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997). Vincent Cheng posits how the cultural concern for authenticity

Gaelic language perpetuated by Gaelic revivalists—and those who provide a more complete ethnographic explanation. John Shaw's work focusing on Cape Breton authenticity can border on romanticism. Shaw's work reduces all authentic Cape Breton to derive from the Gaelic language.[220] Shaw makes a musical distinction between fiddlers who speak Gaelic and those who lack the language, holding only the Gaelic speakers as the correct interpreters of the Cape Breton musical style—a claim he justifies

stems from a growing loss of identity, and the need to feel a sense of belonging—a point relevant to my discussion about the desire of those outside of a community to learn the cultural practices of the community. See, Vincent Cheng, *Inauthentic: The Anxiety Over Culture and Identity* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004).

[220] See John Shaw, "Language, Music and Local Aesthetics: Views from Gaeldom and Beyond," *Scottish Language* 11 (1992); John Shaw, "Observations on the Cape Breton Gàidhealtachd and its Relevance to Present-Day Celtic Studies." In *Proceedings of the First North American Congress of Celtic Studies, University of Ottawa* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988) 75-87. Shaw's assertion that Cape Breton culture is only based on Gaelic language is not alone within the academic discipline of Scottish Studies. Some in Scottish Studies romanticize the Highland Gael and think of Cape Breton as the model for a pure Gaelic world that contrasts to the impure contemporary Scotland. Michael Newton who studies Scottish settlements within Cape Breton asserts that Scotland should embrace Gaelic as a language because, "it could renew the vigour of Scottish culture from within and reinforce the sense of place and identity which has only recently been disrupted from its ancient roots. It could change Scotland from being a mediocre periphery of the Anglo-American world to being at the centre of a Gaelic/Scottish world. All of this together could help give Scotland the self-confidence necessary to seize control of its own future and reclaim its status as a proud European nation among peers." Michael Newton, *A Handbook of the Scottish Gaelic World* (Dublin, Ireland: Four Courts Press, 2000), 290. Shaw, Newton, and others like Marcus Tanner, paint the picture of an ideal Scottish, Gaelic, or Celtic culture, and harken to Cape Breton as the embodiment of this ideality. See Marcus Tanner, *The Last of the Celts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

by citing older Cape Breton Gaelic speakers.[221] In doing so, Shaw romanticizes the fiddlers of the past as pure representations of Cape Breton musicians.[222]

Glenn Graham[223] responds to Shaw's anecdote of older Cape Bretoners lament for the hegemony of non-Gaelophiles by noting that despite any claim that young fiddlers all sound alike, locals actively engaged with the community can easily identify performers solely based on listening to their music. Shaw's claims for Cape Breton musical purity rests on the premise that a *correct* tribal practice (speaking Gaelic) gives foundation to a *correct* musical style.[224] While it is valid to link the development of a

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[221] Shaw, "Language, Music, and Local Aesthetics," 41-43. Shaw does not recognize that the Gaelic speakers he relies upon don't actually interact with the Cape Breton's musical community in its current form. He uses older Gaelic speakers' reflections that 'things have changed for the worse' as justification that the music is either dying, or becoming an "invented tradition." But Shaw has ignored interrogating how the current community thrives despite Gaelic playing a lessor role. It seems that Shaw would rather the music die than for Gaelic to play no role—or rather, if Gaelic played no role within the music, Shaw would use that as proof that the music was already dead. Contrast Shaw's view of tradition with that of Gadamer's view discussed in the previous section. Gadamer sees tradition as a dialogue that individuals constantly participate within. Shaw describes tradition as if it is a static application of certain rules, without the possibility to change. Hence, individuals who haven't participated in the tradition for decades are a reliable source for Shaw of what is wrong with the tradition today.

[222] Shaw asserts that the music of Cape Breton sounds the same as music in Gaelic Scotland would have sounded in the eighteenth century. See Shaw, "Observations on the Cape Breton Gàidhealtachd and its Relevance to Present-Day Celtic Studies." But the Cape Breton fiddle style, despite Cape Breton's isolation, has evolved stylistically through every musical generation over at least the past hundred years, and logically this evolution extends to the arrival of Cape Breton's first Scottish settlers. Glenn Graham, *Cape Breton Fiddle Music: The Making and Maintenance of a Tradition* (Masters Thesis, St. Mary's University, 2004); Doherty, *Paradox on the Periphery*.

[223] Graham, *Cape Breton Fiddle Music: The Making and Maintenance of a Tradition*.

[224] Within "Language, Music, and Local Aesthetics," Shaw frequently refers to a "correct" style, form, or music. The article itself can be seen as a rhetorical attempt to normalize the Cape Breton fiddling style more common fifty years ago by drawing from an extremely small sample of former community members. Some of the patterns that Shaw cites as occurring over the last two decades include "increased tempo (often remarked upon by older Gaels); less bow used per note; a tendency to hold the bow with a thumb and index finger only instead of the thumb and two-finger grip of the older

musical style and the language of its origins[225] it is reductionist to suggest that this link is the *only* contribution to a communal aesthetic. Moreover Shaw's understanding of how a fiddle works is tenuous at best, as evidenced by the questionable claim that the practice of some modern fiddlers to hold the bow with only an index finger and thumb stems from the lack of a Gaelic language.

While Shaw is not alone in his desire to root Scottish authenticity in Cape Breton culture,[226] a second strand of scholarship dismisses the idea of an authentic Gaelic-ness. Ian McKay challenges any concept of establishing an *authentic* folk as reliant on unchanging criteria.[227] McKay looks at the logical inconsistencies of the *tartanism* movement of the 1930s that romanticized an authentic Highland Gael in Nova Scotia—a

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players; a smoother (or less varied) tone, and the introduction of musical ornaments which recall Irish music. Over time, these leave the listener with a clear impression of a drift toward the style of English-language Irish fiddling popular with the media and at folk-festivals." *Ibid.*, 43. While this impression of "Irishness" is hardly clear to someone who actually listens to the music, Shaw demonstrates a lack of understanding in the Cape Breton music community by ignoring such contributions of Winston Fitzgerald and Buddy MacMaster—fiddlers who popularized a smooth tone in Cape Breton as early as the 1940s.

[225] As evidenced by the shared tunes of the fiddle and puirt-a' beul, or "mouth music" wherein singers would sing dance tunes using nonsense words. See, Heather Sparling, Puirt-a'Beul: *An Ethnographic Study of Mouth Music in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia* (Masters Thesis, York University, 2000).

[226] In a similar vein, some scholars have been promoting the idea of 'pan-Celticism.' They advocate for Gaelic speaking peoples to unite and develop solidarity due sharing a special relationship. Peter Ellis, in *Celtic Dawn: The Dream of Celtic Unity* (Ceredigion, Wales: Y Loifa Press, 2002) details the struggles of the 'Celtic people' and advocates for the "freedom" of these nations. He traces the history of the notion of 'pan-Celticism' and discusses, at length, the Celtic-League, a non-governmental organization dedicated to gaining political freedom for Celtic countries. Ellis argues that Galicia, an area of Spain with elements of Celtic culture, especially musical culture, is not fit for membership within the Celtic League, because people in the region speak a "non-Celtic" language.

[227] Ian McKay, "Tartanism Triumphant: The Construction of Scottishness in Nova Scotia, 1933-1954," *Acadiensis* XXI, no. 2 (Spring 1992), 5-47.

myth that McKay shows as contrasting with the actual Scottish immigrant experience. For example, Cape Bretoners never wore kilts prior to Nova Scotia's government promotion of the Highland tourism experience. Here, the Cape Breton Gaelic revival movement rests its justification of revival on an authentic Gaelic Cape Breton Highlander who never existed.

Other scholars have focused solely on Cape Breton's musical community. Elizabeth Doherty provides the most comprehensive critique of Cape Breton's musical development.[228] Rather than concentrating on one musical element, such as the fiddle or the Gaelic Language, Doherty creates a more ecological picture of Cape Breton music. Herself a noted fiddler from Donegal, Ireland, Doherty immersed herself within the Cape Breton music community not only as an observant scholar, but as a participating musician. She traces how several generations of musicians have altered the musical style, shifting it to a unique Cape Breton identity that differs from Scottish music. Her analysis contrasts from the revival purists who look to Cape Breton music as the ideal that Scots should replicate. Cape Breton fiddler Glenn Graham aligns with Doherty in his Master's thesis[229] and subsequent book[230] but focuses on the importance of family connections in music transmission. Fiddlers born into families that participate in the fiddle community understand music as part of the everyday. Graham pushes back against the romantic idea that music passes from one generation to another "in the blood." His work indicates how family structure serves as an institution that shapes the

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[228] Doherty, *Paradox on the Periphery*.

[229] Graham, *Cape Breton Fiddle Music: The Making and Maintenance of a Tradition*.

[230] *Ibid*.

conditions for a musical community. This musical community, for Graham, is one that evolves with each generation and thrives in this change.

Burt Feintuch, like Doherty, observes a number of factors contributing to the formation of Cape Breton's musical community.[231] Apart from the music itself, Feintuch has focused in on both economic and social influences. The Island's high unemployment rate, for example, has pushed many youths to leave in search of jobs. This consistent loss of young community members has led to difficulties in the maintenance of the Island's musical tradition. Both Feintuch and Doherty acknowledge how specific individuals have influenced Cape Breton's musical style. Feintuch has looked at the more contemporary contributions of the late composer Jerry Holland as well as the Beaton family. Doherty has focused on the contributions of composer Dan R. MacDonald[232] who, after World War I, brought tune books from Scotland to Cape Breton. Winston Fitzgerald also contributed to Cape Breton's musical community, not through compositions, but through style—a role that I discuss elsewhere.[233] Doherty[234] has also expanded on Fitzgerald's centrality in setting the stage for the current sound of the Island's music.

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[231] See, Burt Feintuch, "Revivals on the Edge: Northumberland and Cape Breton—A Keynote," in *2006 Yearbook for Traditional Music, vol. 38*, eds. Svanibor Pettan & Jonathan P.J. Stock (UNESCO, 2006); Feintuch, "The Conditions for Cape Breton Fiddle Music: The Social and Economic Setting of a Regional Soundscape" (2004).

[232] Doherty, *Paradox on the Periphery*.

[233] Greg Dorchak, "Rhetorical Cycles: Music, Rhetorical Effect, and Tradition," in *Rhetorics and Effects: Past, Present and Future,* eds. Amos Kiewe & Davis Houck (University of South Carolina Press, 2015).

[234] Doherty, *Paradox on the Periphery*.

Other studies have focused on how specific events have shaped Cape Breton's musical community. Marie Thompson[235] examines the 1971 documentary *The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler*. This documentary forced the Cape Breton community to address the lack of youth within the traditional music scene. Thompson shows how the community responded by actively integrating youth. Virginia Garrison's work[236] examines the documentary's effects from a different angle. With the community actively seeking out youth by establishing formal music classes, young musicians no longer needed to live in historically musical families in order to join the music community. This new source of community, for Garrison, saved the music.

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[235] Marie Thompson, "The Myth of the Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler: The Role of a CBC Film in the Cape Breton Fiddle Revival," *Acadiensis* XXXV, no. 2 (Spring, 2006), 5-26.

[236] Virginia Garrison, *Traditional and Non-Traditional Teaching and Learning Practice in Folk Music: An Ethnographic Field Study of Cape Breton Fiddling* (Ph.D. Diss., University of Wisconsin, 1985).

# CHAPTER 6

# RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES

Because this work sits at the intersection of rhetorical studies, folklore studies, ethnomusicology, and hermeneutics, you might expect a traditional ethnography. I am respectful of ethnography; but this is not ethnography. While I will incorporate a varying level of participant observation, it will not be used in the traditional sense that one finds in folklore or ethnomusicology projects. Similarly I will not be using rhetorical criticism, even in the sense of critical rhetoric. Nor am I philosopher per se. So what am I doing? As my project sits at the intersection of various disciplines, so to will the perspectives that I use draw from each of these methodological perspectives. The folklorist, ethnomusicologist, rhetorician and philosopher might all identify with some elements, while finding others foreign. But this will not be the case where I take the hammer of a methodology and apply it to the nail of my project. The unique nature of the project is one that demands an organic perspective to be applied—one that suits the project naturally. As such I will devote some time to walk you down the path I've travelled so that you might better orient around how this project's perspectives are informed, and so that those in one discipline might understand how I draw from other disciplines. To assuage the fears up front that this dissertation is one without a home anywhere, there is good justification for locating its home within the field of communication. The theme that unites the methodologies I draw from in order to define my perspective is 'conversation.' The idea of conversation is central to communication and rhetorical theory, but also one familiar to music, where musicians participate in musical conversations, to folklore, to where conversation drives the orality of folk

practices, and to philosophy, where hermeneutics is predicated on the notion of conversation. It is hermeneutics where I first turn.

Hermeneutics plays a large theoretical role in my project, but in the same light that hermeneutics informs my project's theoretical foundation, it would be hypocritical if hermeneutics did not also inform my project's research perspective. There is some confusion over Gadamer's opinion of social research, given that the corpus of his work is largely critical of the methodology of human sciences.[237] In the forward to the second edition of *Truth and Method* Gadamer tries to clarify any confusion.

> "I did not intend to produce a manual for guiding understanding in the manner of the earlier hermeneutics. I did not wish to elaborate a system of rules to describe, let alone direct, the methodical procedures of the human sciences. Nor was it my aim to investigate the theoretical foundation of work in these fields in order to put my findings to practical ends."[238]

Gadamer's remarks do not mean that his work is immaterial to my discussion of a research perspective. While *Truth and Method* may not disavow methodology, and while Gadamer may purport to offer no practical ends within it, Gadamer's hermeneutics can inform the conception of a research perspective.[239]

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[237] Gadamer is critical of method, but as in the case of Gadamer's work, this criticism is directed at those who place blind faith within the procedure of method. Gadamer's concern is aimed at the domination of practical judgment by technical judgment, and blind faith in procedure represents just such a blindness. "When a naive faith in scientific method denies the existence of effective history, there can be an actual deformation of knowledge." Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* 300. Gadamer's is critical of the human sciences only to the extent that researchers have not thought through the philosophical implications of both their goals and their methods.

[238] *Ibid.*, XXV.

[239] When discussing my own project, I refer to the "method" I employ as a research perspective. Here I draw from Michael McGee, who critiques the very notion that a method can be anything more than a perspective on a problem, and can offer no claim of certainty. And that the multiple competing, and contradictory methods tolerated within the human sciences should be recognized as perspectives, because any claim otherwise would distort the knowledge these "methods" purport to provide. McGee's critique

One target of Gadamer's criticism of method within the human sciences is the concern for repeatability. Making procedure repeatable is born from a desire for the researcher to maintain objectivity. The prejudices of an objective researcher will not interfere with results when the procedure is repeatable—one researcher can just as easily be swapped out for another, because the onus of the results is on the procedure and not the researcher.

> "The aim of science is so to objectify experience that it no longer contains any historical element. Scientific experiment does this by its methodological procedure. The historico-critical method, moreover, does something similar in the human sciences. Through the objectivity of their approach, both methods are concerned to guarantee that these basic experiences can be repeated by anyone."[240]

Gadamer is not implying that repeatability is not a valid concern for some human sciences. But not all human sciences carry the same objective, and his critique is offered against human sciences that concern understanding. When research concerns understanding, rather than attempting to eschew prejudices—which Gadamer shows is

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aligns nicely with Gadamer's commentary on methodology: "'Pluralism' thus becomes an intellectual version of liberalism; it might be defined as 'pure tolerance of alternative and mutually exclusive methods.' To 'have a distinct method' at some level of abstraction, is equivalent to 'having a unique perspective on the problem.' It must be so in this mindset, for 'method' (have not we all been taught?) is the one and true path to anything deserving the name 'knowledge.' And if we are to make claims to knowledge based on multiple perspective-taking, we of course must be intending to offer an elegant explanation of the curious plethora of contradictory methods which inhabit an intellectual world unified (is it not so?) by a fantasy we don't even believe—the rhetorical vision of one, true method leading us to certainty." Michael McGee, "Another Philippic: Notes on the Ideological Turn in Criticism," *Central States Speech Journal* 35 (1984), 47.

[240] Gadamer, *Truth and Method.*, 342.

itself an impossibility—the researcher should attempt to embrace and expose prejudices, with the goal of clarifying how prejudice shapes understanding.[241]

As an alternative to a pre-conceived procedure, which shifts judgment away from the researcher towards the procedure, Gadamer proposes returning judgment to the researcher, and offers two related reasons for this. First, social research involves placing the particular situation into relation to the research goal. Pre-conceived procedures are not necessarily designed to respond to the contingencies that might emerge, and situations occur where following the procedure might actually lead the researcher away from the goal. Freeing the researcher to respond to such contingencies requires allowing the researcher to make judgments while conducting research.[242] Second, Gadamer contends that the researcher is not an objective instrument hovering above the social setting being researched. Instead, the researcher is a participant enmeshed within the situation, and as such, the decisions the researcher must make are ethical. Because of this necessarily ethical dimension, Gadamer sees that social research

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[241] This does not mean that Gadamer conceives of understanding that borders on relativism. Quite the contrary, as I have already shown in my review of hermeneutics, Gadamer's hermeneutics provides a space between objectivism and relativism. The goal of embracing and exposing prejudices is an attempt to expose where this space exists. Prejudices shape our understanding, and since the traditions we live within are a source of our prejudices, prejudice itself is neither universal nor subjective, but part of our participation with tradition. Gadamer shifts hermeneutics focus from one concerned by procedure, to one concerned by attempting to find the source of understanding. "Understanding is to be thought of less as a subjective act than as participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated. This is what must be validated by hermeneutic theory, which is far too dominated by the idea of a procedure, a method." Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* 291.

[242] Particularly relevant here is discussion of Gadamer's development of deliberation and action in section 4.3.

should be guided in part by an ethical judgment—for which he returns to a foundation of Aristotle's *phronesis*:[243]

> "The alienation of the interpreter from the interpreted by the objectifying method of modern science, characteristic of the hermeneutics and historiography of the nineteenth century, appeared as the consequence of a false objectification. My purpose in returning to the example of Aristotelian ethics is to help us realize and avoid this. For moral knowledge, as Aristotle describes it, is clearly not objective knowledge—i.e., the knower is not standing over against a situation that he merely observes; he is directly confronted with what he sees. It is something he has to do."[244]

This begins to clarify how a researcher informed by hermeneutics might conduct inquiry. This also begins to link how hermeneutics relates to critical studies, a link that I will explore later.

It is not enough to say that hermeneutics allows a researcher to make their own decisions and leave it at that. Such a claim would push hermeneutics in relativism—a push Gadamer stoutly guards against. A research perspective informed by hermeneutics relies upon the researcher's judgment within contingent situations, this judgment is guided by placing the contingent in relation to a goal—and while this goal does not prescribe a set of rules, it provides a foundation to guide the researcher's judgment. Gadamer offers the goal of clarifying the conditions in which understanding takes place.

> "Given the intermediate position in which hermeneutics operates, it follows that its work is not to develop a procedure of understanding, but to clarify the conditions in which understanding takes place. But these conditions do not amount to a "procedure" or method which the interpreter must of himself bring

[243] As I discuss in detail within in section 4.1., Gadamer's use of Aristotle is not one of rote obedience, but one of modern rehabilitation. Rather than blindly following Aristotle's *phronesis* as Aristotle might have originally intended, Gadamer explains how *phronesis* is something that everyone is capable of within everyday practices.

[244] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 312.

> to bear on the text; rather, they must be given. The prejudices and fore-meanings that occupy the interpreter's consciousness are not at his free disposal. He cannot separate in advance the productive prejudices that enable understanding from the prejudices that hinder it and lead to misunderstandings. Rather, this separation must take place in the process of understanding itself, and hence hermeneutics must ask how that happens."[245]

The goal of clarifying the conditions in which understanding takes place guides the researcher to attempt to expose prejudices, and allow these attempts to inform the researcher's judgment of how to act. Because the researcher cannot predict how prejudices might affect understanding, or even which prejudices exist, the researcher must make judgments in the course of the research process itself—all with the goal of clarifying the process of understanding.

Researchers in the medical community have conducted inquiries informed by Gadamer's hermeneutics, and these studies help model what a hermeneutic inquiry informed by the goal of clarifying understanding might look like. Here I must clarify that there is a distinction between hermeneutics and phenomenology, as many similar studies offer methodology informed by Heidegger and Gadamer's development of phenomenology where discussion of hermeneutics is relevant only when it contributes to interpreting phenomenology.[246] Put simply, hermeneutics concerns the study of understanding while phenomenology concerns the nature of experience. There is sometimes a confusion between the two, especially given Heidegger's *Being and Time* was a hermeneutic phenomenology of *Dasein's* historicity, and given how the

[245] *Ibid.*, 295.

[246] See, e.g., Max van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (London, Ontario: The Althouse Press, 1997).

researcher's question of understanding is often the question of self-understanding.[247] But the aim of hermeneutic inquiry, in seeking to understand the conditions of understanding, is fundamentally different than an inquiry seeking to understand individual experience.[248] A hermeneutic inquiry would ask the question "how is understanding possible here" while a phenomenological inquiry would seek to expose consciousness, treating consciousness as an object of study. Though separate perspectives of analysis, some researchers combine them as a hermeneutic phenomenology, with the combined goal of interpreting experience, but these researchers tend to focus more on phenomenology than hermeneutics.[249] For my

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[247] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 251.

[248] This is a reason why, although valuable in its own right, Harris Berger's *Metal, Rock, and Jazz: Perception and the Phenomenology of Musical Experience*, does not contribute to my own analysis. Berger's phenomenology is informed by Edmund Husserl's work, which works from a theoretical foundation contrary to that established by Heidegger, and focuses on the phenomenological experience of music, a goal markedly different than a hermeneutic inquiry seeking to clarify understanding. Harris M. Berger, *Metal, Rock, and Jazz: Perception and the Phenomenology of Musical Experience* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1999).

[249] See an outline of these distinctions in Valerie Fleming, Uta Gaidys, & Yvonne Robb, "Hermeneutic Research in Nursing: Developing a Gadamerian-based Research Method," *Nursing Inquiry* 10 (2003), 113-120; and, Maura Dowling, "From Husserl to van Manen. A review of different phenomenological approaches," *International Journal of Nursing Studies* 44 (2007) 131-142.

For examples of articles claiming to use a hermeneutic methodology, see, Colleen Gullickson, "My death nearing its future: a Heideggerian hermeneutical analysis of the lived experience of persons with chronic illness," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 18 (1993), 1386-1392; Tommie P. Nelms, "living a caring presence in nursing: a Heideggerian hermeneutical analysis," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 24 (1996) 368-374; Suzie Robertson-Malt, "Listening to them and reading me: a hermeneutic approach to understanding the experience of illness," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 29 (1999), 290-297; Brian A. Smith, "The problem drinker's lived experience of suffering: an exploration using hermeneutic phenomenology," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 27 (1998), 213-222; Jeanne E. Van der Zalm, "Hermeneutic-phenomenology: providing living knowledge for nursing practice," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 31 (2000) 211-218;

purposes it is important to tease out the distinction between a perspective concerned with understanding from those concerning the nature of experience.

Tina Koch outlines that an inquiry informed by a Gadamerian hermeneutics would be informed by Gadamer's notions of the hermeneutic circle, dialogue, prejudice, and how understanding is gained.[250] Fleming, Gaidys, and Robb draw from these themes identified by Koch and propose a Gadamerian hermeneutic inquiry that contains five stages. First the researchers would define a research question "congruent with the aims of interpretative hermeneutics [...] so that data obtained and conclusions reached will be appropriate and useful."[251] The question itself will open of possibilities of understanding, and likewise close others. Second, the researcher will attempt to identify their prejudices concerning the topic. They offer conversation as a method to provoke the possibility of where prejudice might exist.[252] Engaging in this dialogue with the goal of exposing prejudices helps the researcher to "enter the hermeneutic circle."[253] Third,

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[250] Tina Koch, "Implementation of a hermeneutic inquiry in nursing: philosophy, rigour, and representation," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 24 (1996), 174-184.

[251] Fleming, Gaidys, & Robb, "Hermeneutic Research in Nursing," 116.

[252] Here, it is important to remember Gadamer's development of conversation that I previously discussed: "Conversation is a process of coming to an understanding. Thus it belongs to every true conversation that each person opens himself to the other, truly accepts his point of view as valid and transposes himself into the other to such an extant that he understands not the particular individual but what he says." Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 387.

[253] Fleming, Gaidys, & Robb, "Hermeneutic Research in Nursing," 117. The concept of using the hermeneutic circle as a guiding light of a hermeneutic research method was also proposed by Tina Koch and Ann Harrington. Koch and Harrington see focusing on the hermeneutic circle allows the researcher to critically reflect on understanding throughout the research project. This proposal was in response to attempts to graft a concern for qualitative rigor onto methodology based on hermeneutic and philosophical inquiry—attempts they saw as problematic due to the theoretical underpinnings of hermeneutics conflicting with rigor's positivist legacy. Tina Koch & Ann Harrington,

the researcher should engage in dialogue with the focus on gaining understanding.[254] Such a dialogue would not necessarily be with other individuals, but would also include texts and traditions. This could occur alongside dialogues that expose prejudice. The researcher would share the understanding of dialogue participants as the researcher's prejudices are exposed and within the conversation.[255] Fourth, Fleming, Gaidys, & Robb propose that the researcher revisit these conversations through both written transcripts and taped recordings. After revisiting these transcripts, the researcher would summarize, and again approach each dialogue partner and engage in yet another dialogue, this time concerning the summary. The summaries would be based on themes that the researcher pulls from each dialogue. Finally, the researcher would seek to establish trustworthiness of both process and analysis. Such a trustworthiness would be based on an auditability of the research process.[256] Given that Gadamer stresses the researcher should employ practical judgment during the research process, auditability helps to ground this judgment by forcing the researcher to document and explain how judgments were made during the research process.[257] To gain trustworthiness the

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"Reconceptualizing Rigour: The Case for Reflexivity," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 28 (1998) 882-890.

[254] Fleming, Gaidys, & Robb suggest that a research employing a Gadamerian hermeneutic would never conceive of "collecting data" since the goal of the methodology would be to reveal spaces of understanding.

[255] It should be noted that any sharing of understanding here would be temporal, as understanding is itself temporal for both participants.

[256] Note the distinction here between auditability and repeatability. While Gadamer is critical of method's preoccupation within repeatability, an auditability would allow the researcher to be held accountable simply through explaining and documenting judgments made along the way.

[257] The concern for clarifying the grounds upon which research decisions were made was the focus of Jonas Debesay, Dagfinn Nåden, & Åshild Slettebø in their development of a Gadamerian hermeneutic as method for qualitative study. The researcher must act as a

researcher would also confirm direct quotations and dialogue in an effort to establish credibility.

This perspective proposed by Fleming, Gaidys, & Robb was used by Jane S. Grassley and Tommie P. Nelms in an attempt to understand the confidence of mothers when breastfeeding.[258] Grassley and Nelms focused on using Fleming, Gaidys, & Robb's method to create a hermeneutic circle to constantly move "from the whole to the part and back to the whole."[259] From engaging in dialogues, and reviewing them, three main themes and fourteen subthemes emerged. Grassley and Nelms used stories from the dialogue participants to help illustrate these emergent themes. Trustworthiness was gained through re-engaging in dialogue with the original participants in order to verify credibility.

Given that my project concerns developing an aural rhetoric, any perspective that I offer would also have to incorporate concerns of rhetorical theory. I have already shown that a perspective informed by hermeneutics would concern prejudice, the hermeneutic circle, an openness of understanding, and dialogue. But these concerns themselves do not automatically provide a readily made research question, especially one that would explain how an aural rhetoric is evolves within a community. To do so, I

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rhetor in justifying the decision process, as part of the process would be finding the appropriate argument. Jonas Debesay, Dagfinn Nåden, & Åshild Slettebø, "How do we close the hermeneutic circle? A Gadamerian approach to justification in interpretation in qualitative studies," *Nursing Inquiry* 15 (2008), 57-66.

[258] Jane S. Grassley & Tommie P. Nelms, "Understanding Maternal Breastfeeding Confidence: A Gadamerian Hermeneutic Analysis of Women's Stories," *Health Care for Women International* 29 (2008), 841-862.

[259] *Ibid*., 845.

must explore how perspectives of rhetorical theory can align with a methodology informed by hermeneutics in order to ground my project.

## 6.1. Critical Rhetoric & Hermeneutics

I have already hinted at labeling a research inquiry as the application of perspective and not as the application of a method that gains knowledge.[260] While the idea of approaching research from an anti-method is justified by the work of Gadamer discussed above, rhetoricians have also embraced this concept, recognizing that critics bring their own ideology to bear when 'doing' criticism.

> "[I]f it is true that good criticism is the product of a critic's personality, then any idea of method will get in the way of determining what should count as knowledge in the study of rhetorical criticism."[261]

This quote from McGee hints of how Gadamer discusses prejudice. McGee shows that the critic must embrace their own personality which itself informs a research perspective, much as Gadamer offers that a researcher should embrace their prejudices during inquiry, as prejudices shape the researcher's understanding. McGee's criticism of method targets the notion that a procedure within social inquiry can lead to certainty or truth,[262] while Gadamer, also critical of conceiving method as a source of knowledge, provides "understanding" as an alternate research goal.[263]

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[260] See my discussion of Michael McGee's critique of 'method' in footnote 239.

[261] McGee, "Another Philippic," 47.

[262] "Of course most academics realize the frailty of what they take to be knowledge in a given time and place; but they invest in the dream anyway, agreeing that it may be a useful regulative ideal. The central image of this dream has been the concept 'method,' for it is possible to envision a unification and integration of knowledge springing from universal acceptance of model rules for the right direction of the mind." *Ibid.*, 45.

[263] Other rhetoricians, such as Philip Wander, echo McGee's critique that method could promise certainty of knowledge. "One of the questions raised through an ideological perspective concerns method—the assumption that "method" contains within it a sense

The proposal that rhetoricians should approach criticism through embracing their personality likewise meant that the critic could also bring their own ideology to bear in criticism. Philip Wander saw this engagement with ideology as an answer to a malaise that had existed in rhetorical criticism—one where critics simply applied methods to texts, without actually *contributing* anything.

> "[W]hat is now called 'criticism' is the result of an established order willing to tolerate work which is morally, socially, and politically meaningless so long as it reproduces forms associated with technical reason. It is the product of a system which asks not why is this subject important, what does it add to human knowledge, or what is its emancipatory potential, but committed to technocratic solutions, what is the 'text' or object of research, what have other researchers said about it, and above all, what method or methods are going to be employed."[264]

Wander offered this critique in a special issue of the *Central States Speech Journal* devoted to ideology. The issue was sparked by backlash[265] from a previous article from Wander, wherein he suggested that adherence to method in rhetorical criticism "prevented the critic from estimating the truth of a speaker's statement and the adequacy of the values the speaker assumes or recommends."[266] Thus, when analyzing a 1969 speech by Richard Nixon, the critic should not simply let the light of the speech shine forth and speak for itself, but must responsibly also recognize that people died because of the speech—the speech had consequences.

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of purpose or the promise of understanding." Philip Wander, "The Third Persona: An Ideological Turn in Rhetorical Theory," *Central States Speech Journal* 35 (1984), 204.

[264] *Ibid.*, 204.

[265] See, Allan Megill, "Heidegger, Wander, and Ideology," *Central States Speech Journal* 34 (1983), 114-119; Lawrence Rosenfield, "Ideological Miasma," *Central States Speech Journal* 34 (1983), 119-121; Forbes Hill, "A Turn Against Ideology: Reply to Professor Wander," *Central States Speech Journal* 34 (1983), 121-126.

[266] Philip Wander, "The Ideological Turn in Modern Criticism," *Central States Speech Journal* 34 (1983), 7.

Wander proposed an alternative to method—one where the critic is guided by the purpose of attempting to reveal the extent to which rhetoric, whether it be in the form of speech or academic theory, can negate audiences through a text.[267] Operating from a perspective, the critic would actively embrace their own ideology and attempt to demonstrate the real-world consequences of rhetoric. It was in this vein that other rhetoricians took up the call of embracing ideological perspective. Raymie McKerrow entered this conversation by introducing the concept of "critical rhetoric" as an alternative to rhetorical criticism.[268]

> "As theory, a critical rhetoric examines the dimensions of domination and freedom as these are exercised in a relativized world... In practice, a critical rhetoric seeks to unmask or demystify the discourse of power."[269]

McKerrow's critical rhetoric offers guidance for what a rhetorical anti-method might look like; one guided by a goal of demystifying domination, but also one acknowledging the critic's own agency in reaching such a goal. [270] Shifting from rhetorical criticism to

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[267] "But just as the discourse may be understood to affirm certain characteristics, it may also be understood to imply other characteristics, roles, actions, or ways of seeing things to be avoided. What is negated through the Second Persona forms the silhouette of a Third Persona—the 'it' that is not present, that is objectified in a way that 'you' and 'I' are not. This being not present may, depending on how it is fashioned, become quite alien, a being equated with disease, a 'cancer' called upon to disfigure an individual or a group; or an animal subordinated through furtive glance or beady eye; or an organism, as a people might be transformed, through a biological metaphor, into 'parasites.'" Wander, "The Third Persona," 209.

[268] Raymie McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis," *Communication Monographs* 56 (1989), 91-111.

[269] *Ibid.*, 91.

[270] For more of the debate concerning critical rhetoric amongst authors not cited here, see also, Kent Ono & John Sloop, "Commitment to Telos: A Sustained Critical Rhetoric," *Communication Monographs* 59 (1992), 48-60 ; Susan Owen & Peter Ehrenhaus, "Animating a Critical Rhetoric: On the Feeding Habits of American Empire," *Western Journal of Communication* 57 (1993) 169-177; John Murphy, "Critical Rhetoric as Political Discourse," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 21 (1995), 1-15; Fernando Pedro Delgado

critical rhetoric places the emphasis on the critical nature of the work, as well as on the researcher's role in producing rhetoric. "[W]e might have said 'critical rhetoric' instead of 'rhetorical criticism' thus keeping it clear that criticism is a vehicle for doing rhetoric. When we reduced rhetoric to its adjectival state, however, we accepted the literary habit of taking the bite out of criticism by conceiving it as a kind of interpretation."[271]

With critical rhetoric on the table for rhetoricians, the debate moved from whether a researcher's work should be informed by ideology to *which* ideology could inform critical rhetoric.[272] The very notion that a critical rhetoric would demystify and expose the domination of power, might in some situations lead to a response of "so what?" The mere exposure of power relations does not necessarily guarantee that the alternative to existing domination would lead to a better world. Maurice Charland,

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"Chicano Movement Rhetoric: An Ideographic Interpretation," *Communication Quarterly* 42 (1995), 446-455; Raka Shome (1996) "Postcolonial Interventions in the Rhetorical Canon: An "Other" View," *Communication Theory* 6 (1996), 40-59; and Marouf Hasian, "Rhetorical Studies and the Future of Postcolonial Theories," *Rhetoric Review* 20 (2001), 22-28. This is by no means a complete list, but offers a representative sample of the discussion.

[271] Michael McGee, "Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 54 (1990), 276.

[272] While there is much discussion over what critical rhetoric is, there is far from an agreed upon ideology to guide it. Celeste Condit justifies this heterogeneity by pointing out that critical work does not need to draw from an a priori ideology. Instead, criticism shares the perspective of the researcher as advocate. See Celeste Condit, "Clouding the Issues? The Ideal and the Material in Human Communication," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 14 (1997), 197-200. I present here some of the initial framers who bring the argument to light calling for a conception of critical rhetoric, however I leave at the wayside a large dialogue concerning the specifics of critical rhetoric. The argument is taken up by the works of Robert Hariman, "Critical Rhetoric and Postmodern Theory," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77 (1991), 67-70; Dana Cloud "The Materiality of Discourse as Oxymoron: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric," *Western Journal of Communication* 58 (1994) 141-163; Norman Clark, "The Critical Servant,: An Isocratean Contribution to Critical Rhetoric" *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 82 (1996), 111-124; and Joseph Zompetti, "Towards a Gramscian Critical Rhetoric," *Western Journal of Communication* 61 (1997) 66-86. This is by no means exhaustive an exhaustive list of an ongoing debate.

while embracing critical rhetoric, offered this criticism, noting that critical rhetoric itself was not complete.

> "In its current form, Critical Rhetoric strengthens our powers of observation. It directs us to look at the dynamic of social relations that are discursively instantiated and at the agents, agencies, and objects constituted in rhetorics that address publics. It assists us somewhat in diagnosis, but here its contribution is limited because diagnosis occurs with respect to a conception of the healthy organism. What would the healthy social body be?"[273]

It is from this criticism that Charland proposes critical rhetoric should incorporate hermeneutics in order to grapple with the contingencies of community.

A critical rhetoric informed by hermeneutics could be guided by practical judgment. Since critical rhetoric is, in part, a recognition that the critic is a producer of rhetoric, then the critic is also commenting on action, as much as the critic is herself acting. As I discussed in a previous section, practical judgment is folded into hermeneutics; practical judgment involves deliberation over action, and the best decision requires understanding the community that act takes place within.

> "*Phronesis* is only mentioned briefly by Professor McKerrow, as he dismisses it as a virtue tied to 'an ideal life-style.' Admittedly *phronesis* is in Aristotle a virtue tied to an ideal conception of the good citizen and leader, but the Aristotelian project entails more than the celebration of virtue. It also includes a seminal enquiry into the character of doxastic knowledge and of judgment in the face of contingency. For Aristotle, better and worse courses of action do exist even though they cannot be determined through theoretical knowledge.[274]

While rhetoric does constitute community, a single rhetorical act does not exist in a vacuum, and community is constituted by more than a single rhetorical act. By advocating for adding a hermeneutic element to critical rhetoric, Charland recognizes

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[273] Maurice Charland, "Finding a Horizon and Telos: The Challenge to Critical Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77 (1991), 72.

[274] *Ibid.*, 72.

that the critic should investigate the contingency of good within a community, and acknowledge that a community needs to be understood.[275]

It is worth noting that a relationship between critical rhetoric and *phronesis* was also proposed by John Sloop and Kent Ono in their essay "Out-law Discourse: The Critical Politics of Material Judgment."[276] Ono and Sloop offer a flawed understanding of *phronesis*, though, making their contribution little help to my project. Here they are interested in "judgments made through vernacular discourse in particular marginalized communities with localized systems of judgment", labeling such forms of discourse as "out-law" due to their opposition to dominant discourses.[277] As vernacular, Ono and Sloop recognize these judgments are part of the everyday.

> "Hence, it is toward an investigation of the occurrence of judgment on the level of everyday life, and the political deployment of these judgments, to which we direct our investigation of out-law judgment."[278]

They briefly sketch that the *phronesis* of out-law discourse could be observed in the speeches of Malcolm X, Monster Cody Scott's *Monster: Autobiography of an L.A. Gang Member*, and the judgments of "gangsta-rap."

While a notable contribution, if for nothing more than recognizing that *phronesis* is a worthwhile addition to critical rhetoric, Sloop and Ono's proposal contains flaws worth discussing. They draw attention to vernacular discourse of marginalized communities as

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[275] "The interpretive component of *phronesis* seeks to locate the contingent good for a particular community at a particular time and place. Rhetoric and *phronesis* are inherently tied to the local and this forms the basis for a crossing of postmodern and hermeneutic trajectories." *Ibid.*, 73.

[276] John M. Sloop & Kent A. Ono, "Out-Law Discourse: The Critical Politics of Material Judgment," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 30 (1997), 50-68.

[277] *Ibid.*, 60.

[278] *Ibid.*, 54.

if the judgments made within these communities are automatically *phronesis* because they exist contrary to dominant forms of judgment. This wrongly contrasts *phronesis* with the dominant, when *phronesis* should instead be seen as the counterpart to technical judgment. Such a distinction is important, because by contrasting *phronesis* with the dominant, Sloop and Ono ignore the possibility that marginalized vernacular communities are also capable of exhibiting technical judgment within various cultural practices.[279] Likewise, dominant communities are capable of exhibiting *phronesis* despite their dominant discourse. Further, *phronesis* necessarily concerns *good* decisions, with the caveat that good is in large part weighed by the standards of the community that measures these decisions. But Sloop and Ono provide no way to assess whether a community actually judges any of the decisions they purport to exhibit *phronesis* to be good decisions representative of the community. This omission is more glaring in that

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[279] Sloop and Ono miss that in contrasting *phronesis* to a dominant they might turn to De Certeau's distinction between tactics and strategies. Kendall Phillips notes this omission in his criticism of their work—a criticism I will bring up more in a moment. See, Kendall Phillips, "Rhetoric, Resistance, and Criticism: A Response to Sloop and Ono," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 32 (1999), 99-100.

Even if De Certeau's contributions to judgment were highlighted, while he offers 'tactics' as a form of judgment that contrasts with the dominant discourse of 'strategies,' not all of De Certeau's tactics are created equal. "Tactics are more and more frequently going off their tracks. Cut loose from the traditional communities that circumscribed their functioning, they have begun to wander everywhere in a space which is becoming at once more homogeneous and more extensive." De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* 40.

Sloop and Ono's work misses this distinction by labeling all forms of judgment contrary to dominant discourse as de facto *phronesis.* If I were to borrow De Certeau's tactics as a form of judgment, *phronesis* might be an example of a tactic, but not all tactics are themselves *phronesis. Phronesis* refers to good judgment, and that assessment of *good* is determined by the community wherein the act occurs. Sloop and Ono label a judgment as *phronesis* by virtue of it being performed by a member of a marginalized community. They need to take two more steps and question first, whether the community itself sees the judgment as good, and second whether the judgment was practical or technical.

Sloop and Ono are proposing that such out-law discourse represents the vernacular everyday of a community, yet themselves ignore both the vernacular and the community. They instead offer traditional forms of public address as examples of vernacular discourse: speeches, a book, and commercial albums.[280] To better discuss how *phronesis* occurs within the vernacular requires placing judgments in relation to how the community understands those judgments.[281]

The calls by Charland, and Sloop and Ono that critical rhetoric acknowledge the contingent good exhibited by *phronesis* is not the only possible relationship between hermeneutics and critical rhetoric. While Gadamer's hermeneutics is generally considered a diversion from theorists associated with critical theory,[282] his development of hermeneutics involves two critical goals: guarding against blind prejudices and guarding against the domination of practical judgment by technical judgment. Earlier I have discussed that Gadamer uses the term 'prejudice' as a neutral term, to refer to all

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[280] I have discussed above that there is a fine line between vernacular everyday practices and special events. Some communities very well might foster special events in line with traditional public address to be part of their vernacular everyday practices. Sloop and Ono make no offer that this is so for the communities they discuss, and do not justify how they decided that their proposed examples of *phronesis* are in fact vernacular everyday practices.

[281] Kendall Phillips offers further criticism of Sloop and Ono's discussion of out-law judgments. "Hidden outlaw discourses may have good reasons to stay hidden... Academic critical discourse is not transparent... [T]he effect of legitimizing out-law discourse is unknown and potentially destructive... Criticism of resistance denies the practical and theoretical importance of opportunity." Phillips, "Rhetoric, Resistance, and Criticism: A Response to Sloop and Ono," 99-100.

[282] It is rare to see Gadamer's name linked with theorists typically associated with critical theory, such as Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, Max Horkeimer, Walter Benjamin, or Antonio Gramsci. Here Stephen Gencarella is an exception, offering a comparison between Gramsci and Gadamer's work within the case of developing critical folklore studies. See, Stephen Olbrys Gencarella, "Gramsci, Good Sense, and Critical Folklore Studies," *Journal of Folklore Research* 47 (2010), 221-252.

pre-understanding, and how our participation with tradition can shape our prejudices. While Gadamer uses 'prejudice' as a neutral term, he draws a line between blind prejudices that close off understanding, and illuminating prejudices that open understanding. It is in drawing this line that a link between critical rhetoric and hermeneutics could exist.

> "Only by virtue of the phenomenon and clarified concept of "temporal distance" can the specifically *critical* task of hermeneutics be resolved, i.e., of knowing how to distinguish between blind prejudices and those which illuminate, between false prejudices and true prejudices. We must raise to a conscious level the prejudices which govern understanding and in this way realize the possibility that "*other* aims" emerge in their own right from tradition—which is nothing other than realizing the possibility that we can understand something in its otherness."[283]

A critical rhetoric that incorporates hermeneutics would be concerned with raising prejudices to consciousness. The purpose of uncovering prejudices would not be to dispel the prejudice, but to test whether that prejudice is blinding or illuminating.

Gadamer's hermeneutics is also influenced by his concern over a domination of technical judgment. As I have already explored, this concern is not to imply that technical judgment is inferior to practical judgment—rather, the two should be seen as a balance. With this balance in mind, Gadamer's goal for hermeneutics is to protect practical judgment against such domination.

> "I think, then, that the chief task of philosophy is to justify this way of reason and defend practical and political reason against the domination of technology based on science. That is the point of philosophical hermeneutic. It corrects the peculiar falsehood of modern consciousness: the idolatry of scientific method and of the anonymous authority of the sciences and it vindicates again the noblest task of

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[283] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Problem of Historical Consciousness," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 5 (1975), 48 (emphasis in the original).

> the citizen—decision making according to one's own responsibility—instead of conceding that task to the expert."[284]

When McKerrow introduced the term 'critical rhetoric' he did so proposing the goal that it demystify domination and power. A critical rhetoric informed by Gadamer's hermeneutics would begin with McKerrow's goal of demystifying domination and focus specifically on the balance between practical judgment and technical judgment.

I began this project with an anecdote concerning how classical musicians are learning traditional music as if the music was performed through the application of rules. This is not to make the claim that classical musicians embrace only technical judgment, nor that their desire to perform traditional music is an existential threat to traditional fiddlers. When an individual from one community attempts to engage in the practices of another community, if the individual engages in this new practice using mechanisms of judgment not usually used within that practice, friction can develop. But the source of this friction is not necessarily apparent. My concern is that classical orchestral musicians, who themselves exercise practical judgment within the practices of their own community do not recognize that transitioning to traditional music requires not simply a matter of learning new notes, but of learning a new form of judgment. Thus ignored in this process is a concern for practical judgment at the expense of technical judgment. I am not approaching this project with a critical perspective because I have already concluded that classical musicians wield a technical judgment that represents a danger to practical judgment. Nor am I saying that Cape Bretoners must beware the eminent collapse of practical judgment wrought by an onslaught of technical judgment. I

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[284] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Hermeneutics and Social Science," *Cultural Hermeneutics* 2 (1975), 316.

am simply recognizing that there can be a friction between technical judgment and practical judgment and, informed by a critical perspective, I wish to gain a better understanding of *how* practical judgment works within the everyday practice of music within the Cape Breton community.

I approach this project with a critical perspective informed by hermeneutics in an attempt to reveal the prejudices of individuals within the Cape Breton musical tradition—specifically, the prejudices that inform the judgment Cape Breton musicians use in their musical practices. It might seem like I just presented a second purpose for my project, with the first being the developing a theory of aural rhetoric. But these are not, in fact, two separate purposes. By beginning with a critical perspective informed by hermeneutics, I seek to both expose prejudices and clarify the conditions in which understanding takes place. I have already discussed that understanding itself is intertwined with application and judgment; the three should not be seen separately.[285] In seeking to clarify the conditions in which understanding takes place, I therefore seek to clarify the conditions in which application and judgment take place. This is what ties a critical perspective informed by hermeneutics to the development of an aural rhetoric. Clarifying the conditions in which application and judgment take place within the musical practices of Cape Breton is also the task of clarifying the aural rhetoric of this community.

## 6.2. How I Conduct My Inquiry

To gain understanding of the judgment of Cape Breton musicians, I engaged in dialogue with Cape Breton musicians, attempting to clarify how they understood their

[285] See the discussion associated with footnote 147.

own actions within their community and how they understood acts of others within their community. It is important to note that I had spent a significant amount time as a member of the Cape Breton musical community. I have lived in Cape Breton and with Cape Breton musicians. I have been a regular at functions within this community that relate to music, as well as functions that are non-musical in nature. I have spent time traveling with musicians, and have a relationship with these musicians that transcends both the music and my role as a researcher. Also, I play the fiddle and guitar and am learning the piano, and have spent years publicly performing as a fiddler. While I do not consider myself a Cape Breton fiddler, Cape Breton fiddling is the genre of music I am most identified by and most identify with. My own background within this community is important in hermeneutic research, since I approach my inquiry immersed in the Cape Breton musical community.

Starting from a point already informed by my own participation, my initial goal was not to become acquainted with the Cape Breton music community, or even musicians themselves. While I began this project with a prejudice concerning the material, this prejudice did not overlap with the prejudices of those musicians who I engaged in dialogue with. Though I lived in Cape Breton and spent extensive time there, I was not born and raised there. I did not step foot in Cape Breton until I was in my twenties, and did not learn to perform my instrument there. The musicians I interviewed did. Also, as previously explained, I have extensive relationships with many musicians from Cape Breton. In addition, the musicians see me as a musician, not just a researcher. This opened the possibilities of discussion for me that researchers seen primarily as researchers might not have access to. Cape Breton musicians are quite familiar with researchers. Due to its popularity within the Celtic music community,

every summer musicians will sit down to provide interviews or fill out questionnaires for research conducted by these researchers. In this, though, researchers have been indiscriminate as to which musicians interview and in some cases have taken the word of these musicians as pure truth without critical reflection.[286] In order to have an open conversation, the researcher should be recognized by the community as a musician as much as they are recognized as a researcher.[287]

I restricted my conversations to musicians who played accompaniment instruments. This does not mean I excluded from my conversations those who played melody instruments. A unique characteristic amongst Cape Breton musicians, is that many of the musicians are proficient in both the piano—typically an accompaniment instrument—and the fiddle—a melody instrument. As I will elaborate in a later section, accompanying music is quite a different skill than performing a melody, and in order to understand how to accompany, a musician must also have insight into how a melody is performed. The accompanist reacts to the decisions of the melody musician, and, in order to be *good* must be able to anticipate how the melody musician might perform. By limiting my interviews to either accompanists, or melody musicians who also played accompaniment, I attempted to address the need to understand both the judgment that occurs within performing a melody and judgment that occurs in accompanying a melody.

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[286] See my criticisms of the work of John Shaw in footnotes 220, 221, and 222.

[287] There are a number of researchers who are acknowledged by Cape Breton musicians as being friends and performers as much as researchers, such as Burt Feintuch, Elizabeth Doherty, Mats Melin, Nic Gareiss, and Pat Ballantyne.

I placed reputation as a chief attribute informing whom I should converse with. The musicians I engaged are recognized by the Cape Breton community as being the community's tradition bearers—those seen as carrying the musical tradition as much as they are seen as defining it. The Cape Breton community recognizes only a limited number of musicians as the ideal accompanists within a performance. These musicians are sought by other musicians to participate in recording projects and touring. The number of Cape Breton accompanists possessing the skill set to inform my inquiry only lies between fifteen and twenty. These are the musicians who record albums and sell out concerts, both in Cape Breton and internationally. I felt it important to engage in dialogue with these musicians because they play a role in shaping the community's music. In total I conducted long form conversations with seven individuals.

While most research in Cape Breton music concerns either historical or ethnomusicological concerns, I entered into each conversation reinforcing how my project is different than the typical research project conducted in Cape Breton. I wanted to make the musicians realize that they did not need to feel the pressure to speak for their entire community. Instead, I attempted to open up a space for conversation about how they understood their own performance of music. The goal for each dialogue was to attempt to "fall into" a conversation. I did not begin with specific pre-conceived questions, but rather began with the topic of how the musician makes decisions during a performance.

While I did not want to formulaically conduct interviews, within each conversation, I attempted to steer the conversation towards musician decisions. I might have mentioned a particular tune the musician might have chorded for, and then ask the musician to explain the different ways they might perform it. Once the conversation was

established as one focusing on musical decisions, the musician would tend to guide the conversations themselves by introducing various topics of decision making, such as chord selections, variations, and embellishments.[288] Depending on the course of the conversation, I might ask my partner to discuss how they perceive their role in the performance. I might also ask them to compare and contrast their own performing styles with other musicians. These approaches allowed the interviewees to discuss the possibilities for action during performance, and would allow them to explain why they might prefer one musical approach over another, as well as how they understand various musical approaches. The conversation might then allow the musician to introduce their own approach to music, broadening the context of the interview. These situations opened discussion about the possibilities for action, as well as allowing the musician to address how they might evaluate a decision.

I took two steps within this project to protect the anonymity of my conversation partners. The first is that I never reveal the name of a source that I will quote. The Cape Breton musical community is tightly knit. It is conceivable that musicians from this community will read this dissertation, or that sections of this dissertation will filter back to this community through other sources. With that in mind, and with the understanding that this is a discussion of personal perceptions of communal identity, I decided to hide the identities of all who spoke. The second step I took, was to assess the context of any musician's name who themselves might be referenced within the quoted material. There are certain instances where I hide the names of individuals when I determine that these musicians might be referred to in an embarrassing or negative

[288] In a later section, I will cover the actual musical topics that I reference here.

light. Here I err on the side of caution. But in other instances I leave the names of musicians' referenced within the quotes. Musicians' identities can be reflected within their musical style. Some of these personal musical styles are influential and set the tone for a communal sense of style. The names of these musicians considered standard bearers are well known for this profile within the Cape Breton musical community, and their names were preserved here in acknowledgment both of this existing public role, and also in acknowledgment that what is said, is already understood without controversy within the community and by the individual in question.

After I engaged in dialogue with these musicians, I transcribed our conversations attempting to identify the prejudices of both myself and my conversation partner.[289] To do this, I summarized the topics of discussion, and then approached my conversational partners again, this time looking to clarify my summaries. In writing and clarifying these summaries, I attempted to raise hidden prejudices to the surface. Using both the transcripts and the summaries, I then looked for themes and subthemes that related to understanding, action, and judgment.[290] By identifying themes and raising prejudices to the surface, I attempted to clarify the conditions in which understanding, action, and judgment take place for a Cape Breton musician. In clarifying these three elements, I attempt to elaborate how aural rhetoric works in Cape Breton music. These clarifications

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[289] This was a similar tactic to that proposed by Fleming, Gaidys, and Robb as a way to attempt to enter the hermeneutic circle. See my discussion of Fleming, Gaidys, and Robb on page 138.

[290] Moving between the transcripts and themes, back to the transcripts, and to the conversational partner again was similar to the process employed by Grassley and Nelms, who attempted to engage in the hermeneutic circle by moving "from the whole to the part and back to the whole." Grassley & Nelms, "Understanding Maternal Breastfeeding Confidence: A Gadamerian Hermeneutic Analysis of Women's Stories," 845. See my discussion of Grassley and Nelms on page 122.

will also help to explain how practical judgment works within the Cape Breton musical community. I do not limit myself to any sort of "data" gleaned in this process, however. I recognize that I am approaching this process having gained my own perspective and prejudices from my experiences within the Cape Breton musical community. I will also draw from these experiences to show how my own prejudices have been formed within this community.

In the remaining chapters, I will elaborate the themes and subthemes drawn from my conversations. I will begin by developing the Cape Breton musical community, and explain how the community as a whole contributes to musicians' understanding, action, and judgment. I will then devote a chapter to the individual. This provides a perspective that helps to relate the individual to the community. The community expects the musician to operate within a range of musical decisions when performing. Here I will elaborate how the community's expectations inform the musician's decisions. Through particularly good performances, the musician can alter the community's expectations. Framing the chapters in such a way allows me to move from the whole (the Cape Breton community), to the part (the Cape Breton musician), and back to the whole (how the Cape Breton musician impacts the community). I explore the aural rhetoric of Cape Breton by showing how the Cape Breton community shapes understanding and expectations in the musician, but also by showing how a musician is capable of exerting agency and altering the Cape Breton community's expectations. This framework allows me to reveal communal prejudices and clarify the conditions where understanding, action, and judgment take place through perspectives that acknowledge both the individual and the community.

I have touched upon a definition of community at various points. I hint at a definition, but before I continue, I should provide a working definition of 'community' as I have used it, and from which I will shape it going forward. This working definition draws from the previously cited authors, and focuses on communication, specifically conversation, as the key to community. To summarize, a community is a conversation with a common topic that is constantly tested and reformed as each individual engages with it. As this topic of conversation flows, the topic can highlight similarities and hides differences. The conversation carries an argument of norms that exist in the form of values and practices. This conversation also carries mechanisms of judgment. But these norms and mechanisms are capable of shifting and evolving as individuals make their mark on the conversation. As individuals act within the community they both explicitly and implicitly proclaim their version of community values. They make an argument.

The conversation of community can exist within any communicative practice that carries and shares meaning amongst its participants. It could be pop culture, words, church, sport, music, art, theatre, academia, etc. This conversation exists as much in the background discourses as in the foreground. To participate in this conversation requires understanding these rhetorical practices—mere identification with a community is not enough. One must be able to understand and participate with this conversation. Taking part in this conversation does not require consciousness of being within the community, nor does it require consciousness of the norms and mechanisms of judgments that exist within the community. In fact, these mechanisms and norms might be so close to the individuals, that they are blind to the mechanisms and norms existence.

When an individual enters the conversation of community, they enter a pre-existing conversation. This conversation bears the scars of countless previous

participants. These individuals engage with the conversation of community and hold themselves accountable to those others also participating in the conversation. But they also make their own mark on the conversation, and have the potential to change the community. It is important to understand that I model community as a balance of the individual and the group. As individuals cumulatively exert agency, they can subtly change the community's practice over time, all the while hiding those changes.

To say that a particular norm shapes community identity is not to say that the community necessarily has consensus on the norm. But the shared judgments within the conversation have tipped so that enough of the community identifies with a particular value. When individuals engage in the conversation of community, they do not do so with the intent of replicating the community's norms for the norm's sake. They do so understanding that in adopting or rejecting any particular norm, they act within a network of relationships with other individuals also participating in that conversation.

Because community is a conversation, it is not necessarily defined by place. Technological limitations one forced conversations to remain in particular locations, making place synonymous with community. But this is no longer the case, and now conversations between individuals can take place at long distances. Community exists when people appear together to act and disclose their identity. These appearances can transcend place. Just as equally, geographic locations can be devoid of conversations. Likewise, a group of people interacting is not necessarily a community, just as two people talking with each other are not necessarily engaged in a conversation. A people might fall into and out of a community as its conversation falls into and out of being.

# CHAPTER 7

# CAPE BRETON MUSIC'S EVERYDAY

To develop a Cape Breton aural rhetoric, I will first focus on the 'everyday' of the Cape Breton traditional music community. While the goal is to flesh out an aural rhetoric, which concerns the performance of music, the everydayness that influences the background rhetoric is influenced by both musical and non-musical factors. When labeling a practice as part of the background, or 'everyday', I recognize that any practice can also be seen as a special event, and part of the foreground. The only distinction between situating a practice either as part of the background or as part of the foreground is the interpretive lens being used. Using the lens of the 'everyday' can reveal how concrete practices of the Cape Breton musical community construct the community's everydayness.[291] While classifying any practice as 'everyday' is arbitrary, I make this classification to situate the particular practice within the Cape Breton community's vernacular.[292] The resulting product should provide a picture of the daily life of the Cape

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[291] See my discussion of Giovanna Del Negro and Harris Berger's development of the interpretive lens of the everyday on page 47. See also, Berger and Del Negro, *Identity and Everyday Life:,* 9-14.

[292] This project relies on the discussion of music itself. The difficulty of writing about music is well documented. If you were to delve into projects within the discipline of ethnomusicology, you would see examples of written music that explain musical concepts to an audience focused primarily on musical specifics. I will not be using such method here for a few reasons. I am not presuming that everyone who reads this project will be able to read music. Some of the musicians who I discuss within this project cannot read music. Instead, as this project unfolds, I will discuss the elements of music that relate to the topic being discussed as it is discussed. Where appropriate, I will provide sources of media that can help supplement this discussion aurally. I will not write a "music" section that acts independently of other sections because it would detract from an understanding of what each particular element means within the context of the overall project. If I were to discuss harmony in the abstract, it might provide the reader with a basic understanding of harmony that might last for five minutes. If I discuss

Breton musical community. I will use snapshots of examples and thoughts from the Cape Breton community as the vehicle to describe these vernacular practices.

The background practices of the Cape Breton community's social life constitute and re-constitute the community's identity. Individuals become part of this community when they gain the capacity to understand and engage in these background practices. By working in the background, these practices often lack explicit articulation. In Cape Breton, there is music literally in the background, as it can be heard in local retail shops, restaurants, and other public places. Ads and articles cover musical performances and the musical community in the newspaper. The music is talked about at church, at the grocery store, and at other everyday places. In engaging with anything on the Island, it is impossible to avoid the background of the music. Communal expectations extend to the everyday musical events. For the audience, there are times to clap and times not to clap, there are times to hiss and hoot, and times to sit in silence. Even if someone was simply sitting at a bar in conversation with live music in the background, background practices occur all around that person. The more individuals engage with these practices, the more possibility of acquiring the rhetorical salience of these practices.[293]

Individuals acquire this rhetorical salience in these everyday places where the music is performed, which is also where this salience is developed. While I previously listed acts of the audience, such as clapping and cheering, the audience also forms

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harmony in the context of where harmony relates to a practice within the Cape Breton community, the musical concept will not be seen independent from the community.

[293] I am not suggesting that every person can simply become rhetorically proficient in the nuances of a community's musical rhetoric through sheer willpower, much like individuals can't acquire the talent of great public speaking through practice alone. At some level talent is involved. But just because a person isn't a great public speaker doesn't mean that they haven't acquired the language to understand rhetorical acts.

opinions. These opinions range from judging the quality of individual performances to the quality of tunes. These opinions concern the propriety of musical nuances—such as whether one particular tune should follow another particular tune, or how a musician should or shouldn't express a particular passage. Audiences explicitly share these opinions with one another and with the musicians by bringing it up in conversation at the venue, or later elsewhere. They also implicitly share these opinions immediately through non-verbal reactions. A cycle forms here, because individuals acquire the rhetorical salience of the community's shared common judgments, but they also shape and reshape these common judgments.

The Island's infrastructure and geography contributes to the community's background. It takes a little over two hours to drive north from Port Hawkesbury to Cheticamp. This stretch of road encompasses the majority of the music venues for the Cape Breton music community. Villages such as Judique, Mabou, Inverness, Port Hood, and Southwest Margaree are scattered along Route 19, which is one of the two thoroughfares that cuts north through the Western half of the Island. Driving north, you would encounter one of these villages every half hour or so. It might seem like these distances are too far apart to offer a single community, yet driving long distances are built into the community's everyday.[294] There are only a few restaurants and there are only a few grocery stores. So people drive. But because there are only a few restaurants, grocery stores, hardware stores, mechanics, gas stations, and any other retail store that

[294] When I lived in downtown Mabou, across from the Red Shoe Pub, I had to do my laundry in Inverness, twenty minutes north. If I wanted to shop for groceries at a supermarket larger than the local fresh-mart, I had to drive the forty minutes south to Port Hawkesbury. These are normal daily commutes for the area.

we use in our everyday life, the members of the Cape Breton music community frequently encounter each other at these locations and outside of the music venues. Anyone who attended Saint Mary's Catholic Church in Mabou encounters the musical community as part of the community backdrop. At every mass I attended at this church, I recognized the parishioners from the local music venues, and the priest was a well-known fiddler.[295]

When I talk about the community of Cape Breton's fiddle music, I'm largely referring to Inverness County. This is not at the expense of the three other counties of Nova Scotia, but if you look at the locations of the dances and ceilidhs, most regular venues are located in Inverness County. There are exceptional fiddlers, piano players, and dancers from the Sydney area and elsewhere,[296] but when it comes to discussing the community in general, the focus is on Inverness County. While Inverness County covers an area of nearly 1,500 square miles, it has a population of only about 19,000.[297] This population has been decreasing since 1986.[298] The area is known for its landscape, and is

[295] At one mass that I attended, the priest had his forearm in a cast. He joked about getting injured at the dance the night before. This was already common knowledge for the parishioners, despite being only eight hours later.

[296] Winston Fitzgerald, for example, was from Victoria County, Brenda Stubbert is from Cape Breton County as are the Barra MacNeils. Fiddlers active in the community, like Troy MacGillivray and Stan Chapman, are from mainland Nova Scotia.

[297] Statistics Canada, "Inverness County: 2006 Community Profile," last modified May 1, 2015, http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-591/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=1215&Geo2=PR&Code2=12&Data=Count&SearchText=inverness&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&Custom=.

[298] *Ibid*. See also, Statistics Canada, "Inverness County: 2001 Community Profile;"and, Statistics Canada, "Inverness County: 1996 Community Profile," available at: http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/index-eng.cfm.

frequently featured as a must see destination by National Geographic.[299] As a result, tourism is one of the area's main industries.

The population decrease of Cape Breton is partially caused by the lack of employment opportunities.[300] Young people move to Halifax or to western Canada. Some will permanently locate to these new locations, while some travel back to Cape Breton for long durations, alternating their time spent between Cape Breton and away. Moving away to find employment is not a recent phenomenon in Cape Breton. While the current generation travels to Western Canada, the previous generations migrated to Boston, Toronto, and Detroit. These locations still feature enclaves of the Cape Breton community that are actively engaged with the Island's community. It is not uncommon to encounter young Bostonians in Cape Breton with family ties to the community, who have been traveling back and forth all of their life.[301] These Bostonians identify with the Cape Breton community and share an intertwined social life.[302] This aspect of the Cape Breton everyday allows community to transcend place. Cape Breton families extend

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[299] See, National Geographic, *Drives of a Lifetime: 500 of the World's Most Spectacular Trips* (National Geographic Press, 2010). See also, The Canadian Press, "National Geographic names Cape Breton a 'must-see' place," *Halifax Chronicle Herald*, December 8, 2012, http://thechronicleherald.ca/travel/229278-national-geographic-names-cape-breton-a-'must-see'-place.

[300] For a brief overview of Cape Breton's current outmigration see, Nelson Ferguson, "From Coal Pits to Tar Sands: Labour Migration Between an Atlantic Canadian Region and the Athabasca Oil Sands," *Just Labour: A Canadian Journal of Work and Society* 17 & 18 (2011): 106-118.

[301] Boston has regular Cape Breton square dances at the Canadian American Club that often feature musicians visiting from Cape Breton.

[302] Some Bostonians move to Cape Breton in order to take an active life in the Cape Breton music community, such as the late Jerry Holland and Doug Lamey. Holland was considered one of Cape Breton's most influential fiddlers, and it would be difficult to find any Cape Breton event that did not feature a musician performing a tune that he composed.

great distances. These families stay in touch and will either form gatherings of Cape Bretoners abroad, or travel back to Cape Breton often enough that they maintain contact with the background conversations of the community. When Cape Breton musicians play venues on the road, they are likely to be held accountable to audience members who still participate in the Cape Breton music community in Cape Breton.[303]

Members of the Cape Breton musical community often share family relations. Cape Breton fiddler Glenn Graham's Master's Thesis discusses the role of family relations in the maintenance of the Cape Breton fiddle tradition.[304] Romanticists idealize the Cape Breton fiddler by claiming that Cape Breton music is passed on 'in the blood'— as if the ability to play the fiddle was transposed through DNA. While there is arguably a genetic disposition to artistic ability, Graham points out how families maintain the tradition simply through exposure. When a child grows up listening to nothing but live fiddle music, they are more inclined to play the fiddle and participate in the community. They don't even have to take an active role and learn the fiddle or piano in order to have grasped the basics of what it means to be part of the community.[305] Family members maintain their relations over long distances, staying current on the happenings back

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303 Fiddler Natalie MacMaster, who will perform at larger venues in the United States due to the large crowds that she draws, will sometimes poll for Cape Bretoners when at New England concerts. This inevitably results in more than a few shouting out.

304 I review Graham's work in Chapter 5, at page 109. Graham, *Cape Breton Fiddle Music: The Making and Maintenance of a Tradition* (2004).

305 One Red Shoe Pub waitress told me that she has no problem enforcing discipline in the pub if anyone gets rowdy. She would never think of calling the police. Rather, she would call the mother of the offending party, knowing that the mother's wrath strikes more fear than the police ever could. This is a possibility because she knows the mother of every one of the pub's patrons.

home, and constantly visiting. The tie of family contributes to a reason that the Cape Breton musical community transcends place.

Many Cape Bretoners trace their heritage to Highland Scots who settled on the Island in the late 1700s and thereafter. This Scottishness is an important part of the community's collective identity, and sets the stage for the routine of the everyday. When I say that they 'trace their heritage' I don't mean that they simply know their family came to Cape Breton from Scotland. Some musicians can trace the musical lineage of all the musicians in their family born in Cape Breton since the 19th century.[306] Some families have maintained a relationship with cousins still living in Scotland. Other families are only recently in their second or third generation of English speakers, with Scots Gaelic actively spoken in the Island through the 1950s. The importance of the community's Scottish roots contributes heavily to the community's background practices.

Though not everyone in the community is Scottish, precisely how the members of the community identify with this Scottish-ness differs by generation. Many of the older members of the community see themselves as part of Scottish culture, whereas the younger generations see themselves as part of Cape Breton culture (recognizing the Cape Breton culture's Scottish roots).[307] Some of the older Cape Bretoners, when meeting

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[306] The commonly used 'starting point' for Scottish tradition in Cape Breton, is 1773, which is when the immigrant ship *The Hector* sailed from Scotland, and landed in Pictou, Nova Scotia, bringing with it Scottish Highlanders cleared from their lands. See Michael Boudreau, "A Rare and Unusual Treat of Historical Significance: The 1923 Hector Celebration and the political economy of the past," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 28 (1993): 28-48.

[307] Elizabeth Doherty traces this generational understanding of identifying as Scottish versus identifying as Cape Breton in her dissertation. She charts how albums from musicians over the past thirty or so years have transitioned from recognizing that they play Scottish violin, to Scottish music of Cape Breton Island, to finally Cape Breton music. See Doherty, *Paradox on the Periphery* (1996)

me for the first time, ask an opening question along the lines of, "Do you play the good Scottish music?" These community members see Scottishness as synonymous with Cape Bretonness. When Cape Breton dancer Willie Fraser passed away at age 100, his obituary read: "Fraser remembered as legend of Scottish culture in Cape Breton."[308] The distinction between the youth who identify as Cape Breton culture, and the older generation who identifies with Scottish culture revealing a differing generational understanding within this community. The youth recognize that the Cape Breton identity began in Scotland, but see it as having evolved as Cape Bretoners make their mark. The older generation recognizes that the Cape Bretoners have made an impact on the music, but see that impact as a natural progression of the culture's Scottishness.[309]

Because of the tourism, Cape Bretoners frequently interact with non-locals in their everyday. The younger people of Mabou who I associated with dubbed these people PFAs, or 'People From Away.' Tourists would come to Cape Breton for many

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[308] Laura Jean Grant, "Fraser remembered as legend of Scottish culture in Cape Breton," *Cape Breton Post,* March 24, 2015, http://www.capebretonpost.com/News/Local/2015-03-24/article-4088370/Fraser-remembered-as-legend-of-Scottish-culture-in-Cape-Breton/1.

[309] Some of the younger generation's musicians have spent time in Scotland associating with Scotland's musicians. There was a period of time in the 1990s and early 2000s where Cape Bretoners were brought back to Scotland, and the Scottish were told (by Scottish romanticists) that the Cape Bretoners were the authentic representation of what Scottish culture should be, since the culture was (according to them) preserved in Cape Breton unchanged for nearly 200 years. The ridiculous assumptions of this argument aside, many Scottish musicians were not happy to hear such a critique. One Cape Breton fiddler who lived in Scotland for a time remarked on how she had to overcome the stigma associated with those who said that Cape Breton was more Scottish than Scotland. She, and many other younger musicians who travel to Scotland, recognize that Scottish music evolved in a different way than Cape Breton music, and they recognize the virtues of this separate evolution. But likewise, they don't consider themselves to be 'Scottish' musicians. Rather, they identify as being Cape Breton musicians who, though they share a common past with Scotland, are their own distinct culture.

different reasons. Some would come for the hiking on the Cabot Trail, others would come for salmon fishing in the Margaree River, and still others would come specifically for the music. Tourists would typically drive to Cape Breton from elsewhere in Canada, as well as the Northeast of the United States. It is also common for 'PFAs' to purchase summer homes in Cape Breton, since gorgeous property is relatively cheap. Interacting with these PFAs is a major part of the Cape Breton music community, as they frequently attend dances and concerts. Their interaction allows for insight into the community's social expectations in a sort of musical shibboleth, since it is common for the PFAs to clash with communal expectations, and in so doing, set themselves apart from the musical community.[310]

Being labeled as a PFA is neither a binary, nor is it permanent. Musicians from other traditions, such as Irish musicians, are readily accepted into the Cape Breton musical community, and mostly because they have a pre-disposition to understand the norms of the Cape Breton musical community, and can fit in. Elizabeth Doherty, an Irish musician from Donegal who wrote her Ph.D. on the Cape Breton musical community, was one such musician, as was Irish flute player Nuala Kennedy. While they might not have had a mastery of every step of the Cape Breton square dance, they began with an understanding of traditional music and traditional music communities, having come from a traditional music community themselves. Slightly different are PFAs who are not musicians, but who perhaps purchase homes in Cape Breton, and begin attending the

[310] These could be little things, like asking a musician what song he just played, when the Cape Bretoners would refer to it as a tune, or like clapping in time to music, when the Cape Bretoners would stomp their feet (frowning upon clapping, since clapping has a tendency to distract).

dances and concerts regularly. Through this exposure and interaction, they gradually acquire an understanding of the music, and of the community's norms. Members of the community might begin recognizing the couple who is attending the dance, and who has demonstrated competency in participating in the dance. This familiarity would place them in a different accord than the PFAs whose faces are seen for only a week before they leave the Island for good.

The spectrum shown by the PFAs illustrates how acquiring the vernacular language of a community does not occur through will alone. Those who belonging to the Cape Breton music community understand the community's local rhetoric, and participate in the local conversations. When I say 'local' conversations, I do not mean the ability to talk about the weather while at the gas pump. I mean the ability to talk about the newest fiddler to play at the West Mabou dance while at the gas pump. Those in the community understand the common judgment of the community—not simply the common judgment as if all Cape Breton community members agree that last night's dance was good—but the common judgment of agreeing that last night's dance itself is a topic relevant to the community. Community members understand the community's background practices, participate in the local conversations, and understand local rhetoric.

### 7.1. Musical Practices of the Cape Breton Community

Members of the Cape Breton music community have a background understanding of the music itself, the people who play the music, the people who listen to the music, and the various locations where the music is routinely performed. These members have a background understanding of the rhetorical musical action. The music

is primarily dance music. As such, the two prominent rhetorical acts are musical performance and dance performance. In discussing the background practices of the musical performance, I will first provide a brief overview of the structure of the music, before then discussing how these practices are acquired and transmitted. I will then focus on the performance of dance. The goal here is to outline how these background practices create the framework for the aural rhetoric of the Cape Breton musical community.

### 7.1.1. The Structure of Music in Cape Breton

In explaining the structure of the Cape Breton music, I will explain some of the more technical music elements, such as how the melody and the accompaniment works musically. This will include a discussion of the various tune types heard in Cape Breton, and how these tune types differ from one another. I will also explain the instruments typically found in the Cape Breton music community, as well as how the musicians approach each performance. Finally, I will discuss how musicians musically express themselves through the use of embellishments and variations. In discussing these musical elements in this section, while I am discussing the actions performed by the musician, I am doing this from the standpoint of the community, and how communal expectations relate to each of these musical elements. In a later section I will discuss the musical from the perspective of the individual judgment of the musician.

## 7.1.2. The Cape Breton Melody

The usual arrangement for any live Cape Breton venue features a single fiddler playing melody accompanied by a single piano player. Variations of this basic model exist. The most common variation would either involve replacing the piano with a guitar, or would add a guitar as a third musician.[311] It is also possible for a second fiddle to play melody alongside the first fiddler. The addition of a snare drum has been growing more common[312] as has the addition of a bass player. While these 'extra' musicians, such as the bass player and the drummer, are rare at live venues, they are more likely in the recording studio, where they will record for an album.[313] This typical arrangement of

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[311] This depends on the venue, at a dance, you'll never see the piano replaced. At a ceilidhs, this is more likely, and at a festival, or a venue that targets tourists, replacing the piano with the guitar is much more likely.

[312] Typically the drummer would only use brushes on the drum kit, as opposed to drum sticks. This is because the drums' purpose is to enhance the fiddle, and drum sticks would draw attention away from the fiddle.

[313] This is because there are so few musicians who play bass, drums, or even guitar, that it is more difficult to secure these musicians for live events than it is to secure them for a recording studio. When scheduling for a recording studio, musicians can schedule around the bass player or drummers schedule.

This is also why only a few piano players are featured as accompanists on CDs. In general, there are a few piano players, such as Tracy Dares, Mac Morin, Joel Chaisson, Allan Dewar, and Troy MacGillivray, that fiddlers seek out for studio recordings. These piano players are valued for bringing creative ideas into the studio. The studio differs from live venues. Rather than having to be spontaneous in the performance, musicians can work together to plan out arrangements. This is not to say that the musicians have hyper-planned each detail of each performance. There is room for spontaneity, and the energy that it brings. But the musicians can work together to talk through the parameters for that spontaneity, and offer discussion over doing new things.

In the studio, this innovation largely occurs due to a combination of conversation, trial, and error. The musicians will discuss what worked, what didn't, and alter their performance based on this conversation. The result will be because of a performance that sits in between spontaneous and orchestrated, but the result will also contribute to the musician's repertoire of what is considered acceptable within the music, and is likely to contribute to the community's understanding of what is considered acceptable.

musicians differs from most other forms of Celtic music.[314] In Irish music, for example, the default environment is the session. In a session, many musicians share melody and many musicians share the accompaniment. While virtuoso performances will sometimes feature a single melody musician, the Irish community on a whole is more structured around the group performances.[315] The Cape Breton performance rarely features groups or sessions. Even at house parties comprised of a majority of musicians, these musicians might play one or two sets in small groups, but will usually take turns at the melody, one after another. The musicians at these parties are as content to listen to other melody players taking turns, as they are to play themselves.

The fiddle is the primary melody instrument in Cape Breton music. To be clear, in Cape Breton, the fiddle is a violin. It is the same exact instrument as a violin. It is not a different instrument. The difference in names being used for the instrument is largely one of context, with folk music often being described as being played by a fiddle, with classical music being played by a violin.[316] The instrument has four strings, commonly

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[314] In order to demonstrate the uniqueness of the everyday background of Cape Breton, I will often contrast the Cape Breton music community with the Irish music community, as this will show how even traditional musics, and more specifically Celtic musics are distinct from one another. This will also help to show that aural rhetoric requires understanding the background practices of the specific community.

[315] For example, Seamus Connolly and Liz Carrol are Irish musicians known for their solo music performances. But Irish music features 'super groups' that include the Chieftains, Danu, Solas, Lunasa, and others. It is far more frequent for Irish music, even at a high level, to feature groups. Musical groups exist in Cape Breton, but they are relatively recent and have yet to become a norm. The Cape Breton band Beolach is one such group, but most of the musicians in this group are also know n for their own solo work.

[316] Interestingly enough, in previous generations of Cape Bretoners, it would be common to hear the instrument be called a violin, and the style of music being played labeled as music of the 'Scottish violin.' It’s also not unheard of for the cello to be referred to as a fiddle. The American cellist Natalie Haas often plays with Scottish fiddler Alasdair

tuned to the notes of E, A, D, and G, and is played by drawing a bow across the strings with the musician's dominant hand to elicit sound.[317] The musician uses their non-dominant hand to press the strings on the fingerboard in order to change the notes.

The fiddle isn't the only melody instrument in Cape Breton. While I will discuss the piano and the guitar more when I discuss accompaniment, they are both likely to be heard playing melody in addition to accompaniment. The bagpipes are also sometimes heard playing melody in Cape Breton. There are two main styles of bagpipe music that you would hear on Cape Breton. The first is the military style bagpiping, which is the traditional picture that comes to mind when someone thinks of a bagpiper. This bagpiper plays standing and somewhat formally reminiscent to the highland piping heard in Scotland. But Cape Breton also features another, increasingly less common, form of piping, in the traditional Gaelic bagpipes. The traditional Gaelic bagpipe style features a bagpiper who sits and plays pipes alongside the accompanying piano much

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Fraser and is part of a recent wave within traditional music of cellists playing fiddle tunes on their cello, and sometimes referring to their cellos as fiddles.

[317] I say 'primary hand' here because the musician should use their dominant hand for the bow, and less dominant hand for on the fingerboard. Classical musicians tend to eschew the notion that we have dominant hands and less dominant hands, and instead require all violinists to bow with their right hand, and manipulate the fingerboard with their left. Cape Breton features left-handed fiddle players, though, which often causes confusion since these fiddlers will use the bow with their left hand. This will often draw remarks from non-Cape Bretoners, such as, "don't they realize the advantage they would be at if they played the way everyone else does, because their left hand would be able to move faster." People who have made this statement, generally don't realize the logic that, if "the way everyone else does it" really did provide an advantage to lefthanders, everyone else would likely be doing it the other way. But they also don't realize that the dominant hand uses the bow because the bowing arm requires far more coordination than the fingerboard hand. Look at yourself. You likely use a keyboard in front of your computer. You're likely using your left hand when you type. And your left-handed fingers are likely moving as fast as a fiddler typing fast. For a right handed fiddler, the left hand is more or less stationary on the fiddle, with only the fingers moving. The right arm needs to coordinate for every note, and requires far more skill.

like a fiddler would. While military pipers use a standardized regimented fingering, the traditional Gaelic pipers typically did not. Gaelic bagpiping was an aural informally learned skill. There are only a few pipers in the Cape Breton community, such as Kevin Dugas, who can still play for dance.[318] While more and more a rarity, the bagpipes as a melody instrument are still part of the community identity.

### 7.1.3. The Cape Breton Accompaniment

The accompanist contextualizes the melody. The accompanist controls tempo and can dictate the overall mood of a performance through chord choice. If the accompanist did not maintain the tempo, both the fiddler and the audience would be confused. If the accompanist played a chord that clashed with the melody, it would make the entire performance seem amateurish, even if the fiddler performed flawlessly.[319] The accompanist's chord choice can make a tune sound dark, pensive, or

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[318] See an example of Dugas playing, "Wednesday Nigh Ceilidh – Kevin Dugas and Matt MacIsaac," *YouTube,* last visited May 22, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2X51S4cN1Q.

[319] For an analogy here, think about flavors. When lemon is combined with mint, the lemon can compliment the mint. But when lemon is combined with coffee, the combination can create an unpleasant experience.

But you might argue that you favor the flavor combination of lemon and coffee. Apparently, this flavor combination is 'a thing.' That some people might enjoy this flavor combination illustrates my overall point even more. This combination of flavors is not absurd to some, much like how not every culture hears chord 'clashes' the same. Hearing chords as clashing or not is a result of community expectations, in part built by a community's background practices. Those who come from a Western music background tend to hear certain chords as dissonant or consonant, not because they absolutely are. But because it fits with our understanding of how notes should compliment each other. Non-Western music communities hold other opinions. Even Western music communities from the past held different musical opinions. So too for your favored lemon and coffee combination—whether or not the flavors compliment each other depend on the expectations of the taster. See, Bruce R. Smith, "The Contest of Apollo and Marsyas: Ideas About Music in the Middle Ages," in *By Things Seen:*

bright. While I will discuss this more at length later, through chord choice, the accompanist can build anticipation, and then create release. While the melody's structure limits what chords can be used at any given time, this limitation still offers infinite room for creativity from the accompanist. While there might not be 'right' chords to be used at any given time, there are definitely 'wrong' chords—those that would clash with the melody.

If the accompanist did play the wrong chord, depending on the makeup of the audience, the fault of the music's 'failures' might be misplaced. Understanding the accompaniment's role in contributing to the quality of performance can distinguish audiences.

> "Especially if you're playing for a foreign audience. If you're playing around here than everyone knows the tunes, and they can pretty much tell a good fiddle player. But if you're playing for an audience from away, if the accompaniment sucks than they think the fiddler sucks."[320]

As a mistake by the accompanist can cause the audience to judge the fiddler to be a poor performer, so too can an exceptional accompanist cause an unfamiliar audience to perceive a mediocre fiddler to be an exceptional fiddler. This is caused by how the accompanist—not the fiddler—chooses to express the music.

> "A lot of the times, that's where the variety comes in - and someone will say, oh my god that's a great fiddle player. And they won't realize that it's really the piano player. And they're saying, oh this time we'll do a relative minor, and this time we'll do this, and it's unconscious. And that makes the variety of the music. But it's really the piano player that makes the dynamic. You can have a great

*Reference and Recognition in Medieval Thought,* ed. David Jeffrey, Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press (1979) 87-107.

[320] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

> accompanist, and not a great fiddler, and people who wouldn't know any better would think that fiddler is fantastic."[321]

The way that the piano player controls the context will be discussed further in the next chapter, but relevant here is that the Cape Breton community's background understanding of the musician's roles allows community members to discern a musician's ability in ways that audience's who lack that understanding cannot.

The accompanist accompanies the melody by using of chords. So while the melody consists of notes played sequentially and these notes form the phrases of a tune, a chord is formed of three or more notes played at the same time. The most common chord structure has only three notes and is called a triad. When the accompanist adds a fourth note to these triads, they changing the 'quality' of a chord.[322] Accompanists accompany a tune by playing chords along with the melody, in a sequence called a chord progression. Because a chord progression is relative to the key it is performed in, rather than referring to the specific notes of a chord, the musician will refer to the chord's relative position in the musical scale (written out as a roman numeral). For example, in the key of C major, the C major chord is the first chord, and therefore the I. Likewise, in the key of G major, the G major chord is the first chord, and also referred to as the I. The accompanist generally uses the chords that correspond to the key of whichever tune the fiddler is playing. So as not to bog down this discussion with musical theory, I will keep this section brief, and focus on the communal expectations. But there will be points later will I will have to elaborate on more specific elements of music theory as they relate to how

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321 Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

322 For an example, see, "Understanding 7, 9, 11, and 13 chords," *YouTube*, last visited May 1, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7c6IsNbh5FI.

accompanists make judgments in the chording of tunes based on community expectations, and in so doing, creating rhetorical effects.

The main accompaniment instrument in Cape Breton is the piano. While there might be some ceilidhs or other venues where a fiddler performs solely with a guitar, the majority of accompaniment is done with a piano. There will never be a dance without the piano.[323] Piano as the main accompaniment instrument differs from other Celtic music traditions, where the guitar is usually the main accompaniment instrument. The piano brings unique properties that contribute to how the music as a whole is understood within the community. The piano is a percussive instrument, which allows it to maintain a solid beat necessary for dancing. The piano has 88 keys, meaning that the piano player can play more than seven octaves worth of notes. The Cape Breton piano player typically will use the left hand (deeper notes) to play the bass notes when accompanying a tune, and the right hand will play the chords of a tune. This allows the piano player to play both the bass notes and the chords. Conversely, the piano player will sometimes use the right hand to mimic the melody along with the melody musician. The left hand here would play either bass or chords.

The keyboard of the piano features the same pattern of keys for every octave. So when the pianist learns the fingering for chords or a melody, this fingering is the same regardless of the octave being played. This gives the musician the option of playing multiple voicings of a single chord or tune anywhere on the piano once they learn it in

[323] This is likely due to the acoustic properties of the piano versus the acoustic properties of the guitar. The piano doesn't need to be microphoned for a dance, while a guitar would have to be microphoned. The piano can resonate and fill the dance hall, as well as maintain the percussion needed for the dancers to dance.

one spot. Also, the keyboard lends itself to allowing the musician to break apart various chords. When striking the keys for a chord, the piano player can divide the chord, playing only two of the three notes, followed by the third a moment later, or vice versa. When the musician breaks apart the notes of a chord, it is called 'arpeggiating'. Pianist could also play the three notes of a triad, and while this chord resonates, play a fourth note, which would change the quality of the chord.

The guitar is the second most common accompaniment instrument in Cape Breton. It differs from the piano structurally, which distinguishes how the instrument can accompany when compared with the piano. So while the pianist can access more than seven octaves of notes, the guitar player has little more than two octaves to work with. While the piano player can use both the left hand and the right hand to play notes, the guitar player has to finger the notes on the fingerboard with (for a right handed player) their left hand, while they use their right hand to strum the strings. Also, because of the keyboard being the same up and down the piano, when the piano player learns how to perform something in one octave, or learns one chord, the piano player can transfer that knowledge and utilize it up and down the keyboard. The guitarist's fingerboard does not offer the same structural advantages. Whereas the piano player can transfer the same shape[324] up and down the keyboard, the guitar player has to learn an entirely new shape when playing a different voicing of the chord. When a piano player wants to change the voicing of a chord by adding a fourth note, they only have to lay down an additional finger in order to make a new voicing. But the guitar player might have to

learn an entirely new pattern to make a similar effect. The structural differences also limit how the guitar can accompany. Because the piano allows for the piano player to divide the work between the right hand and left hand, and further allows chords to be divided rhythmically, the Cape Breton piano style has developed a syncopated rhythm. But the guitar cannot mimic this rhythm. So functionally, the guitarists and piano players differ in how they can approach accompanying.

Some Cape Breton Guitarists, like Dave MacIsaac, have crafted their accompaniment style in order to compliment and work with the piano.[325] But the major influence in guitar players comes from other Celtic traditions, specifically of Irish influence. Guitar is popular in Irish music. Irish guitar players like John Doyle are popular amongst Cape Breton musicians.[326] But the way that guitars accompany in Irish community differs a great deal from how a guitar accompaniment style that would seek to compliment the

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[325] MacIsaac is referred to throughout this dissertation, and his history deserves a brief mention. MacIsaac plays both the fiddle and the guitar. His guitar ability extends beyond Cape Breton music. Early in his musical career, MacIsaac toured as a blues guitarist, playing with such musicians as Jon Lee Hooker. Later, MacIsaac toured with the Cape Breton musical acts such as the Rankin Family and Natalie MacMaster, that were popular throughout Canada and the United States. MacIsaac is concerned by musicians in Cape Breton to be an encyclopedia of tunes. Musicians routinely call him and sing out an obscure melody so that MacIsaac can tell them the name of the tune. See an example of MacIsaac playing with the late Jerry Holland in 1981, "Jerry Holland Rehearsal with Dave MacIsaac," *YouTube,* last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mwXoFqfJjN0.

[326] Doyle currently plays with American Irish fiddler Liz Carroll who is also popular amongst Cape Breton musicians, but for a long time played in the Irish traditional 'super group' Solas. Doyle's strumming accentuates the beat differently than a Cape Breton piano player, creating a different rhythm all together. Doyle's technique is so dominant that it would distract and clash with any rhythm the piano player attempted. Compare MacIsaac's playing the from previous footnote with Doyle's playing here, "Michael McGoldrick John McCusker and John Doyle (sic)," *YouTube*, last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzOKVeOgqp8.

piano would work. As this Irish influence in Cape Breton guitar grows, and as the piano accompaniment itself evolves, the two are diverging stylistically.

> "I wasn't there, but I daresay that many years ago, the guitar player and piano player would have played the same thing. It was very simplified, and you had your two or three chords, and the guitar was doing the same thing. Today, the guitar players are taking in all these Irish influences, and the piano is getting stuff from all over the place, and they're getting together and wanting to show off all those new things, and it does not work. Unless it's rehearsed."[327]

The community does not reject these changes outright, and the guitar is gaining popularity.

The guitar is not acceptable for accompanying a dance on its own, so as long as the dance is the fore of Cape Breton music scene, the guitar will not be the main accompaniment instrument in Cape Breton. The changing nature of Cape Breton accompaniment causes controversy over how the guitar and piano can work together. This argument centers on how the two instruments rhythmically approach the music.

> "And it does not work, these new guitar rhythms. I call them new rhythms, like the Irish thing is creeping up, and it does not work with the piano playing. These new rhythms can't work with the strathspey, it's not dotted enough. They're great at what they do. But they don't have to play with the piano."[328]

The focus here, is not on the problem with the guitar in general, but in how the guitar and the piano work together. This piano player is fine with the Irish style influencing the guitar, but finds that, this new influence does not work with the piano, nor does it work with tune types such as the strathspey.[329]

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[327] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

[328] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

[329] This piano player clarifies at other times, that he has no problems with the guitar in general. This piano player values playing with Dave MacIsaac. But MacIsaac has a

### 7.1.4. The Cape Breton Fiddle Tune

I have been referring at various times to specific 'tune' types without discussing what a tune is. A 'tune' is how traditional musicians label the melodies they play. If someone were to interact with the Cape Breton community and refer to these melodies as songs, not tunes, it would indicate that person as an outsider who is unfamiliar with the tradition. Tunes generally have a common structure, where twelve bars are played and repeated (called the A section), and then twelve different bars are played and repeated (called the B section). This whole process is then itself repeated, producing AABBAABB, before the musician transitions into the next tune.[330] These different sections are themselves made up of phrases. I have heard one Cape Breton musician describe these phrases as calls and answers. This general pattern stands true no matter the tune type. Of which, in Cape Breton, the most common tune types are jigs, reels, strathspeys, and marches, with the occasional air.

Jigs and reels are two different forms of traditional tunes. Reels have a 4/4 time signature, while a jig has a 6/8 time signature. The first number tells you how many beats are in each musical bar, and the second number tells you the note value of each beat. So in the case of the reel (4/4) there are four beats in a measure, and the quarter note gets one beat. In the case of the jig, there are 6 beats in a measure, and the eighth note gets one beat. The major difference between the two, is that the jig is subdivided

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unique approach to playing guitar. MacIsaac's goal is to compliment the piano with his guitar, rather than seeing the guitar as the primary accompaniment.

[330] Some tunes have C, D, and maybe even more sections, and some tunes are not usually repeated. Although as a general rule, most tunes are repeated a single time. This is a distinction from some Irish communities where a tune is often repeated three times, and in New England contra dance communities, where a tune is repeated more times than I can count.

into groups of three. You can say "jig-it-tee, jig-it-tee" over and over to match the timing of the jig. That's three syllables, repeated evenly over and over.[331] While if you attempted to repeat the same phrase to a reel, it would quickly feel off-beat and awkward. A reel has a more consistent driving pulse that accentuates every fourth note.[332] Jigs are often played by themselves, although lately it has become more common for fiddlers to pair jigs with reels or other tune types. Reels, when being played for a square set, will generally be played by themselves, but otherwise will likely be preceded by strathspeys.

A strathspey is a tune type that, like the reel, is in 4/4 timing. However, where a reel is played with a straight-ahead, consistently emphasized beat, the beat of a strathspey has a varied emphasis—almost as if the beat had a hiccup.[333] This hiccup itself is not consistent like the offbeat in ska or reggae. The beat in a strathspey depends on the specific tune being played. There are two general types of strathspey: the slow strathspey and the fast strathspey. For step-dancing, the fiddler will start out with some fast strathspeys, before transitioning into the reels. At a sit-down concert or a ceilidh, the fiddler would probably start out a tune with an air or a march—both slower forms of fiddle tunes also in 4/4—before transitioning to the fast strathspey and then the reel. It is unlikely to hear the strathspey on its own without hearing the reel to follow.

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[331] See, for example, Cape Breton fiddler Jerry Holland playing a set of jigs, "Jerry Holland – Jigs," *YouTube*, last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dbkBzalYt-0.

[332] See, for example, Cape Breton fiddler Jerry Holland playing a set of reels, "Jerry Holland Reels," *YouTube,* last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTZSRDG3_sQ.

[333] See Cape Breton fiddlers Buddy MacMaster and Natalie MacMaster playing a common set of strathspeys and reels, "Natalie MacMaster – King George Medley," *YouTube,* last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbY-LpV3K-k.

An air is also usually in 4/4 timing. This is the slowest tune type played in Cape Breton. It is usually played to start a long set that will progress to strathspeys and reels, or it will be played by itself. It has a more lyrical quality than most tunes, and you could imagine it sung with words. It is unlikely to ever hear an air at a dance, although it is common to hear them at concerts, as they generally create a more pensive atmosphere for the audience. The fiddler will often use the air to create such an atmosphere to allow for a more dramatic contrast when they transition to a strathspey.

Marches are typically in 4/4, but could also be written in 6/8. Whether it is written in 4/4 or 6/8, the emphasis is placed on two beats in the measure (so the emphasis would either be placed on the first or the third beats of either measure). The march comes from the military tradition, and is often originally written for pipes. Historically, they were literally used for the pipes to set the pace for an army to march into battle. While faster than an air, they are slower than strathspeys and reels, so when a fiddler strings together a longer set of tunes, the march will come before the strathspey or reel. It is unlikely to hear a march played on its own without being followed by a strathspey and reel.

The tunes played in the Cape Breton musical community have a variety of origins. Many are composed by Cape Bretoners, and many regulars in the community, whether they are musicians or not, have tunes named after them. Many of the tunes also come from Scotland. It is also common to hear tunes from Irish, New England, and other Canadian fiddle traditions. Fiddlers are always seeking out 'new' tunes to perform, especially musicians who record and sell albums. Cape Breton musicians have been recording albums since the mid-twentieth century, so all of the commonly played tunes in the Cape Breton tradition have already been recorded. Various musicians have told

me that they see no point in recording a tune that's already been recorded, unless you're going to perform it drastically different than its previous record. Therefore musicians seek out new tunes, or write new tunes. After popular fiddlers record new tunes or tunes from other traditions and begin to play these new tunes live, these tunes will generally gain a brief period of popularity. When I say 'new tunes', I'm not necessarily saying that the tune itself is brand new, just that it's new to the Cape Breton vernacular. One of the locations that fiddlers will find 'new' tunes, is in the tune collection books written in the 18th and 19th centuries. These books each feature thousands of tunes, many of which are not part of the Cape Breton vernacular. I have seen fiddlers spend hours pouring through these books in search of a new tune.

This discussion of transitioning between tunes brings me to an important point about how Cape Bretoners understand grouping tunes together. The way that Cape Breton musicians (and Scottish musicians) group tunes together differs greatly from how Irish musicians group tunes together. Irish session musicians will typically play the same types of tunes in a set of tunes, whether it be reels or jigs. They will vary the key of the tune that they play. So they might start out with a jig in the key of G major, and then transition to a jig in the key of A minor, before ending in a jig in the key of D major. In contrast, a Cape Breton musician will vary the structure of the tune type they play, advancing from slower tunes into faster tunes.[334] Using this structure to perform tunes is

[334] See an example of Buddy MacMaster advancing from a commonly heard tune "Neil Gow's lament for the Death of his second wife," into a set of Cape Breton strathspeys and reels. The first tune was composed in the 18th century by Scottish composer Neil Gow. Many of Gow's tunes are part of the Cape Breton vernacular. "Buddy MacMaster in Concert Cape Breton Fiddler Clip 2" *YouTube,* last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ny2beJky_KM.

engrained in the Cape Breton community's background, to the point that it's hidden from their foreground recognition. One piano player who teaches outside the community often points out he loses track of this:

> "I think when you know something really well, that you take things for granted when you're teaching. Because you just expect that everyone just understands that. But I often get asked questions like: what comes first, a strathspey or a march?"[335]

Musicians will sometimes deviate from this general structure, but the deviation is a rarity. When musicians do deviate from the structure, they do so for the effect of deviating from the norm, relying on the fact that the general structure of advancing from march to strathspey to reel is itself part of the everyday, so that the deviation is disruptive.

Musicians are expected to vary the tunes that they play so that they do not play only the popular tunes. In Cape Breton, every year there seems to be a fad new tune that no one can get enough of, and the following summer, the tune is burnt out. Play one of these hits, and it's fine, but play a second back-to-back and eyes roll. Musicians are also expected to not repeat playing a tune during the night. Because it only takes about a minute or so to play a single tune, when the fiddler plays for three hours for a typical dance or ceilidh, it is more than possible that they play close to two hundred tunes. One fiddler has estimated that, in order to play a dance, the fiddler should know at least a thousand tunes, if not two thousand tunes. This is an enduring feat, not only for the body to play for three hours straight, but also for the mind to recall so many tunes. While it's frowned upon for a fiddler to play a tune more than once in an evening, some

[335] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

have said that if they play two dances in a week, and repeat a tune on a Friday that they might have played on Monday, some in the audience will give them grief.

While the musicians alter the type of tune they play within sets, they usually maintain a consistent tonal center.[336] The Cape Breton musician might start out with an air in the key of G minor, before transitioning to a march in the key of G major, then into a strathspey in the key of G major, then into a reel in G minor, and then a reel in G major. Every tune played by the musician in this example was built on a tonal center of G. Maintaining this tonal center is central to the Cape Breton vernacular, and is distinct from other traditions. At one ceilidh, where I heard a well respected Irish musician play a set of Irish reels that transitioned between keys with each new reel, I also overheard an older Cape Bretoner in the audience comment about whether the fiddler knew enough tunes in G or not[337]. There was a disconnect, in that the Cape Bretoner either didn't understand that the Irish fiddler normally transitions keys, as is the Irish custom, or that the person didn't care. Likewise, an Irish music session might have a few sets where they would transition between tune types, such as from jigs or hornpipes into reels. But this as well is not a common practice, and will not happen in an extemporaneous Irish session where the sets aren't worked out beforehand. These are both areas of the everyday for members of the community, where the practice of how sets are constructed, while not set and stone, carries with it notions of acceptability.

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[336] Here I say tonal center, referring to the various keys that relate to G, or A, or whatever key it may be. But A major and A minor and A mixolydian (another key type) share the same tonal center. But A major and B minor do not.

[337] Younger fiddlers do generally play more keys within a set, but they do it for effect. This is something that wasn't done fifty years ago.

Note that this is a slight oversimplification that needs some expansion. Musicians do transition between keys. But they won't transition often. They might play seven tunes in a row in the tonal center of G, before transitioning to a tune in the key of A to finish a set. Finishing a set of tunes by transitioning to a tune in a 'higher' key is relatively common, though not necessary. The is called 'modulating', and doing so can create a sense of energy, because while the transition of tune is expected, the transition of key isn't. There is a sense of movement by shifting to a higher, some would say brighter, key. Modulating a single time is common. Modulating twice in the same set is rare, and if done outside of the right situation, could be frowned upon. The situations where I've heard a musician modulate twice in the same set were where the fiddler was in the midst of a long set of reels.[338] But while the fiddler can modulate and change keys

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[338] I can think of one situation where, during a dance, a fiddler went from the key of A, into a tune called "The Road to Errogie", which is in the key of B, before transitioning into a tune in the key of E. 'The Road to Errogie' was a showpiece in the key of B that was the 'it' tune in Cape Breton around 2006. It was popular because playing a tune in the key of B is difficult for fiddlers. The key of B requires four sharp notes, including A sharp. The A sharp, while not difficult for the fiddler, is something that the musician is not used to, since there are no tunes written with it (and in a tautology, there are no tunes written with it because the fiddler isn't used to it). In contrast, the bluegrass tradition is full of tunes in the key of B. 'The Road to Errogie' also involves a shifting of positions. This is another, somewhat difficult, skill. When the fiddler plays, their hand is anchored to the end of the fingerboard. Because the hand never moves from here, the fiddler gains muscle memory, based on their hand position, as to how to place a finger so that a note is in tune. Knowing where to place the finger is relative to the position of the hand, and because the position of the hand is determined by the fingerboard, there is no discretion as to where that begins. But when a fiddler shifts into a higher position (typically the third position, which is called the third position because the first finger on the fingerboard is taking the place of where the third finger would normally be) they have to move their entire hand up the fingerboard. The fiddler loses that anchor, and has to learn where to place their hand in order to be in tune without the end of the fingerboard to guide them. Because of this, it takes time for the fiddler to learn how to play in this position in tune. There are not many Cape Breton fiddle tunes that require shifting, and some fiddlers could go a lifetime being considered a reputable player without ever playing a tune where they need to shift.

sometimes, the acceptability of this practice is a relatively recent development, and it's debatable that everyone in every generational cohort has accepted the practice. This new trend shows that standards of acceptability that form the community's expectations can be manipulated for effect. So the second shift to a new key creates effect by disrupting the community's conventions and therefore creating a sense of surprise. But as musicians begin to exploit this expectation more and more, shifting to a second key could itself become a new norm.

### 7.1.5. Embellishments and expression in Cape Breton Fiddle Music

Not all notes are the same. The same tune played by two different musicians will be different based on how the musician expresses notes, or how the musician makes decisions about what to perform, or what chords to play. While the possibilities for expression are shaped by the instrument, they are also shaped by communal expectations. Even within this framework, individual decisions are made. While a Cape Breton musician sounds different than an Irish musician playing the same tune, the Cape Breton musician will also sound different from a different Cape Breton musician. How musicians express themselves within these communal expectations is key to understanding musical rhetoric.

If a Cape Bretoner plays the same tune as an Irish musician, the audience members from their respective communities could easily identify that musician's origin, if not the musician themselves.[339] The different musicians 'embellish' the music differently. Embellishments are nuances in how one performs a note, similar to an accent

[339] Some discerning blindfolded Cape Breton audience members would not only be able to identify that the musician is from Cape Breton, they would also be able to identify the specific musician.

in speech. So while one community might speak slowly with a drawl while another drops their 'R's, a community of musicians might slide into a note while another community might drone a particular note. Irish musicians often embellish by sliding into notes, while Cape Breton musicians approach notes more rigidly, with 'hammer ons' or 'hammer offs.' In places where an Irish musician would 'roll' a note, the Cape Breton musician would likely play a 'cut.' These embellishments are community patterns of approaching each note.[340]

Embellishments can be planned, where a musician decides ahead of time that they want to apply a certain embellishment to a particular section. But when not planned, embellishments filter into how the musician naturally approaches the music. "Even if it is a learned pattern, or something you've picked up along the way, you are thinking about it, but you're not actually thinking about it. It's all on the fly."[341] One Cape Breton piano player discusses how oftentimes his embellishments are influenced

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[340] I won't go into detail here as to the precise technical descriptions of each of the various unique Cape Breton embellishments as this could turn into a project all unto its own. Each Cape Breton musician adopts the general stylistic embellishment in their own unique way. The point I am trying to illustrate is that there is a general commonality shared within the Cape Breton community that makes the music sound different from other communities, even musicians from the respective different communities were to perform the same tune. My point is not to describe the sound of these embellishments, but to illustrate that judgment is the guiding force that distinguishes the musicians. If I were to focus too long on the precise sound, it would detract from my argument. Focusing on the precise sound would solidify a technique as essential to the 'correct' Cape Breton sound. I argue that, because individuals apply their understanding of communal notions of acceptability, the community's sound will eventually shift and evolve. Other projects have done a better job than I ever could in describing the many nuanced embellishment of various Cape Breton musicians, and have focused on how these individuals have embellished the tunes differently. See, Kate Dunlay & David Greenberg, *The Dungreen collection: Traditional Celtic Violin Music of Cape Breton*, (Toronto: Dungreen Music, 1996).

[341] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

by how he might have heard a particular tune expressed by others. This influence is not usually thought through: "Its probably something I subconsciously have heard this method before… so I might have heard someone else heard a rip in a tune in that spot before. It's very spontaneous."[342] While I cover the role of individuals in its own section, acts of an individual can become part the community's collective background. This musician picked up an embellishment through the constant listening to individuals in the community.

The Cape Breton community does not approach embellishment with a single mind. There is a stylistic spectrum of embellishments in the community, with what is described as a 'dirty' sound on one side, and a 'cleaner' sound on the other. The 'clean' sound can be heard in musicians like Troy MacGillivray[343] and Winston Fitzgerald,[344] while the 'dirty' style can be heard in musicians like Donald Angus Beaton[345] and Little Mary MacDonald.[346] With a clean style, the musician approaches playing notes crisp and clear, while the 'dirty' style involves more droning. The dirty style has become less popular after Winston Fitzgerald brought more attention to the cleaner style. Thus, the

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[342] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

[343] For an example of MacGillivray's fiddling, see "Shetland Folk Festival: Troy MacGillivray," *YouTube,* last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mYv5CGeQSLU.

[344] For an example of Fitzgerald's fiddling, see "Winston Scotty Fitzgerald – Mrs. Douglas of Ednam," *YouTube,* last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_8msCjpVXhs.

[345] For an example of Beaton's fiddling, see "Donald Angus Beaton (Glendale 1970, Strathspey and Reel)" *YouTube*, last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2n2EBBZ6y4g&index=5&list=PL78H8gcbnsUJbMnivit4yB_ImeEqGNIXw.

[346] There are no videos or recordings of MacDonald, however Kate Dunlay and David Greenberg devote much discussion to her personal style in Kate Dunlay & David Greenberg, *The Dungreen collection: Traditional Celtic Violin Music of Cape Breton*, (1996).

dirty style came to be revered by romanticists as associated with the past. These romanticists often mistook the nuances of a 'dirty' style with general 'scratchy' fiddling. "Their definition of dirt is just crappy playing. I think the real dirt is all the elements that characterize the style, like all the neat bowing and finger embellishments that a lot of these players are great at. But it wasn't necessarily scratchy."[347]

While embellishments concern *how* each note is played, the Cape Breton musician also takes liberties with *what* notes are played. Cape Breton musicians see the tune as a skeleton that provides a structure, but allows for deviations at the appropriate time and in the appropriate way. The view in how liberties can be taken varies both generationally and ideologically. The older generation of Cape Breton musicians would take pride in learning a tune 'correctly' or would place pressure on musicians to play a tune 'correctly' as it was written. Yet despite this pressure for correctness, musicians such as Winston Fitzgerald would change tunes as they saw fit, and these changes could become standard.[348] These musicians who do create variations that 'stick' within the community make variations that they see as acceptable to the community's expectations and sensibilities—not just any variation will do. These variations could be entire bars of music, or could be a note or two.

This notion of correctness in how a tune is played is another locus of romanticism in the discourse about Cape Breton music. Because correctness is often mentioned as important by Cape Breton musicians, especially by the older generation,

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[347] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

[348] Often the way that Fitzgerald would change a tune would become seen as the 'correct' way. Fitzgerald once changed a tune written by composer Dan R. MacDonald, and Fitzgerald's way of performing the tune was seen by most as the right way to play the tune. MacDonald then wrote a new tune, which was actually the original tune.

romanticists cite correctness as an absolute element of Cape Breton music—that the tune must be played correctly as written. As much as 'correctness' is paid lip service, functionally, the performance by musicians show that how strictly one aligns with the written tune varies with each musician, and it is just as acceptable for a musician to vary from the written score as it is for a musician to follow it rigidly.[349] Not every variation from a fiddler would be acceptable though.[350] The musician would have to 'tastefully' vary based on the audience's expectations. When a fiddler varies a tune, it is common for them to play it as it was written the first time through, and subtly vary it the second time through, or vice versa. While this is not always the case, it allows for an ideologically mixed crowd to be pleased, as it demonstrates deference to the standard, but also shows innovation. Likewise, the musician could play a few tunes as they were written, and only apply variations to select tunes.

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[349] Some musicians have explained that decisions on how to vary, or whether to vary, in a given tune is based on who is sitting in the audience. If they know that some people in the audience are opposed to varying a tune, they will adjust as needed. It would not be uncommon for the composer of a given tune to be in the audience, and the fiddler to base how they perform a given tune on that composer's presence.

[350] When some musicians are introduced to the Cape Breton tradition, or other Celtic traditions, and they hear that the music allows for variation, they sometimes take the stance that, because variation is allowed, then any variation is allowed like in jazz. This would be wrong, both about what kinds of variation are allowed, and about jazz. The way that many people refer to jazz is not jazz. Jazz operates within its own community frameworks just as much as traditional music and is not monolithic. Both have notions of acceptability when it comes to improvisation and variation. Yes, in Jazz, musicians who have challenged the status quo of established principles have had success, but that does not mean that their success in challenging the status quo means anyone who challenges the status quo will succeed. Far from it. Jazz musicians who have challenged the status quo have themselves succeeded because of their understanding of *how* to challenge the status quo, which itself has required a firm understanding of the community's notions of acceptability.

In addition to variations in the melody, accompanists will vary the chords that they use to accompany any given tune. Accompanying tunes offers much more opportunity for variation than performing the melody, and some accompanists would say that accompanying properly demands variation. Unlike the melody, which often has an original 'standard' melody written in print, accompaniment does not have a standard set of chords written for a given tune. Here, the notes of the melody determine the 'correct' chords for accompaniment. So if a melody had a string of notes that included D, F sharp, and A, then the accompanist could possibly play the D chord (which includes D, F sharp and A) the entire time. But depending on the melody, the accompanist could start on the B minor chord (which contains D and F sharp) and then switch to a D major or A major. Just as likely, the accompanist could play the chords one way the first time through, and another way the second time through. A wrong chord would be a chord that clashes with the note of the melody. But also, just because a chord 'could' work, doesn't mean it would. Accompanists operate within a framework of subtlety much like the melody musicians. Lately, more advanced chords, such as 9$^{th}$ chords and sustained chords have been used by accompanists. These chords can draw more attention to the accompanist and away from the melody, in addition to other effects. It would be seen as 'wrong' for the musician to over-use these chords, and would contrast with the community's expectations. The chord choices made by the accompanist create the background of expression for the entire performance—both melody and accompaniment. When the note played by the fiddler is heard, it is heard in the context of the chord from the accompaniment.

What the discussion of musical expression within the Cape Breton musical community shows is that there is no 'one' way for musicians to play Cape Breton music

and align with the expectations of the community. Each musician brings their own ideas. While boundaries are drawn regarding the common judgment of musical expectations, they are not drawn in stone and they allow for diversity. The fiddle styles extend on a spectrum from clean to dirty, the fiddlers vary in how they take liberties with the 'correctness' of tunes, and accompanists are confronted with the near limitless choice of chords. This diversity allows for an infinite and changing set of possibilities for musical rhetoric, but these possibilities are still bound by the expectations of the community.[351]

Earlier, when discussing the difference between piano and guitar, I hinted that the accompaniment is in a state of change. While guitar players generally adopt Irish and other traditional music influences, the Piano players are also changing. In both cases, the accompaniment is advancing beyond a simple three-chord style. Musicians are understanding more music theory, and this understanding has expanded the possibility of how they approach chording music. The basic structure for accompanying a tune in a major key is to utilize the I, the IV, and the V chords. So in the case of a tune in C major, the musician would use the C (which is the first chord) the F (the fourth chord in the scale) and the G (the fifth chord in the scale. In the past, before the community adopted more knowledge of music theory, it wouldn't have been uncommon for a musician to use the C major chords to accompany A minor. A minor and C major share the same

[351] It is important to not misinterpret infinity here. While infinity can extend to every horizon allowing for every permutation, infinity can also exist within the bounds of an integer. It is this latter type of infinity that I refer to. I am not saying that there is a boundless notion of acceptability, but rather that, even when operating within the community's limits of possibilities, there are a seemingly infinite number of decisions that could be made.

notes, with the difference coming in the tonal center of the notes. A minor is the relative minor of C major, and C major the relative major of A minor. Tunes in A minor will revolve around the A minor chord and the G major chord (the I and the vii chords). Playing these chords with these tunes today would be heard as clashing within the community. In addition to the I, IV, and V chords of a tune, the accompanist now understands the possibility of substitute chords, and that the second and the sixth chords of each key, also minors, can be used when accompanying a tune. So in the case of the C major tune, in addition to the C, F, and G, major chords, the accompanist will also use the D minor, and the A minor chords.

These five chords present a basic understanding of music theory. Cape Breton piano players are adopting a much more complex understanding of how to accompany tunes, and are adopting chord understanding from jazz music and other musics. These musicians are integrating 7th and 9th chords into their accompaniment style. These musicians are also implementing more complex bass lines with their left hands. The overall result of these additions to the piano style is a much richer allowance of acceptable accompaniment than what was heard fifty years ago. Seen in hand with the changes in the Cape Breton guitar accompaniment, the community can is in the midst of a continuing evolution of accompaniment.

Community judgment can be seen in the Cape Breton community's adoption of new musical elements, such as the new accompaniment chords, or the cleaner style of fiddle playing, or the variations in tunes. The audience might not realize that they're making judgments of innovation when they gravitate towards one musician or another. They might just like the sound of a particular musician, without realizing that they like that

musician because of particular variations, or chord choices. The Cape Breton audience makes these common judgments through a variety of means, such as attending concerts, buying albums, or inviting musicians to perform. They have deemed these musicians to be appropriate representations of their community's music. This switch could be flipped, if the musician began performing too far outside of the community's expectations. But as the Cape Breton community chooses the musicians that it likes, it also chooses the style and substance of that musician's expressive choices. So by the Cape Breton community continuing to attend concerts of Troy MacGillivray, and asking him to teach workshops, and buy his albums, they are also acknowledging that Troy's chordal choices—though new to the community—are part of the Cape Breton community. In this way, newness and an individual's choices become part of the community's expectations.

When the community recognizes these more aesthetically pleasing choices, the choices filter back into the community's understanding of how to judge the practice itself. Thus, the decisions made by the traditional musician within a performance both draw from and contribute to the public meaning of that traditional community. The musicians base their decisions on their understanding of the audience's aesthetic values. When the musician makes a choice informed by an understanding of her own community membership, it reflects an acknowledgment that the musician holds herself accountable to her community. But those decisions also in turn affect the community's understanding of appropriateness.

While the community's understanding of appropriateness changes over time, and is changed by the rhetoric of individual musicians, the speed at which it changes

creates the illusion of unbroken continuity.[352] The beliefs of Cape Breton romanticists help to parse out the illusion of unbroken continuity a bit more. This illusion does not suggest that the community is unchanging. Romanticists have complete faith that the community is changing. This faith that the community is changing has romanticists up in arms.[353] The romanticists see the community's history as unbroken, until today's

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[352] See my discussion of Henri LeFebvre's use of 'unbroken continuity' earlier on page 53.

[353] A debate within the editorial section of *Celtic Heritage* magazine illustrates the extent to which these romanticists are up in arms. This debate began with a submission by American Seamus Taylor, where he stands up for his Gaelic culture, when he says "I think it has become more important than ever in these days of Rock/New Age/Jazz/Whatever-'Celt' to keep in mind that this is NOT a malleable 'world music,' but rather the tribal music of our ancestors, preserved and revered for many centuries (especially in Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island, until quote recently)… I am extremely sorry that artists like Natalie McMaster (sic), the Rankins, and (lately) Mary Jane Lamond, are attempting to 'rock up' their material. I likewise deplore what Ashley McIsaac (sic), another young prodigy, has done to debase the native idiom. I understand the lure of money and fame, and don't begrudge them their success—they are extremely talented youths. I wish they would realize that this music doesn't NEED 'improving.' It has stood for centuries on its own merit, preserved by our ancestors into the modern age, and may go on (if we can keep the Gaelic culture that produced it alive) long past the unlamented (by me, at least) demise of rock, jazz, and other pop idioms. What we need is for someone of their stature to stand up for the true Gaelic music, language, and culture, and stop pandering to the fickle-pop taste of the 'great unwashed' and loudly declare; (sic) 'THIS IS THE MUSIC AND LANGUAGE OF OUR PEOPLE, AND I WILL NOT DEBASE IT, NOT FOR ALL YOUR GOLD OR FLEETING FLAME." Seamus Taylor, "Standing up for Gaelic culture," *Celtic Heritage*, (June/July 1997): 5.

Taylor's position is not unique. At least by outsiders to the Cape Breton community who identify Cape Breton with a pure version of a "Gaelic" community that they desperately want to defend. So encountering tourists or academics in Cape Breton who hold these beliefs is not uncommon. However, Taylor's position is rarely held be those within Cape Breton. In fact, I have discussed this position with nearly every musician I have known from Cape Breton, and not a single one finds a bit of truth within it. Though musicians who travel to Cape Breton from elsewhere in order to learn how to play Cape Breton fiddle music sometimes subscribe to this belief.

In response to Taylor's submission, Cape Bretoner Alexander MacDonald placed a follow-up editorial, debunking Taylor's beliefs discussing the various different histories of Celtic music (both Scottish and Irish musics) that Taylor misunderstood. Alexander

musicians broke it. There are various beliefs concerning the 'golden age' of Cape Breton fiddle music, but generally this conjures Winston Fitzgerald, Buddy MacMaster, and Donald Angus Beaton, as the defining musicians of Cape Breton. Romanticists would freeze Cape Breton culture in this golden age. Ignored here is that, prior to Fitzgerald, MacMaster, and Beaton, the music was different, and Fitzgerald, MacMaster, and Beaton changed it, as did the generation before them, and so on. The subtlety and nuance of how musician's have historically changed the music, whether it be through the introduction of a new chord, or a new form of expression, allows romanticists to rely on the illusion of the community's unbroken continuity when arguing that today's changes will destroy the community. Cape Breton offers documentation of these changes, though, as most of the influential musicians over the past 80 years have recorded albums. This allows tracing when individual musicians introduced new ideas into the community, and how these ideas were then carried forward by other musicians, until these new ideas eventually become part of the community's norm.

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MacDonald, "The Gaelic in the Fiddle: Debunking the Myths," *Celtic Heritage* (August/September 1997): 5.

Taylor responded with numerous appeals to his own knowledge of history, various references to 16th and 17th century arguments about the Scottish throne, and a nod to Chomsky, all to justify that Gaelic music is pure. He concludes "If, as Mr. MacDonald says, our culture must "Change or die" (a remark very akin to past English ultimatums and 'Robber Baron' laissez faire Capitalism), then perhaps that would be the better alternative. For if we become them, why bother to exist? And thus my original point: stand up for the Gaelic!" Seamus Taylor, "…in which we learn more of Gaelic music," *Celtic Heritage* (December 1997/January 1998): 5-6, 26-28.

Please see Taylor's biography at "Seamus Taylor – Yachats Celtic Music Festival," *Yachats Celtic Music Festival,* last visited May 24, 2015, http://rainspout.org/ARCHIVE/2012%20Archive/seamus.html. It is not atypical to see people with similar tribal sartorial ideology stroll through various Celtic music festivals.

The Cape Breton musician operates within a system of everyday practices, where through manipulating sound, they are able to create communal effects. Understanding the community requires understanding the boundaries of the community expectations, as well as the various spectrums of acceptability that exist within these expectations. The Cape Breton musician manipulates this system through embellishments, chord selection, or the choice of tune and tune type. The adept Cape Breton musician does not see these boundaries as rigid and solid, but understands how to play with the borders in order to create effects. So while fifty years ago it might not have been seen as acceptable to follow a jig with a strathspey or reel, a musician today might see potential in manipulating the expectation that a jig will be followed by a jig. It is through these manipulations that the communal judgment shifts, thus shifting the range of possible actions acceptable within the system.

## 7.2. How Cape Breton Musicians Learn Music

When the Cape Breton musician begins learning how to play music, the musician is not only learning the physical requirements of eliciting a sound from their instrument, they are also learning the community's boundaries of acceptability. When the musician learns to perform, they are learning the background processes that inform each musical performance, and gaining the rhetorical judgment of how to interact within the community. This is not to say that simply in acquiring this understanding, all musicians become equally rhetorically adept. On the contrary, rhetoric—even vernacular rhetoric—is an art, and likewise musicians' talents in navigating the community's expectations will vary. In the next section, I will outline how musicians learn their instrument, and how this affects the community's vernacular rhetoric.

The way that Cape Breton musicians learn their instrument is an important part of the community's everyday background. The distinction should be made between learning how to play the instrument and how to play a tune. While often in tandem, the two are different processes, as learning an instrument concerns learning the skill of how to elicit particular sounds and learning a tune concerns the memorization of a particular melody.[354] Learning how to play the instrument within Cape Breton straddles the line between formal and informal learning. Most musicians who perform at the various venues also teach at workshops, camps, and private lessons. Taking lessons to learn how to play the instrument is a relatively new trend in the Cape Breton community. Fiddler Stan Chapman is said to have taught the first workshop on the island, attended by students Natalie MacMaster, Ashley MacIsaac, and Wendy MacIsaac.[355] Most of the musicians in this workshop came from families active in the Cape Breton musical community, so they also were exposed to the music at home. The other common way of learning the instrument occurs when an aspiring musician watches other musicians play and attempts to mimic them. One Cape Breton piano player remarked on how he learned: "Nobody showed me how to play. My sister Alice took piano lessons from a nun at the school. She'd leave the piano and I'd go play what she'd play."[356] These two modes of learning show the two poles of a spectrum. Most Cape Breton musicians

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[354] Compare this to learning how to sing, and learning the words of a song. The two go hand in hand, but are different processes. The skills gained in learning a new tune can be applied to other tunes, so ultimately advance the goal of learning the instrument. But they are different processes.

[355] Doherty, *Paradox on the Periphery*, 100.

[356] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

learning their instrument straddle this line, having taken lessons in some form and also learning on their own through observation.

The influence of teachers affects the musicians' styles in ways that previously only musical performances might have. While often, the same musician who performs is the teacher providing lessons, in the lessons themselves these musicians are articulating their own understanding of when and how to make a particular judgment. Generally these lessons involve the teacher teaching the students a tune, and through teaching the tune and the ways that the tune can be performed, also teaching the principles of musical expression. Teaching is a relatively recent addition to the Cape Breton musical community having affected two to three generations of musicians.[357] In altering the way that musicians acquire the community vernacular, the teaching of music has altered the vernacular itself:

> "Things have changed more since the teaching has began. I don't know if it's from the teaching, but because other influences are more readily available. CDs, Cassettes, so people are listening and breaking down more. Just when you're exposed to more, you can mess around with it."[358]

This musician hints at the multivariate approach in how musicians learn. Not only are musicians taking lessons, they're using computers to slow down recordings, they're listening to more influences both past and present.

In learning how to perform, Cape Breton musicians don't only take lessons from other Cape Breton musicians. It is also increasingly common for them to take lessons from classical musicians. The goal of learning from classical musicians in addition to Cape Breton musicians, is to gain a better understanding of the instrument, which

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[357] See Doherty, *Paradox on the Periphery,* 99-102.

[358] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

would allow the musician to play more advanced tunes requiring difficult techniques. In doing so, the musicians demonstrate an understanding that the knowledge of the instrument is distinct from the knowledge of performing within the community. While a fiddler might learn a Bach gigue from their classical music teacher, they have the understanding that the community would not accept a performance of this composition at a Cape Breton dance. The prevalence of musicians who have taken classical courses has created a divide between those who do incorporate classical technique, and those who don't. Whether a musician has classical technique can be seen in how the musician holds their instrument, with the classically trained musicians keeping the wrist down and straight on the arm that supports the instrument.[359] It is more likely for non-classically trained musicians to have their wrist bent.[360]

> "I teach beginners, and I like that better, taking them through string builder. When it comes to trad. stuff, I just try to explain - this is what I do, and this is why. I play with my wrist down, here is why. There are plenty of players who don't. If you just give people the information, then sometimes that helps. I remember the first time I was teaching, teaching that wrist, it seemed like you were insulting people, you know. They'll say "Buddy plays with his wrist up, and he does fine" and I'll say, "yes he does, and he does fine". It's not even that, I'll just say, if you want to play for awhile, here are some tips. If you're trying to water your garden and your hose is going around the corner… How can you argue with that."[361]

This illustrates a fear here that, some Cape Bretoners see the influence of classical music technique on Cape Breton music as an indictment against older players who lacked formal training. This indictment doesn't seem to be expressed by the established

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[359] My own classical teacher threatened to tape a thumbtack to the neck of my viola in order to make sure I was never lazy.

[360] Many traditional musicians also hold the instrument without their wrist bent, however many don't.

[361] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

musicians, even amongst those who lacked classical education. These musicians expressly admire the abilities of the classically trained fiddler. The anti-classical mentality is expressed more from the aspiring musician looking to learn the tradition, or from the non-musicians. This perceived fear does not translate into a lack of popularity for those fiddlers with classical training, though, as some of Cape Breton's most popular musicians have such training.

It is not uncommon for a musician learning to play the piano to already play the fiddle. Many of the musicians on Cape Breton play both instruments. In fact, many Cape Breton musicians play the fiddle, play the piano, and stepdance, with some also playing the guitar. It is not uncommon for fiddlers and piano players to switch spots during a dance or at a concert.

> "It helped knowing the tunes to learn to play, but I think what helped more, I think because I was so interested in everyone that was playing with me, that I really started, while I was playing, I would pay a lot of attention to what they were doing, and listening to their different styles and everything, and I didn't try to play like anyone when I started playing, I just wanted to get the right chords, and hopefully get the right beat, and my main concern was always timing."[362]

Here the musician is acknowledging the difference between understanding the technique of performing the instrument, and understanding the musical vernacular of the community. The musician already had a solid understanding of how the music worked, and what was important, which allowed her to focus on learning technique when learning the new instrument.

In addition to teaching, musicians also learn by listening to other musicians. When someone learns by ear, they pick up the tune through trial and error. The ear

[362] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

recognizes the relationships between notes, so if a note was a full step, such as the difference between a G and an A, or two steps, such as the difference between a G and a B, the musician hears that relationship. The musician also hears the tunes as phrases. Tunes usually share a similar construction. A single tune is divided in half, as an A part and a B part. The A part can further be subdivided into different 'phrases'. If you make the analogy that a tune is like a set of two paragraphs, the 'phrases' of the paragraphs would be the equivalent of a sentence. They are part of a greater whole of the paragraph, which carries meaning itself, but internally, the sentence can be seen as complete with its own conclusion. Likewise, the words would be the equivalent of single notes. Understanding the rhetorical properties of individual notes requires the viewing the note in the context of the notes surrounding it, as words too require context of the words around them. So the important part of learning a tune by ear, is paying attention to the phrasing of the tune. If I were to ask someone to memorize the text of four sentences repeated out loud, it would be difficult for the person to do so by focusing solely on each individual word. But when the person listens to the words together, and grasps the meaning of the sentence, then the person is more likely to commit the sentence to memory. Phrases make the ideal analogy to sentences, because they are mini-melodies that resolve themselves.[363] The musician listens for these phrases, and through trial and error, plays along. As musicians do this more and more, it is easier to pick up a tune by ear. When you listen to enough tunes, you begin to pick up patterns in how phrases

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[363] If you think of the nursery rhyme, hickery dickery dock, those three words themselves are a musical phrase: hickery dickery dock. The phrase's melody repeats itself with: "the mouse ran up the clock." Then the next section is a separate phrase, and so on.

work and resolve. It is possible for musicians to immediately discern whether a tune is an Irish tune, a Scottish tune, or a Cape Breton tune based on the vernacular patterns existing within the composition.

More and more musicians are learning how to read music, but not as an exclusive way to learn music. Reading is supplemental, not fundamental. For many of the musicians who read music, unlike a classical orchestra where the musician reads during performance, the fiddler reads the music as a method of hearing the tune to learn it. It is not the notes on the page that help commit the tune to the musician's memory, but hearing the notes that the page guides the musician to play. In the case of a tune that they might be familiar with, reading the music also helps to fill any gaps where the musician is unable to discern aurally.

Most Cape Breton fiddlers will learn a tune by ear. The fiddler listens to a tune so that they learn how it should sound, and have the skill to translate this to the fiddle itself. There doesn't need to be much trial and error, because the skill gives the fiddler the ability to sense relationships between notes, and also the prevalence in patterns and stylistic tropes within the music makes tunes predictable for the musician familiar with vernacular patterns. But the tunes don't need to be transmitted from fiddle to fiddler. It was common for tunes to be passed from mouth to fiddle through Gaelic mouth music. Here the Gaelic speaker would "lilt" a tune by singing non-sense words that make the sounds that mimic tunes a fiddle would play, which the fiddler would replicate on the fiddle. This tradition of Gaelic singing is called 'puirt à beul.'[364] When Cape Breton was a

[364] Sometimes translated as music of the mouth, or mouth music. See, for example "Puirt a beul, Scottish Mouth Music, Quadriga Consort, Elisabeth Kaplan, Laurenz

predominantly Gaelic speaking community, it was common for mothers to sing these tunes to their children, so that when the children would learn the fiddle, they would already know the tunes.

The Gaelic influence on the fiddle is not as strong as it once was. When Gaelic was actively spoke on the Island, there was a living relationship between Gaelic and fiddle tunes. Romanticists point to the lack of Gaelic speaking on the island as a sign that fiddlers are not playing tunes 'correctly' anymore.[365] The argument they make is that some tunes were originally Gaelic tunes with Gaelic words, not fiddle tunes. As such, they argue, knowing where to place the 'correct' emphasis on notes, or how to 'correctly' embellish a tune, requires knowledge of how the tune would have sounded in the Gaelic language. Fiddler Glenn Graham shows how these Gaelic-philes argue that the chicken always came before the egg, when in fact Gaelic words are just as likely added to tunes written for the fiddle as vice versa. He makes the argument that because fiddlers today learn these tunes from fiddlers who might have learned them from Gaelic singers, today's fiddlers aurally pick up nuances of musical expression from the Gaelic singers.[366]

Transmission of tunes also occurs between bagpipes and fiddle. The main difference between the fiddler and the piper, is that the piper only has access to eight

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Schiffermüller," *YouTube,* last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovhNIBnH9es.

[365] Dr. John Shaw, of the University of Edinburgh has advanced this theory in both academia, and amongst Cape Bretoners. Shaw drew from Gaelic speakers who were formerly active within the Cape Breton music community but lost touch to argue that knowledge of Gaelic was essential for properly playing fiddle tunes. The result of a loss of Gaelic in younger fiddlers, Shaw describes as a "post-Gaelic" sound that has "the character of an invented tradition with aesthetic and social points of reference increasingly distant from the region…" John Shaw, "Language, Music, and Local Aesthetics," 43. See my discussion of John Shaw's work in chapter 5.

[366] See, Graham, *Cape Breton Fiddle Music*, 9-13.

notes. So while a fiddler can put their fingers on a string and literally play any tone of note, including all of the spaces in between, the piper is limited to the holes that their chanter allows. Generally, a piper is restricted to tunes in the key of A (and some in the key of D). But the key of A that the piper plays in is not the standard A major scale most are familiar with.[367] This scale of pipers is called a mixolydian mode, as the seventh note of the scale is lower than the seventh note of a major scale.[368] Rather than a G sharp, which is in the A major scale, the pipe scale has a G natural. But that's not completely accurate. The G natural played by pipes is somewhere between a G natural and a G sharp. It's not a note available on a tempered scale.

This point about the G natural on the pipes being somewhere the G sharp and the G natural is important when talking about the everyday Cape Breton music community, especially for older members of the everyday Cape Breton music community who would have been more likely to learn tunes from pipers. When the fiddler might learn a tune from a piper, if they are mimicking the sound of the piper, they would play the same note, somewhere between the G natural and the G sharp, rather than playing the G natural. There are stories of these fiddlers being criticized by people from outside the community, for playing out of tune. Most Western music is built upon the same fixed scale found on the piano. But this fixed scale is hardly the only possible scale, and while it is currently the most familiar musical scale in the Western music's everyday, Cape Breton's musical vernacular carries remnants of an alternative scale. When Cape Breton fiddlers learned tunes from pipers, the flatted seventh note

[367] The standard scale here being the common solfège "do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti, do."
[368] So using the solfège from the previous footnote, "ti" would be a half step lower.

was not out of tune to their ears. The note was part of their everyday. Outsiders who heard the note, and heard it as out of tune, judged the note according to the outsiders' everyday conception of what and how music should sound. This demonstrates how individuals can make a value judgment within a community without recognizing that the values they are placing upon the community contrast with the values of the community they judge. If it was tourists from away, whose only familiarity with music was classical music, or any other Western music based on a tempered pitch tuning, nothing would indicate to these individuals that, when they were judging a musician to be out of tune, that musician was judged by some in his community as being precisely in tune.

Because Cape Breton fiddle music shares a large repertoire of tunes from tunes originally written for the bagpipes, the keys of Cape Breton tunes are commonly in the key of A. This is a contrast from the everyday Irish session where tunes are often in the key of D or G, or Bluegrass music which is often in E or B. This distinction contributes to the everyday of these communities. When leading a session in Amherst, Massachusetts, the majority of musicians who would play with me identified with American-Irish or New England musical communities. Some of these musicians would become frustrated that our session played so many tunes in the key of A. It was not that these tunes were new tunes that they needed to learn that caused frustration, but that the tunes were in the key of A. The key of A was a familiar part of the community that I identified with, and thus was the key for most of the tunes in my repertoire, while it was less common for the communities of these musicians. It is a subtle distinction about the everyday that sits in the background, and comes to the surface when contrasted with other traditions.

## 7.3. The Cape Breton Square Dance

At this point I should explain the dance, since the Cape Breton square dance is one of the central focal points of the Cape Breton community, and informs how the music is played. A square dance is made up of many square sets, with set each lasting anywhere between 15 minutes and 25 minutes. The set is comprised of three different figures.[369] The first two figures are dances where the fiddler plays jigs, and the final figure is danced to reels. The dance must have at least four couples, but can accommodate many more. The first figure begins with everyone holding hands. For a majority of the dancing that takes place in the first figure, you dance with your neighbor, not your partner. This can encourage conversation, or at the least a create an ice-breaker, since you have to physically hold the other person. The fiddler will string together a set of jigs for three or four minutes.[370] After the first figure there is a break of a for the musicians and the dancers to rest, before the second figure begins. Everyone socializes during this break. For the second figure, the fiddler again plays a set of jigs. The second

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[369] This is called the 'West Mabou' set. The 'West Mabou' set by far the most common dance performed on the island. The dances in Sydney sometimes feature other types of figures, but Sydney does not hold regular dances, and does not have the active dance culture that Inverness County on the west side of Cape Breton has. But the regularity of the West Mabou set of dance is a recent phenomenon, relatively speaking. Dances in Boston are more and more scarce, because the number of Cape Bretoners from Cape Breton is dwindling. But it was once an extremely active community. The dances in Boston feature an older crowd of dancers, and these dancers typically dance sets other than the West Mabou set. They will dance the West Mabou set, but they will dance other sets as well.

[370] See, for example, "Cape Breton square dance Inverness Co figure 1" YouTube, last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hg-rdvAsGw8.

figure is a little more crowded than the first figure because some couples sit out of the first figure if they don't feel like dancing with someone else.[371]

For the final figure, the fiddler will string together a set of reels, and this could last ten to fifteen minutes.[372] Such a long set is demanding on both the musicians and the dancers. In the final figure, the couples will begin in a circle. Couples will split up and dance away from each other forming two circles. One ring of dancers dances clockwise while the other ring dances counter-clockwise. The dancers in one circle interact with dancers in the other by alternating between offering their right hands and then their left hands, as they move past a dancer coming the opposite direction. Essentially you're shaking hands with people who are coming at you, switching hands with every person. This is called the 'grand chain'. Eventually, you'll encounter your partner, where the two of you will join hands and 'swing' around a few times[373]. When the spinning subsides, the partners split again, heading back the way they came, again dancing the 'grand chain'. Again the dancers will encounter their partner, and this time they will 'promenade' where the couples will walk in a line, one couple after another.[374] This line will straighten from a circle formation, and form a long line, combining with couples who have been dancing in other sets throughout the hall. Eventually every group

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[371]See, for example, "Cape Breton square dance Inverness Co figure 2" YouTube, last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-PVQgTRcRU.

[372] See, for example, "Cape Breton square dance Inverness Co figure 3" YouTube, last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQ_9xBZ_U-4.

[373] The speed of this swinging ranges greatly from those who spin their partner intent on making them dizzy, to those who spin their partner intending to be gentle. There is room for play here.

[374] This has been confusing so far. And it is. When dancing this for the first time (and a few times thereafter) newcomers are told to "follow the person in front of you", because the dance makes no sense. Review the source in footnote 372.

dancing in the hall will form one long line. The lead couple followed by those couples following will split through this line running down the hall, forcing couples to split apart. Visually this looks impressive when there are fifty couples splitting apart. Every couple will in turn take a part of this running through the middle until there are two lines of dancers—typically a line of men and a line of women—holding hands with each other, and facing their partner. Here the dancers are dancing a basic 'reel step' to the music.[375] Eventually this line of men and line of women will drop hands, and each dancer will dance over to their partner. The original circle will form again, and the process will repeat. This cycle occurs four times, and then at the end all the couples join hands before clapping in time with the music to signal to the fiddler that they're finished.[376] After this set, the musicians will take a few minutes break, and the process will then repeat.

At most dances, in between sets, the dancers form a circle, and the musicians will perform the 'step-dancer's queue.' The musician strings together a group of strathspeys and reels, and step-dancers will take turns dancing in the middle of the circle, where they will show off their steps.[377] Eventually the night winds down, and the crowd thins until the dance is over. At family dances, soda and water can be bought at the hall's canteen, along with snacks. At adult dances, you can also purchase alcohol. At a family dance, the alcohol is consumed in the parking lot outside the hall. Conversation takes

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[376] When the couples have all joined hands, it's common for a few dancers to pull the circle in together, 'whooping' as they do. This happens after especially lively dances where everyone is in good cheer and excited.

[377] See, for example, "Step dancing at Brook Village Dance, Cape Breton" YouTube, last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-oI9da2jhFQ.

place between the sets. Conversation takes place as dancers retreat from the sweaty heat of the hall to the fresh cool air of the Cape Breton nighttime. Conversation takes place between regulars, newcomers, and any combination therein. One of the effects of a newcomer participating in a dance, is when they are later encountered in the marketplace or at the restaurant, they might also be greeted with conversation. Some regulars are fussy about who they dance with, and may be annoyed if a newcomer disrupts a set by participating, assuming that they will not pay attention or overly disrupt the routine of the dance. But generally, newcomers are both welcome and encouraged to participate. It is not atypical to see a regular in need of a partner to drag a newcomer, who had seemed resigned to watching, onto the dance floor.

## 7.4. The Cape Breton Spaces of Appearance

Thus far in this chapter I have focused on Cape Breton's communal expectations in relation to the actions. I conclude this section by discussing the various spaces of appearances in Cape Breton where this action takes place. Members of the Cape Breton community see these spaces as having the potential for musical action, whether it be planned or spontaneous. While venues such as dance halls are more inclined to planned action, venues such as the Red Shoe pub have the potential for spontaneous action at any time. At any time, patrons of the Red Shoe Pub expect that any of the various musicians in the audience will set up and perform.[378] Musicians who go here, know that they will be appearing before others, and that there is the potential that they will be asked to perform. Individuals are also expected to perform at the various house parties

[378] See, for example, "Ceilidh at the Shoe" YouTube, last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3CxOvwpd4A8.

that occur on the island. Again, by virtue of attending the parties, musicians understand that they will potentially perform.

During the summer months, a dance takes place five nights a week in community and church halls throughout the Island. In the winter months, a dance takes place usually only on Saturday nights in West Mabou. While each of the dances is the same, in that the same dances are performed, and that each has the same general setup, these dances are experienced differently. To the community, the background practices at West Mabou are slightly different from the background practices at Glencoe Mills. On Mondays, the dance is at Brook Village Hall (an adult dance, so alcohol can be consumed in the dance hall). On Wednesday nights, the dance is at Scotsville (a family dance, so alcohol can be consumed in the parking lot). On Thursday nights, a family dance is held in Glencoe Mills. On Friday nights, and adult dance is held in Southwest Margaree. And on Saturday nights, a family dance is held in West Mabou. I have earlier discussed the action that takes place here, whether it be music or dance. When I say that the background practices are slightly different at each location, I refer to the habits that form within the community at each location. For example, certain cliques routinely sit in certain areas.[379] At some locations the crowd congregate in different areas outside to cool off. Different refreshments are expected in different locations, and so on. For example, because one must drive down a dirt road through the forest for a half hour in the dark in order to get to Glencoe Mills, before arriving at the idyllic view of what looks like an old 19th century wooden church hall, the dance draws a disproportionate amount of

[379] For example, Brook Village can get warm fast, so the crowd will try to congregate under fans--in fact, at Brook Village, I have seen some couples attempt to guide their dancing so that they maximize the amount of time they are under ceiling fans.

tourists. Yet the one room hall is quite small, and can't fit as large a crowd as other dance halls. So unless the hall will feature a particularly exciting set of musicians, it tends to draw a smaller local crowd, since the quality of the dance is decreased by the tourists. This is the type of nuance that locals understand when thinking about each dance hall as different.

The places where the Cape Breton community appears together features a regular, but evolving, set of faces. It is not uncommon to see the same people at nearly every dance in any given week. But it is also not uncommon to see new faces begin to attend next year, while other faces are no longer seen. Given that dances begin at 9:00 p.m. and continue until midnight or 1:00 a.m., one needs endurance to attend every dance in a week while also maintaining a work schedule during the daytime. Some attend the dance for the sake of the dance itself, and will never miss a dance, while others decide on attending based on the fiddler scheduled to perform that dance. The fiddler for any dance is scheduled sometimes weeks in advance. The fiddler then has to find a piano player to accompany. The piano player might be advertised alongside the fiddler, but acknowledging the accompaniment here is sometimes done last minute, since the fiddler might not find a piano player until the day before.[380] At each dance, the fiddler will perform for about two and a half to three hours of actual music, maybe more.

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[380] While the dancers might decide on whether to go to a dance based on the fiddler playing, the fiddler's focus is finding a piano player that they work well with. If a fiddler has the chance that piano player X might be able to accompany them for a particular dance, they will wait as long as possible in the hopes that piano player X might eventually commit.

The routine of the summer dance is supplemented by routine 'ceilidhs' which are essentially informal sit down concerts at halls or pubs, where alcohol, tea, and food is usually served. These take place on Sundays at both the Red Shoe Pub in Mabou and at the Celtic Music Interpretive Centre in Judique. The Doryman's Tavern in Cheticamp has also featured ceilidhs, as have various other locations throughout the island. In additional to the public informal ceilidhs, there are also the various house parties held throughout the year by members of the Cape Breton music community. These house parties feature smaller and limited crowds, but some of the more notorious yearly parties feature crowds that far exceed the most packed dances. At these ceilidhs, people sit to listen to the music, but there is the usual general din of background noise that might accompany any restaurant. People are having quiet conversations, ordering food, and drinking. It is common to hear many musicians at the Ceilidhs, not only the ones advertised to perform. Musicians who are not playing elsewhere are likely to also be in the audience to listen, and it is common for musicians to ask each other to take their place so that they might take a break. It is also common for a ceilidh to be advertised from noon until four, but to continue until hours later.[381]

In addition to the dances, ceilidhs, and house parties, the Cape Breton community will sometimes appear together at a festival. Each of the villages in Inverness County have a weekend festival, featuring golf tournaments, lobster dinners, family picnics, and day-long ceilidhs. The main music festival in Cape Breton is Celtic Colours. Taking place for a week in October, Celtic Colours is an international Celtic

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[381] One of the first weeks that the Red Shoe Pub was under operation of the Rankin family, I was at the pub from 10am until after midnight, and the music did not stop once. Upwards of fifteen musicians performed that day.

music festival with venues all over the island. It features several concerts each night, each featuring Cape Breton musicians alongside traditional musicians from around the world.[382] Every night, after the concerts end, the Gaelic College at St Ann's, holds the Festival Club, which is a series of impromptu musical sets featuring any of the musicians in town for the festival, both locals and from abroad.[383] Rather than a formal concert, this Festival club is more like an informal ceilidh.[384] The audience is either seated at shared long tables, or standing along the walls, and alcohol is served. Behind the scenes here, is the 'artists-only' set of back rooms, where smaller sessions take place for the musicians. Here musicians might meet and perform together for the first time, and immediately take their newly discovered musical partnership to the great hall for a slot on the Festival Club stage. These performances, especially backstage continue past sun-up.

Celtic Colours is a major tourism draw, as it pairs Cape Breton's prime Fall foliage for tourists in the daytime, with major Celtic music concerts in the evening. This event also marks the general season's end for summer music events on the Island. Except for the year-long West Mabou square dance on Saturdays, the rest of the Island's dances would have ended, as would have the local pub ceilidhs. Some of the Island's restaurants will close up shop for the winter, as they are exclusively tourism based. The

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[382] Here Cape Breton musician J.P. Cormier plays a set accompanied by Scottish musician Tim Edey, "J.P. Cormier & Tim Edey – Celtic Colours Guitar Summit 2010" YouTube, last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8W59k3UPEQ.

[383] See, for example, "Brenda Stubbert & Howie MacDonald – live @ ECMA 2010 – Celtic Colours Festival Club Stage" YouTube, last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5yLNK3jmB7Q.

audience at Celtic Colours features both local Cape Breton regulars alongside tourists from off the Island who come solely for the festival.

## 7.5. The Cape Breton Community: Final Thoughts

The Cape Breton musical community features diversity within its judgment. The commonality here is that community members often share judgment about the focus of import, though they differ in opinions over this focus. So the importance of Gaelic, or whether a musician should shift in keys, are agreed upon topics of debate, but each topic allows for a spectrum of thought, and this spectrum can occur in the background. There is no set demographic that molds whether someone will be for or against change. Some differences are generational, but age alone does not explain where members of the community stand. These differences are not downplayed though, and are acknowledged by musicians.

> "There are some who don't appreciate us. And there are a whole host of reasons, probably. And I'd be lying to say I knew what they were. Maybe they just feel like the music is changing, and maybe they see the new accompaniment as part of that reason. Or maybe they see that they're being left behind, so there's an animosity. And they're not interested in putting the time in. I don't know."[385]

This point raises the question of how the community is maintained, and how community relates to the vernacular. Clearly the members of the community do not coalesce over a common idea of a 'right way to play.' When this musician notes that some don't appreciate the younger musicians for how they sound, the argument concerns the music. While the sides might disagree over how the music should sound, they agree that the music itself is a place of contention. This shared judgment indicates

[385] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

where the conversation of community exists. But this musician's comment hints at something else. This musician's concern is with the members of the community who still engage with the community: they attend ceilidhs, they go to dances, but they don't like what they hear. It is through this engagement that the community member maintains touch with the vernacularity of the community. The background conversations are ever shifting in contrast with the illusion of continuity. Those who have disengaged with the community and voice an opinion outside the community have lost touch with these shifts.[386] When a member of the community stops participating in the conversation, and yells from the sidelines, they have stopped being a part of the community because the conversation of community has already changed.

The community makes common judgments over the boundaries of expectations. Through the spectrum of opinions, the Cape Breton community allows for change. This change is rhetorical, and is accomplished musically. Musicians understand these expectations, and understand the system of the community. Through understanding this system, musicians gain the ability to manipulate this system, which presses the communicative nature of community. In manipulating the system, these musicians are changing the community's conversation. Musically, these musicians alter the background rhetoric of what it means to be within the Cape Breton community. They have altered the expressive nature of the music through changing communal expectations of embellishments, of chords, and of arrangements. Through this

[386] See my discussion of vernacularity on page 41. Abrahams introduces the term to recognize both the most recent slang, and the most archaic turns of phrase. Staying in touch with the most recent slang and the possibilities within the community requires constant interaction with the community.

vernacularity, they have shifted the community's understanding of what it means to be part of the Cape Breton community, so that a time traveler from fifty years ago would not easily comprehend today's Cape Breton musician, nor today's Cape Breton musical rhetoric. Those individuals that disconnect from the conversation are such time travelers. They hold onto an ideal formed by the illusion of continuity, when in fact their community has always changed and will always change. But they key to understanding the community's change requires more than understanding the community's expectations. It requires understanding how individuals act within this system and manipulate it, and through this manipulation, shift the boundaries of acceptability. So now I will turn to the individual.

# CHAPTER 8

# THE INDIVIDUAL IN CAPE BRETON

Now that I have given an overview of the Cape Breton musical community's everyday, in order to complete an outline of a Cape Breton aural rhetoric I will focus on the individual. To understand the community requires understanding that the community is made up of individuals, each acting upon one another. In this section I will focus on how individual musicians act upon the community. This will require discussing how individual musicians make decisions that can affect and influence the community. This is a community made up of individuals who act together seeking to influence each other and distinguish themselves amongst one another. They perform to make a name for themselves, so that the community will recognize them as not only a competent musician, but as an influential musician. They want to excel in their performances. They want to sell albums, be asked to perform at venues, and draw large crowds. They want to be musicians that other musicians point to and talk about for influential qualities. They perform in this way as part of their everyday. In order to focus on the individual, I will develop how the Cape Breton musician understands situations and make decisions. I will explain how the conventions of performing Cape Breton music, and explain how the individual takes the community into account when making decisions within these performances.

## 8.1. The Cape Breton Musicians' Understanding

The decisions made by Cape Breton musicians occur within a system of practices. The Cape Breton musicians understand this system in a particular way that allows them to act by manipulating the system in order to achieve effects. When explaining this, I am

not outlining a set of rules that the musician applies to achieve a given effect. Cape Breton music does not work as a program of rules. In order to avoid this, I will explain how the musician's understanding of particular elements of the music informs the musician's judgment. I am focusing on explaining 'good' judgment. But understanding good judgment also requires explaining the system as if it were constantly evolving and changing, because it is. Musicians' acts within the community can change communal standards for good judgment. I will also explain the flux of this system, and how individual acts change it.

Understanding Cape Breton music is only somewhat distinct from understanding the Cape Breton community. Understanding how to be a musician requires more than just understanding how to make an instrument produce sounds, it also requires understanding how those sounds affect the community.

> "Yeah, at first you have to learn the chords and technique, but then you realize that there's a way you want to say something on a particular tune to sound. Certain chords evoke certain effects, and you can't explain it, but it gives the music a different perspective."[387]

To inform the musician's judgment of when and how to use a particular effect, the musician needs to understand the possibilities of the sounds that can be made. Then the musician has to understand the links between these sounds and the movement of individuals within the community. So while the use of one chord in a particular situation moves audience members from mood x to mood y, another chord in that situation might move the audience from mood x to mood z.

[387] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

When musicians begin to learn the community's music, they often come to the table already having favorite sets recorded by other musicians. The musicians who have recorded these sets are usually musicians advanced in skill, and this favorite set is representative of this advanced skill. It is typical for a musician who is only just learning to want to perform these sets requiring this advanced skill even though they are a beginner. When accompanying, the advanced skill isn't the ability to play a chord or a bass line. The advanced skill is the ability to know *when* to play a chord a bass line. As a result of the desire to play advanced chords early on, the beginner musician overlooks the fundamentals of understanding the music's basic accompaniment foundations.

> "From what I've heard from them, it seems that they're not using the basic chords first. They're using a chord that's not standard. They're using it, and not knowing that it's subbing[388]…Not that you have to theoretically know, but you have to know how to work from the basic."[389]

This musician isn't making the point that the beginner musician is wrong in playing the chords that they played. It's rather that the musician didn't understand why they played the chords that they played. Knowing how to perform the music isn't knowledge of how to mimic a sound, or even how to make a sound. The importance lies in understanding why and when to make a sound.

The emphasis here is that the musician makes decisions based on the sounds that they think should be performed. Not on the skills they need to use in order to elicit the sound. The skill of how to elicit a sound from the instrument drifts into the background as the focus shifts to the mood or effect they wish to elicit through using a particular

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[388] Subbing here refers to the playing of a 'substitute chord.' These are chords that deviate from the basic three-chord chord progression, and represent places within the tune where the accompanist can make a choice as to which chord to use.

[389] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

sound. While this requires knowing how to elicit the sound, for the musician, at some point the skill becomes a reaction, and the communication the focus.

> "That's just it - you have to get the skills first. But it's like, if I'm bowing something teaching, it's entirely different. Then you get all these techniques, and I try to explain after you play long enough - you think of how you want it to sound. It's like when you speak, you don't think that my tongue has to hit the roof of my mouth for that. You just think of a sentence and it comes out. You don't even think of words, but a phrase."[390]

Understanding this is essential to recognizing music as aural rhetoric. Even more so than visual rhetoric, for the musician, the instrument is able to become an extension of the body during a performance. And like the sound generated by the tongue becomes an unconscious reaction as the speaker seeks to create a sound, so too does using a musical instrument become an unconscious reaction for the musician to create a sound. For the speaker, the sounds become words which convey a message that seeks to affect the listener. For the musician, the sounds become notes which convey a message that can affect the listener.

### 8.1.1. How the Cape Breton Musician Understands Musical Structure

Musical structure works in a way similar to a grammar, with the use of chords similar to the use of words. Some musicians with formal training come to understand the theory behind the music, but this knowledge is not enough for understanding how to act within musical performance. Simply because a person might understand the theory behind why a particular chord works and can elicit a particular effect within a tune does not mean that the person has the ability to judge when to use the chord within

[390] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

a tune.[391] "It's only really necessary that you know the sound. You don't need to know the theory behind it."[392] Some Cape Breton musicians' had formal training, studied jazz or classical music at university, and understand the theory behind the music—many don't. These musicians have an embodied knowledge of the music, based on understanding the sound that they want and expect to hear.

Though I talk about the music as being embodied, this does not mean that the musician simply unconsciously understands how to perform a tune, and lets the body guide it. The musician's relationship with a tune evolves as the musician encounters it. Initially, the musician needs to listen and think through the constraints of a particular tune in order to decide what sounds they want to make within each tune. Eventually, the musician becomes familiar with the tune and no longer requires to spend time weighing decisions.

> "When you're trying to figure something out, you're bringing all of your tools to play. I don't think you're - there's anything unconscious. If I've figured it out already, that's when the unconscious kicks in. Then I might consciously feel, though, oh I might change that to this or this, because I know it might work. But if it's for the first time, or you're not comfortable with it, then I think you're very conscious about how you approach it."[393]

The musician who performs well understands the sounds needed in general situations, and this is informed by the community. The musician then takes this general understanding and applies it to particular situations within particular tunes. It might be that part of one tune sounds like part of a different tune, so the musician is informed by this other tune. After playing this particular tune for awhile, the musician becomes

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[391] In a similar vein, not all professors of rhetoric are great public speakers.

[392] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

[393] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

accustomed to the needs of the tune and no longer consciously thinks through its needs. The knowledge of the needs of this tune then filters into understanding the needs of other tunes and so on.

This understanding of the needs of a tune changes, not only based on one's familiarity with the tune, but also depending on the relationship between the musician's role and the tunes. A fiddler might understand a tune differently than an accompanist. Cape Breton features many musicians who perform in both roles, but one Cape Breton piano player explained this relationship thusly:

> "If I played the fiddle, I don't think it would change my style, but it might change my approach…I hope I have the chords I need to have. But maybe there'd be some tunes in there, and learning the melody much more intimately, I'd be able to see, a five [chord] would sound better there. Although it works with what I'm doing, and it's not wrong, but it might just, maybe if the melody is calling for something that I perceived."[394]

This accompanist knows the tunes, but acknowledges that the particular relationship that a musician has with a tune affects how the musician understands the tune. This also would affect the musician if they were a dancer. When the musician is a dancer, they would understand the nature of musical timing, and the placement of accents in a way differently than the musician who doesn't dance.

### 8.1.2. How Listening Informs the Cape Breton Musician's Understanding

Listening is the essential skill needed for a musician to understand how the music works, how the community works, and how other musicians perform. Listening is essential to understand a tune. It is essential to understand the audience. It is essential to understand the community. Listening is quite possibly the most important skill for a

[394] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

musician in order to properly understand the needs of a situation and the needs of the performance.

> "[Knowing how to play the fiddle] helped knowing the tunes to learn to play, but I think what helped more, I think because I was so interested in everyone that was playing with me, that I really started, while I was playing, I would pay a lot of attention to what they were doing, and listening to their different styles and everything, and I didn't try to play like anyone when I started playing, I just wanted to get the right chords, and hopefully get the right beat, and my main concern was always timing."[395]

This musician was a longtime fiddle player, but had only played accompaniment for a short time. Despite her short time on the piano, she was a trusted accompanist who was asked by many fiddlers to play piano. While her understanding of the tunes helped her transition to playing accompaniment, so too did her ability to listen. By listening and attuning herself to the piano players that accompanied her when she played fiddle, she gained an understanding of how piano players approach accompanying tunes.

The accompanist and fiddler need to listen to each other during a performance in order to react appropriately. While musicians do not usually speak to each other within a performance in order to coordinate the music, they extend non-verbal musical cues to one another. Of primary concern here is timing. One musician emphasizes that "[t]he most important thing is to pay attention to timing."[396] Another musician reiterates this when stating her goals within a performance: "I try to listen to, first of all, their gate, their timing, their swing. And then the melody of the tune. They're kind of the two priorities. Then I just try my best to match what they're doing."[397] The fiddler would

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[395] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

[396] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

[397] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

generally be more likely to establish the timing than the accompanist. But the two musicians can push each other and feed off of one another's energy. I have heard one accompanist state that his goal is to push the pace of the fiddler to the edge of their ability, depending on the tune type. Knowing that a particular pace is the edge of a musician's abilities would require paying attention to the musician's performance, and attuning oneself to whether that musician is thriving within the given performance at the given speed. The musicians ideally listen to each other to understand each musician's comfort levels, and to adjust accordingly.

Listening's importance to musical performance cannot be stressed enough. It is essential for the musicians to develop a more intimate understanding of the community's expectations for acceptability, of a tune's needs for chords or embellishment, and of the other musician's acts when performing with another musician. However musicians don't usually realize listening's importance at the outset of performing. "Listening is the most important skill. When people start out. They know their three chords. And for awhile what happens is that we might be playing at the same time, but I'm changing chords, but it takes awhile to learn that you have to listen."[398] This last statement is important. Not every musician realizes the importance of listening—yet the musicians who are seen as the tradition-bearers and who are routinely cited as the best musicians on the island point to listening as "the most important skill." Listening directly affects understanding. Its status of import for the better musicians illustrates how in Cape Breton, a musician's abilities directly relate to a musician's ability to make decisions. Listening informs understanding, which in turn informs decision

[398] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

making. Beginner musicians, or musicians who don't focus on listening, conceive of musical performance as musical production. They perform each note uninformed by the situation or by context.

Listening can allow the musician to excel within a performance, because it allows them to easier understand and acclimate to the unfamiliar. A musician adept at listening can react to fit the needs of the situation, as well as adapt to the nuances of the musicians they are accompanying. One Cape Breton musician describes what it is like to perform with such a musician:

> "[Like] Dave [MacIsaac][399]. I played with him and Troy [MacGillivray][400] at the ECMAs. And he immediately got me, musically. And he immediately could tell where I was going to go with certain things and I guess knowing that I don't do too many things far from the basics. And he would catch on, and sense when I was doing an up-run or a down-run, and I do more ups than downs. But then sometimes we'd have a little moment where he'd guess something and it would be dead on, and we would laugh. But for me it's exciting because I never have that extra filler when I'm playing and they fill in all the little bits."[401]

Because the musicians in question listen, they are able to understand and anticipate the musical actions of the musician quoted. Their ability to listen informs their decisions as to how and what to perform, and when to perform it. Because both musicians are open to the situation, they feed off of each other's musical decisions, constantly reacting to

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[399] See footnote 325 for discussion of Dave MacIsaac. Including in that footnote is also an example of MacIsaac on the guitar.

[400] For an example of Troy MacGillivray on the fiddle, see "Shetland Folk Festival 2007: Troy MacGillivray" YouTube, last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mYv5CGeQSLU.

For an example of MacGillivray on the piano, see "Andrea Beaton and Troy MacGillivray Nova Scotia Fiddlers #2" YouTube, last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VdGaymrzclI.

[401] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

each other, aurally communicating with each other, and anticipating the acts of each other.

This begins to paint a more communicative, conversational understanding of aural rhetoric in Cape Breton.[402] During the ideal musical performance, all of the musicians are listening to one another, and reacting to one another. There is a genuine openness in this dialogue.[403]

> "Many's the dance I've played with Dave [MacIsaac] and at the end we'll have a laugh because I'll have been chasing him, and he'll have been chasing me. It's that interchange again. It's reaction. I'm going to try to find where he's going and he's going try to find where I'm going. So we're cat and mouse all the time. Granted we're always in the same ballpark. Same with Patty Gillis,[404] he'll try something I'll pick up next time."[405]

Unique within musical conversation, is that while the musicians are engaging with one another, and reacting thereto, they are also listening and reacting to the audience, and listening and reacting to the community. Within their musical conversation, the musicians are acting rhetorically towards both each other, as well as towards the audience.

The coordination of the conversation between musicians is essential to a good performance. This is especially compounded when there are multiple accompanists. Not

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[402] In the ideal musical performance, this is similar to Gadamer's development of the conversation. The musicians are guided by their subject matter, the particular tune, and rather than one musician dominate where the performance goes, the musicians are open to one another as they constantly test the other's position. See my discussion of conversation beginning on page 92.

[403] In no way assert that this is the norm, nor that all musicians are listening in this ideal way. Just that listening and openness is the ideal that good musicians aspire to, and that these musicians recognize as part of the ideal musical performance.

[404] For an example of Patty Gillis, see "Beloach – the Schooner Lane Set" YouTube, last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INlQoxWSRxw.

[405] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

only does an accompanist have to listen and react to the fiddler, but the accompanist has to react to the other accompanist. The goals for the musicians is to create a cohesive whole and work to support each other, but if the musicians don't listen and pay attention, they could clash and rather than enhancing one another, could work against one another.

> "It's a combination of following the fiddler and the piano player. You can't have two people taking it their own way. Especially in accompaniment. If there's one person accompanying, they can do whatever they want. As soon as you have to follow another accompanist, you have to take that into consideration."[406]

The potential for clashing is especially strong with guitarists who don't adapt to the accompaniment of the piano player. If the guitar player were to apply rhythms from Irish music into a performance that also included a piano player, the end result would likely clash, given that structurally, the piano cannot mimic those guitar rhythms. Dave MacIsaac is one of the pioneers of Cape Breton guitar playing, and established a guitar style that compliments the guitar. This particular style is built upon MacIsaac's ability to listen.

> I'm bad at working with a guitarist, with the exception of one guitar player [MacIsaac]. Maybe we've played so often that we just unconsciously go in the same direction. I really dislike playing with guitar players unless it's rehearsed. But that's completely different. It's the same concept of you're not together. And sometimes there's that clash of rhythms, or they go off on a different way, and you lose being in the moment. And I think I end up listening to him, because I trust him, and he gives me hints of where it's going to go, but otherwise I find it very difficult [with other guitarists]."[407]

MacIsaac's ability to listen to, adapt to, and communicate with his fellow musicians influence them to trust him musically. This trust of MacIsaac's decisions affects the

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[406] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

[407] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

musician's decisions, since, in having faith that MacIsaac won't fail them, they might feel more flexible to make riskier choices.

How musicians listen to, communicate with, and follow one another influences their performing decisions, which in turn can change a musician's style—for at least that moment. This change might not be obvious or conscious, even to the musician in question. But musicians who listen, adapt to suit the needs of the musicians they are performing with. It is in this adaptation where style can change.

> "Who I'm playing with for accompaniment does not change how I play consciously. But I can tell if I'm playing a dance with Howie [MacDonald][408] versus Kinnon [Beaton].[409] Other people might not be able to tell. I can't tell right away, but I'll be accenting different things. And it's just that interchange that happens - they spur you on to do something different. So yeah, I don't consciously play different. It's all reaction based."[410]

In this community, ideally a musician's musical decisions are not programmatic and blueprint based. At each given moment of crisis requiring a decision, a musician might have a repertoire of choices to make, even within that musician's own stylistic preferences. Playing with musician X might result in the musician being steered towards certain choices, while playing with musician Y might result in the musician being steered towards a different set of choices. While the musician might make different choices than they usually would make, these choices are not outside of what they consider acceptable. Musicians makes decisions based on their understanding of

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[408] For an example of Howie MacDonald, see "Howie MacDonald & Mac Morin" YouTube, last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TjyHur3_GdE.

[409] For an example of Kinnon Beaton, see "Andrea & Kinnon Beaton Set – Part One" YouTube, last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VfazypdZhpU.

[410] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

possible choices—not of a single choice—even though more often than not they might make a particular choice. Listening to other musicians shifts this understanding and filters the how they make particular choices.

When musicians listen to other musicians it also opens up their understanding of possibilities. While the Cape Breton musicians each operate within a spectrum of expectations, they learn these expectations and possibilities by listening to the other musicians in the community. The better musicians in Cape Breton devour listening to other musicians.

> "I think that I've listened to so much of them, and I know the bits that I love out of everyone of them. Like Joel [Chaisson]'s lift,[411] I want to have that when I play, but I don't know if I can do it, but I think subconsciously I try to be a little bouncy. And Betty Lou [Beaton]'s[412] accurate chords, I want to have an ear like hers. And you know I'd love to be able to do some of the diddles that Tracey [Dares][413] does. John Morris [Rankin][414] was my hero, he's the one that I love and Troy is a friggen monster."[415]

Being able to identify who a musician is through listening alone is a point of pride for some Cape Breton musicians.[416] But it is through this listening and absorption, that

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[411] For an example of Joel Chaisson's piano playing, see "VIDEO 1 Andrea Beaton Wendy MacIsaac Joel Chaisson Pat Gillis Governors Pub July 2 2014 1" YouTube, last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGO17rSU6Go.

[412] For an example of Betty Lou Beaton's piano playing, see "Kinnon & Betty Lou Beaton Clogs and Reels PH Ceilidh July 15 2014" YouTube, last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lRHdyt3Jr1k.

[413] For an example of Tracey Dares' piano playing, see "Cape Breton Fiddle : Natalie MacMaster ii" YouTube, last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xF5gzxUjKRk.

[414] For an example of John Morris Rankin's piano playing, see "Ashley, John Allan, Stuart, John Morris Rankin" YouTube, last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1ytBSAG4wo.

[415] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

[416] In Ashley MacIsaac's album, *Fine, Thank you very much*, he mimics a different fiddler and piano player on each track. MacIsaac, one of the Island's virtuosos, purposefully did

stylistic nuances of one musician make their way into the performance of another musician.

To be clear, not all Cape Breton musicians listen. The focus in this project is on musical vernacular rhetoric. Romantic views of vernacular rhetoric or of folk traditions, might focus solely on the folk practices, with the discussion ignoring that within a particular practice some individuals excel while other individuals are not as proficient. But this should be a tenant of rhetoric; some rhetorical attempts absolutely fail. Understanding a rhetoric requires understanding where these failures originate. In Cape Breton, one musician succinctly puts that if a musician fails within a performance, usually it's because, "they're just not listening or paying attention."[417]

When an accompanist doesn't listen, then they won't adapt to the fiddler's intended musical path. They will likely miss any cues that would attune them towards appropriate decisions. When the fiddler transitions from one tune into another, the accompanist doesn't know what tune will come next. The fiddler will at most shout out the tonal center of the tune, so for example the fiddler might yell "A" if the fiddler is planning on shifting into A major from G. This is what the fiddler would yell if they are shifting into A minor from G as well. But the fiddler won't yell out a key change if they

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so after he received some criticism from the Island's community for his earlier album *Hi, how are you today*, which split opinion on the Island. *Hi, how are you today* features fuses the traditional Cape Breton fiddle tunes with contemporary rock-inspired arrangements. Some of those resistant to innovation on the Island criticized MacIsaac for not playing 'traditional' music. His response was *Fine, thank you very much*, where he demonstrated that he understands traditional music as much, if not more, than anyone in the community, by mimicking the likes of fiddlers Winston Fitzgerald, Buddy MacMaster, etc, along with the community's well known piano players. Anecdotally, locals tell me stories of when the album first came out, how they would fool people into having them guess the wrong musician.

[417] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

are shifting from A major to A minor, or any other variation within a tonal center.[418] The accompanist has to listen for the tune and respond accordingly with the chords required for that new key. If the accompanist has previously chorded to a given tune, then they will be able to quickly adapt to the chords needed; if they haven't, then their only recourse is to listen to the tune as they chord, and adapt to suit the needs of the notes that they hear. There is an expectation that if the accompanist doesn't respond as needed the first time through, they will use appropriate chords the second time through. The only way that an accompanist can respond as expected is if they listen. But this isn't simply listening for the sake of listening, this is listening for the sake of anticipating and informing immediate action. "I one hundred percent believe that people who play inappropriate just aren't listening to the tune. I feel like I hear two instruments fighting."[419] The instruments would be heard to fight if the accompanist plays a chord that doesn't match with the notes of the tune. The instruments would also be interpreted as fighting if the musicians aren't paying attention to one another's tempo or timing, etc.

This describes the issues that could occur when a single accompanist isn't listening to the fiddler. When there is a second accompanist, an extra layer of listening is added. Each accompanist must listen to the other accompanist as well as the fiddler, and react and adjust accordingly. Ideally, the accompanists will give each other room to make decisions, but it becomes complicated for example, if the piano player might play a substitution chord that the guitarist doesn't expect. Even if the guitarist doesn't expect

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[418] Musicians from other traditions can find this confusing, if it's not expected. I have played with musicians who expected being notified when going from major to minor, etc.

[419] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

this chord, if they are listening, and anticipating the acts of the piano player, they will be able to react accordingly.

> "It's a combination of following the fiddler and the piano player. You can't have two people taking it their own way. Especially in accompaniment. If there's one person accompanying, they can do whatever they want. As soon as you have to follow another accompanist, you have to take that into consideration."[420]

This also extends beyond chords, and applies to timing and rhythm as well, even more so than if there was a single accompanist having to listen to the fiddler. The guitar can apply a variety of rhythmic strumming patterns. Some of these patterns suit a partnership with the piano, but some don't.[421] If the guitarist wasn't listening, they wouldn't adapt their rhythmic patterns as needed, and the result would be a clashing cacophony of sound.

Listening informs the understanding of many elements that the musician has to factor when performing. When making decisions within performance, the musician judges all of the inputs of that moment and in relation to the musician's understanding of acceptability. Listening is often the only way that the musician can understand the particular of that given moment. Listening also contributes to how the musician understands the communal standards of acceptability. Musicians venting frustration about the performance of newer musicians emphasize that the faults of these musicians stem from not listening:

> "Honestly, my experience that I've heard several times. And I've heard it less and less, but when I did hear it, I found the kids weren't paying attention. They weren't listening. They didn't put as much stock as important as I did. That you

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[420] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

[421] This is especially true of the more Irish-influenced guitar rhythmic patterns mentioned previously. See my discussion of Irish influenced guitar in Cape Breton on page 162 and an example in footnote 326.

had to listen and make it work and be something pleasurable. They played something that was wrong, and they didn't know it was going to be wrong. So maybe they're not at the level that I thought they should have been to play. Maybe in their own development, they're not in a place where they knew it was going to be acceptable."[422]

Here the musician establishes a rhetorical standard: that the music be something pleasurable. The musician hints that to perform music pleasurable for the audience requires the musician to pay attention and to make adjustments as needed. This is key to recognizing music as rhetorical, and to recognizing music as action that requires judgment. The skill that this musician emphasizes is not the skill with the instrument, but the skill with the judgment—a musician needs the right approach in order to perform pleasurable music. This approach is not one where the musician works from a blueprint of chords and notes, but one where the musician adapts to the needs of the moment. Understanding what is needed at a given moment requires that the musician listen.

#### 8.1.3. How Musical Roles Inform the Cape Breton Musician's Understanding

Ideally musicians understand that, when performing together, they have a role within the performance. This was hinted upon earlier when discussing listening, in pointing out how musicians need to respond to each other and adjust accordingly. But this listening can only inform a musician's decisions about a role if they already have an understanding of their role. At the basic level, there are two categories of roles: melody and accompaniment.

[422] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

> "…accompanying, even if you take it out of the traditional sense, there's a role played. By anyone. You're there for support. Rhythm. Chord changes. You're backing someone up. That's the fundamentals of it."[423]

But this fundamental of the role of accompanists becomes more nuanced as additional instruments are added. To illustrate this, I have once seen four Cape Breton musicians play on a single piano. The musician on the highest range of the piano played the melody and only the melody. The musician a few octaves lower played the main chords to accompany the melody. The musician the next few octaves lower played additional chords that worked to enhance the second musician's chords. The musician in the bottom range played only the bass notes. This was not a collaboration that would ever occur on stage, and was only done for fun, but it illustrates the musician's understanding of roles. When each musician entered the performance (and this was not something that was planned out, the musicians literally approached the piano one after another) they decided the notes to play based on an understanding of a role for that given time.

A musician's understanding of their role informs the decisions that they might make within a performance. So far I have mostly shown performance decisions in an ideal world, where I discuss how musicians should respond to certain situations and how these decisions should ideally made. However, even of the best musicians, not all musicians perform correctly all the time. Some of the key decisions a musician makes are how to clean up the mess when things begin to go wrong. Understanding their role helps the musician to understand how to act within these situations.

> "If I'm playing, I'm in a situation where… I'm playing a role. The piano player is filling the chords. A bass player is doing [bass] kind of stuff. In that situation, I'm

[423] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

> playing a little more rhythm, and the bouzouki,[424] it's a drone thing, so I'll play the roots and pedaling more. Then there's situations where things are starting to fall apart, I might push the rhythm a bit more, or back off if I think that's going to help the situation."[425]

So this is not a situation where the musician in question, in playing the bouzouki, thinks only, "I play the bouzouki for accompaniment, and the bouzouki for accompanist plays these chords in a certain way." Instead, the musician understands that in playing the bouzouki for accompaniment, he has to pay attention to maintaining the rhythm, and that if things begin to fall apart in rhythm he has to act one way or another way, depending on the situation. While listening to the fiddler, his concern is not the melody, but in making sure that the fiddler is within the proper rhythm, same with the piano, and the guitar. He will listen to all of the other instruments, and try to musically communicate with each other musician in order to establish a consistent proper rhythm.

This is a key distinction between the role of the fiddler and the role of the accompanists. Generally the fiddler's concern is the melody and keeping up with the accompanist's timing. The accompanist has to make sure that the timing they establish is comfortable for the fiddler. If the fiddler begins to miss things or seems rushed, the accompanist has to adjust the rhythm accordingly. A piano player also has to focus on both the chords and the bass line.

> "There's absolutely more to learn on the piano than the fiddle. It's so much harder. And trying to keep track of where one hand's going and where the other hand's going. With the bow you're going up or down. But with the hand there's chords, and notes and rhythms that you have to do. And the left hand is doing the same thing, so sometimes I catch myself as more natural on the left hand. To play bass lines. Because I think in bass lines and not chords. So sometimes when I

[424] A bouzouki is an instrument sometimes heard on Cape Breton but is a Turkish instrument that is more likely to be seen in Irish music.

[425] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

> get lost I realize my right hand is stopped. And my left hand is still doing the bass line. Then I realize it and my right hand has to catch up."[426]

This musician was relatively new to the piano, though had played fiddle for a long time. The musician understood the music as a fiddler, so in switching to the piano, the musician had to learn a new understanding of the music. The notes of the tunes were the same. Adjusting to the new role required more than understanding what chords to play to the tunes that the musician already knew. Adjusting to the new role required developing a better understanding of a new approach that focused on multiple elements of the musical performance.

In addition to the various musical elements of the performance, the accompanist also has the role of attempting to make the fiddler sound better. Cape Breton music is driven by the name recognition of the fiddler, and while fiddlers might understand that the nature of their own success within a performance is in many ways controlled by the accompanist, the community comes out to see the fiddler. The fiddler is the individual that venues book to perform a given show, and is the individual that headlines any advertisement for the musician. As such, the fiddler makes the decisions about the tunes to perform, and acts as a sort of 'producer' who coordinates the other musicians. One or two accompanists on the island reject this community practice, interpreting it as making them a side show, and will try to book shows on their own. I have been in the presence of one venue coordinator when a younger accompanist attempted to book a show with the promise of finding a fiddler. The coordinator told the pianist that "we don't do it that way around here." Another long established piano player has a reputation for

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[426] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

thinking himself as a priority over the fiddler. “He does not think of himself as an accompanist. He thinks of himself as the main show, and the fiddler is on the side.” This piano player has burned his bridges in not aligning to the established community roles, and is not usually asked to perform as an accompanist unless the fiddler is desperate. A fiddler wouldn’t ask such an accompanist to perform, since the accompanist’s goals are not aligned with the fiddlers. The usual accompanist, in understanding their role of helping the fiddler, and therefore helping the whole musical performance sound better, makes decisions that help the fiddler. This other musician seeks to make himself sound better. Since this informs his decisions, if there is an opportunity where he feels he can draw attention to himself and in doing so, it clashes with the overall musical product, he will make the decision that makes himself sound better.

When musicians engage the performance as if they were in a genuine conversation with their partnered musicians, it influences stylistic decisions. This can lead to stylistic reputations. If one fiddler always performs with a given accompanist, then the community might coalesce around the idea that the fiddler has a particular sound, when in fact the musician’s range of musical possibilities are much wider.

> “There's a fiddler I’ve heard, that people claim who know the music, that he is not a dance player, and I beg to disagree, and that same player came to a dance where that fiddler was playing with Hilda [Chaisson],[427] and they ate their words, it was completely different. So depending on who you're playing with, he's got a different energy.”[428]

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[427] For an example of Hilda Chaisson’s piano playing, see “Kristen Shaw and Hilda Chiasson, Set 4” YouTube, last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4faXQcE6-O8.

[428] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

There are dance musicians and there are 'sit-down' musicians,[429] and then there are those musicians known for both. The dance musicians are recognized for a driving musical style that is excellent to dance to, while a 'sit-down' musician is recognized for a musical style that might play some of the 'fancier' tunes not considered suitable for a dance. The musician in question here was pigeon-holed by the community as a sit-down player, and not a fiddler suited for the dance. Simply by performing with a different accompanist, he was able to break from his stereotype because he was heard making different musical decisions.

One of the key areas where musicians can influence and alter each other's musical decisions is in how musicians choose how they might express a note or phrase.

> "If they are going to pedal, it might make me more intense, and make me do something different than I wouldn't otherwise do. If they do a rip, I might do something different. If they do a... something that makes you react. And make you do something you're not expecting. Something small. Not even something the audience would get. But to you, it's like, something, I might do a spicato bow, I might just, that kind of stuff. If I'm present and I'm enjoying myself, I enjoy where the piano player can just, feed off of that and they can feed off of you, rather than just playing to an accompanist who is just there, the timing is fine, the chords are there, but there's nothing to get excited about because they're not going to do anything that's not going to make you perk your ears."[430]

The decisions of one musician affect the decisions of another musician, and so on. These musicians are not applying pre-decided musical elements to a performance. They are listening to one another, and based on the acts of the other, reacting accordingly. There is a rhetorical cycle here, in that one musician's act might trigger a chain of actions and reactions that otherwise wouldn't occur. But they can only mutually influence each

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[429] A dance fiddler is valued for their driving rhythm needed for a dance. A sit-down fiddler is valued for their more ornate playing suitable for the concert.

[430] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

other's expressions if they are actively listening to the other, and reacting accordingly—if they are in a genuine dialogue.

When in a dialogue with one another, musicians balance their own musical desires with how they interpret their musical partners' desires. Again, this is in an ideal musical conversation between the musicians. When not in this conversation, musicians are 'talking at' one another, rather than 'talking with'; such a musician would not care about listening or reacting to the other musicians.

> "My purpose as an accompanist is to - when I play, I want to be as correct as I can to make it as easy and on time - to make it easy for them to play. So I'm constantly worrying, to be honest, about whether or not its good enough - to make sure that it's what they want to hear. Or if I feel like. Like sometimes I'll feel really excited, so I'll want to do loads of rips and stuff, but say I'm playing with XXX and he's not in a really really, you know sometimes he's in a crazy mood and he'll laugh his head off when I do that - and sometimes he'll be like 'settle down.'"[431]

Here the musicians explicitly discuss how they want to adjust, but oral communication is not the only way that musicians engage in this conversation. They also provide non-verbal cues with glances of the eye, or shifts in body language. But they also react through musical decisions. For example, if a fiddler thinks that the accompanist is pushing the tempo too fast, they might emphasize the start of a phrase in such a way to signal to the accompanist that a shift in speed is in order.

The ability of musicians also affects the possibility of musical conversation between the musicians. Less experienced and less skilled musicians are constrained in their possibilities. When these musicians perform, they already have a limited ability to

[431] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

adapt to the needs of a situation. They don't understand when they are playing too fast or too slow because they usually have one speed.[432]

> "And another thing is that when you have someone who can do anything, there's no boundaries to what you are going to do. But if you're playing with someone who does not know, you're constantly thinking ahead... not playing, but thinking of what you can't play. You think of a tune, and you've got this whole conversation in your head, and you're not with the music at all."[433]

Here one musician's lack of ability places all of the responsibility for a performance on the other musician. In this situation only the proficient musician can make adjustments, so is at the mercy of adapting to the performance of the less proficient musician. The inability to mutually react and musically communicate limits the possibilities of performance.

Likewise, when one musician is seen as extremely proficient, then the other musician will likely feel that they can take more musical chances and make decisions they wouldn't otherwise make. This inspires confidence because one musician knows that if they take a chance and make a decision to try something at the edge of their ability, and if they fail, that the other musician has the ability to help recovery, and the entire musical performance will not be affected. It will also lead the musician to venture into areas of unfamiliarity without worrying. For example, the musician can play an

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[432] Counterintuitively, beginner musicians will generally perform too fast. They hear established musicians play at faster speeds, they hear the exciting tunes at fast speed, and so it's often that beginner musicians confuse the speed one can play with the skill that one can play. So they will focus on setting the metronome to a fast speed, and practice as fast as they can. At this speed, they will usually be able to hit all of the notes, just not well. What is sacrificed here, is the phrasing and embellishment needed for a good performance.

[433] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

esoteric tune that they know the other musician wouldn't know, because they trust in that musician's ability to chord to it regardless.

> "The difference between having someone who does know how to play, like XXX , and someone that does not, well you can play whatever you want. Someone like XXX has such a range of tunes in his head that even if he does not know the tune, he's played so many tunes that often these patterns have happened for him. When you play so many, you just get used to making different changes. And it's a wealth of knowledge. It just makes it so easy you don't even need to practice."[434]

So while a lack of skill limits the possibility for conversation and communication, the presence of skill opens up these possibilities. At the higher level of ability, musicians are able to make musical connections that might not otherwise exist, because the musicians are capable of being more open to one another. They achieve this openness specifically because of their ability.

But the relationship and the ability to communicate can also be affected by the familiarity between the musicians. When musicians are familiar with one another, they understand each other's abilities, but they also understand each other's musical nuances. One musician might already know that another musician excels at a particular speed, or likes to be pushed, etc. This familiarity creates an openness that allows the musicians to work with one another. But when the familiarity doesn't exist, musicians can feel limited.

> "People that I'm a little more nervous about, that I'm not used to, or I'm scared that I'm not on their time, I'll be a lot more careful. I'll do less rips. I don't even know if that's a good thing, because I probably won't play as well because I'll be holding back."[435]

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[434] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

[435] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

This musician's decisions are influenced directly by their degree of familiarity with their partner. Because they lack this familiarity, they consciously limit the possibilities of choices that they will make. They also might not respond in the way that they think that the performance needs. Their focus is less about creating a good musical product, then it is in adapting and learning the musical abilities and nuances of their partner in an attempt to achieve a conversation.

#### 8.1.4. How the Cape Breton Musicians' understanding affects judgment

A musician's understanding of how to perform includes an understanding of how making musical decisions within the community should be approached. The accomplished Cape Breton musicians begin with an approach where they will vary their decisions. They factor in their previous performance when making a decision about how to play a particular part of a tune. So perhaps because they played a particular passage one way the first time through, they will play it differently the second time through. Or perhaps because they are usually heard to play it one way, they will play it a different way. Likewise, because they might be expected to vary a particular passage, they won't. The purpose here isn't to throw off the expectations of the audience purposefully. The purpose is to make the performance unique. "I might not do it every time. But I might do a variation of it, to somehow bring out and highlight the accented beat."[436] The musician doesn't approach the music as if it were guided by a blueprint. They will not make the same decision every time. They might want to emphasize a particular element or passage of the music, and use their understanding of expressive possibilities to do so.

[436] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

To be accomplished in the Cape Breton community, a musician has to approach the music as if it is a medium to convey individual expression. This individual expression rests squarely on the ability of musicians to make decisions. The alternative would be the musician who sees the proper way to perform music as the ability to execute a memorized replica of someone else's performance. Approaching the performance as a memorized pre-arranged performance doesn't allow the musician to adapt to the contingency of the situation. The musician isn't able to respond to the audience, nor to the other musicians.

> "Some accompanists these days, I just see that one thing people haven't taken as much, or placed as much importance on maybe as I have… I think it's really important to listen to stuff, but be unique and individual and be flexible enough to roll with the changes in the tune that other people have done. But some people that I've heard, some of the younger people… they've heard somebody else chording to a group of tunes and they'll play - they've memorized - that approach. So if someone else is playing the tune, and changed the melody a bit, or whatever, and they're playing this approach to a tune and it's not appropriate to the tune, because the tune's changed. And they don't know that, because they aren't listening. They just hear and say, oh I know how to chord to that tune. Here we go. They just do it by rote."[437]

It is precisely because the better Cape Breton musicians don't approach the music in this manner that the music has evolved. More so, it is precisely because the better Cape Breton musicians don't approach music as a memorized replica of a previous performance that the musicians are each unique. Such an approach is caused be a rigid and inflexible understanding of how the music is to sound. The better musicians understand that there are certain moments within a performance where new possibilities can be explored. They also understand an amorphous set of boundaries for what is acceptable within these possibilities.

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[437] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

When musicians make decisions, they are not making decisions simply for the sake of making decisions. When they use a particular chord, it is because they intend that chord to elicit an effect. The chord can't just be used whenever the musician wants. A particular chord that might elicit a particular effect can only be used when the structure of the tune warrants it. It fits in a particular place, but not every place. The musician needs to understand not only the relationship between the chord and the effect, but also how the chord is used effectively. Understanding this speaks to the approach of the musician. When a musician only understands the effect of the chord without understanding the functionality of it, they are not informed by the music itself.

> "There's a problem with cool chords when they just don't fit. like XXX plays chords that don't even follow what's going on, they're unrelated to the tune, they're unrelated to anything. I don't even know how you can relate it back. Like even functionally. I think it's too much of too many sub chords."[438]

So there is a balance needed in making these musical decisions. They cannot be informed purely by desired effect. Nor can the musician approach the music through pure rote memorization. The musician must understand the functionality of the expressive elements, and understand how the musical decisions relate to both the effect within the community and the music.

## 8.2. The Cape Breton Musician's Sense of Self: Agency, Action, & Distinction

When the musicians act to express themselves, they are internally manipulating the community's system. Informed by their understanding, they act in order to achieve effects within the community. In acting within their community, they act to distinguish themselves within their community. Musicians want to perform well so that they will be

[438] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

asked to perform again. They want to be recognized as musicians capable of contributing to the community, by being asked to play popular dances and drawing a crowd. They want to be recognized by the community by recording albums that the community buys. They want to be recognized by the community by recording albums that others try to emulate. They have the audacity to desire this because they are a phone call away from those that they themselves try to emulate. These Cape Breton musicians see and interact with their own musical influences in an everyday setting. Because of this, Cape Breton musicians understand the possibility of influencing the community through their own acts by distinguishing themselves.

There is a link between action, judgment, and understanding here because a musician's decisions of how to express themselves musically distinguish musicians. The difference between one musician's decisions and another's is determined by how the musicians approach musical performance, and by how the musicians understand the music. This distinction is possible through music because music is common to the community. Skill is involved, but this is much more than skill in the instrument—there is also musical skill within the decision making itself, in understanding the needs of the moment, the desires of the audience, and the ability to act thereupon. The Cape Breton community recognizes the differences between musicians based on their individual sound, and that individual sound is individual because of musical decisions. This can be heard in how the community talks about musicians:

> "She has all the right chords, and the right rhythms, but she's not going to bring the tune out a different way and bring it out well each time. And XXX does that a little bit better. XXX is plain too, but her rhythm, there's something different

> about her rhythm than YYY's rhythm. And XXX is more interesting. Her chords are more interesting, even though it's not flashy, it's more interesting."[439]

This musician isn't being recognized for her skill in using her instrument. She's recognized by the community for her choice in chords. Her decisions in chord use has given her a reputation for choosing "interesting" chords. Her identity within the community is in part established through these musical decisions.

While each musician's style would identify them as a Cape Breton musician, because each style is individual, there is an internal diversity within the possible sounds of a Cape Breton musician.

> "The personal styles are all very different. Betty Lou is solid, timing is impeccable, always plays the right chords, not over the top fancy, but she's classy. Has the seven chords, plays really nice bass lines. Really classy, you can always expect the best. But you're not going to be shocked - like with Troy [MacGillivray] or Tracey [Dares]."[440]

This range of styles can include mixing and matching existing sounds of how musicians make decisions, but it allows for the new. In some ways, the community embraces the new stylistic elements that individuals introduce into the community.

> "I'd say that there are some in that generation who appreciate what we're doing in my generation. Like Betty Lou Beaton, she's not a flashy progressive player, but she's got a style that's so, I'd lump her in with John Morris [Rankin] and Tracey [Dares] and Maybelle [Chisholm McQueen][441] in that she's more progressive than the people before her. Tracey and John Morris probably needed Betty Lou to get to where they were."[442]

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[439] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

[440] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

[441] For an example of Maybelle Chisholm McQueen's piano playing, see "Ashley MacIsaac at the GAMS benefit July 24, 2011" YouTube, last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CV6ewFxdJLo.

[442] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

But this in no way assumes that the community uniformly agrees with each individual musician's musical decisions. As much as there is a diversity in musical styles amongst the musicians, there is a diversity in opinions amongst community members over the range of what is acceptable within the community.

> "I think that within that shifting range of acceptable viewpoints are different. I assume my range of acceptable is from here to here or whatever. And I assume that that's the range of acceptable. But I can hear someone else do something that I would completely think as unacceptable, but when I hear it, I think oh I like that. And I've expanded my range of acceptable."[443]

The vernacularity of this community's rhetoric is diverse. Musicians distinguish themselves as different from one another based on musical choices, and these difference demonstrate a range of possibilities. As the last comment indicates, some within the community can be persuaded to accept new ideas into what they consider acceptable. Some in the community won't.

When recognizing that new musical ideas are accepted by the community, it needs to simultaneously be recognized that new musical ideas are accepted by individuals within the community and these individuals include musicians. As such, the individual styles of musicians evolve as they incorporate new ideas of acceptable decisions. Their understanding of what is possible grows, and therefore their sound evolves. Many musicians recognize this sort of evolution in the music of pianist Betty Lou Beaton:

> "Her beat and everything, she's 68, she's rolling with the times. She's one person that when I listen back to stuff from the 60s, her left hand was somewhere between older style, and as time goes on, she really listens, so you can catch her trying to play like other people, and you can hear her do things the way she

[443] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

> thinks people wants to hear them, and she's always complimenting all the young people on how they play."[444]

As I have previously discussed, listening is a key skill that influences one's understanding of possibilities. Also as previously discussed, the relationship between one musician and another also influences one's understanding of possibilities. This in turn expands musicians' understanding of how to express their own individuality, and allows this expression to change over time.

> "New things come about from the interchange, playing with other people. and the influences that you carry into that. Like, I might have heard a good dance tape of Howie [MacDonald] and John Morris [Rankin], and I might try something just for fun, yeah, just borrowing it, then in filters into my acceptable range."[445]

New ideas can evolve a musician's personal style as they make the conscious decision to try something that they might never have tried before. This is different from the argument that newness naturally enters into a style. Based on whether the musician considers the result of the new decision to be success or not, that new decision might enter their range of possibilities. Regardless of whether the decision was a success or a failure, the musician's understanding of the music would have changed, since it would have been tested, and that testing would have revealed something new about the music.

Earlier I discussed how Abrahams notes that by participating in a community's everyday practices, one steps into a series of routines that took shape before one's own contribution to the practice.[446] The previous generation contributes to the current generation's understanding of rhetorical possibilities. But the current generation's

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[444] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

[445] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

[446] See my discussion on page 52.

understanding is not constrained to work only within the possibilities of the past. As a building block, these past possibilities allow the current generation to conceive of new possibilities.

> "To be honest, if John Morris and Tracey were never exposed to the stuff that came before them, that they would have filled that generation. I think that Maybelle played the way that she did because she heard how the people before her approached those things, and she had the ability to travel a little bit. It's an organic progression. If Maybelle hadn't have been there, but Tracey was, she would have influenced by the people before, but not the point where she sounds today. because she never would have had what came before to build off of. She would have been the building block."[447]

In such fashion musicians establish the rhetorical possibilities of future musicians by laying the groundwork for what the community expects and can possibly expect in the future as well.

> "We [pianists] needed the people who came before us. Just like the fiddling tradition needed the Angus Chisholms[448] and the Winstons. Winston was the new thing then. And the Jerry Hollands. … In the beginning, that album with him and Joey [Beaton], and Winston stuff, they're a little cleaner, and you can just see that natural progression that evolution of players in the fiddle tradition. So I firmly believe that had there not been Maybelle before John Morris, maybe the stuff that he and Howie had done wouldn't have been as well received. I'm sure of that."[449]

This is an understanding of the change of community practices and communal norms built upon the collective rhetoric of diverse individuals participating in a communal conversation. It is contrary to an understanding of change that rests on the cliché that a

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[447] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

[448] For an example of Angus Chisholm on the fiddle, see this recording from the 1930s, "Angus Chisholm Celtic 015 78 rpm Cape Breton Fiddle" YouTube, last visited May 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ophrjwLl4kk.

[449] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

community naturally evolves on its own. The difference being the recognition of the actions of individuals acting within the community to express their individuality.

Cape Breton musicians embrace this potential to change the community's understanding of its music. They understand how others who they perform with have changed the music, and this contributes to the understanding that they too can act to change the community's music.

> "I don't doubt that I'm changing it, and it's not because I'm saying, oh look at me. But, because I think that's only natural though, Tracey, John Morris, Betty Lou all progressed it. I would hope to progress it a bit. Not to change it, but to make it better. In making something better maybe that is changing it."[450]

This musician believes that his actions and decisions can change his community. The musician understands that this change happens by performing in a way that the rest of the community appreciates, but also that this performance is individual—that it comes from him distinguishing himself from others in the community. This belief is possible because the musician understands his community as a set of individuals, and recognizes the actions and influence of the individuals who came before him, and the individuals who act alongside him. These are not faceless anybodies without distinguishing qualities that move within an established set of systems. These are named somebodies who act upon his everyday community. He recognizes these somebodies for the distinct individuals that they are, and recognizes the effects of their actions.[451]

[450] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

[451] See my discussion of Geertz noting that recognizing identity and agency within community practices is important when interpreting the everyday, on page 54.

## 8.3. The Effects of Good Action

Cape Breton musicians perform in a way to distinguish themselves. They make expressive decisions and exercise their agency with the idea that through their performance they can change the community. They seek fame and recognition within the community through their performances. They seek this fame through performances that the community recognizes as good. Not every performance is good. But that does not mean that simply because a performance is not good that it is bad. Many performances are marked by mediocrity, which is when the musician performs at a standard that illustrates their competence with the music, but little more. Competence does not set new standards, nor does it win the recognition that good performances do. Good performances within the community establish the community standards that others will later be judged by. But the occurrence of a good performance is not a unique happening. The Cape Breton community expects the possibility that on any given night, any given group of musicians can put on a performance that the community will remember and will talk about for that month, that year, or years to come.

Music, including traditional music, is an art. Some performances are better than others. There is a distinction between acting competently in a community and excelling in a community, and much of this distinction is influenced by one’s ability to make decisions.

> “Reels are all straight eights, but it could accent in different spots. So sometimes as a piano player you want to bring that out. You want to land on that, you don't want to go over that. A good accompanist does not want to go over that. They're not going to set the tempo for you. Some people will do that. A good accompanist will let you, if you're strong. Which if you're a soloist you have that responsibility, you can't be wishy washy, and if you're good at that then they will follow you. So that's the most important thing. And then if they're really good, they won't just play rhythms based on the tune type, but they'll play more

> rhythmically specific to the tune. Whether or not it's following the tune, or doing some sort of counter rhythm to bring out in a different way. It's not something anyone thinks about. It's all improvised. But if they're good, they'll do that."[452]

Clearly, a good performance requires many decisions. Over time the decisions that make a performance 'good' eventually establish the communal standard for basic competence. In the 1960s, it wouldn't have been uncommon to hear a Cape Breton piano player use only three chords. As musicians introduced new standards of excelling at the music, and began playing with more and more chords, the benchmark for competence changed. It would now no longer be acceptable for a musician to chord within a concert or a dance using only three chords. Understanding the distinction between good and competence is something that explanations of vernacular rhetoric miss, which is odd given that rhetoric is often concerned with the success and failure of rhetorical acts. Likely one of the reasons that vernacular rhetoric ignores the good, is that it ignores the individual.

There is a thin line between good and competent. Good performances are characterized by a musician's skill in deciding how to subtly manipulate the community standards for competence.

> "The qualities that John Morris Rankin and Tracey Dares brought to the music that you didn't have to work to find. Their timing was impeccable, but you didn't ever notice. You just knew that, you took these things for granted because they were so perfect. In all honestly, there was never a doubt that they added something. You didn't have to work to appreciate what they were doing. Their timing was just incredible. They added to the music so subtly. They didn't have to play all these fancy things that they did, every once in awhile. They had this style that just complemented the music in these subtle ways that you may not pay attention to."[453]

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[452] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

[453] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

Dares and Rankin are cited for their ability to exceed the community's standards for competence but without drawing attention to it. They were valued because they were fundamentally sound in every way that the community desired, and in addition, they did not make decisions to draw attention to themselves simply for the decisions' sake. They knew when to play these "fancy" chords, but they did not play these chords for the chord's sake, they played these chords when they felt that the situation called for it. They understood how to 'place' a chord.

> "What makes something tasteful is placement. Some people sit on an F chord in Brenda Stubbert's [reel]. But if you just use it as a very quick, almost like an accent, it's a lot better and stands out more in some ways than actually going to F and using a whole beat on it."[454]

This musician presents a technical explanation of subtle placement. Understanding where and when to sparingly use a substitute chord creates a more meaningful effect than using the substitute chord at every possibility. Making a 'good' decision that leads to an overall good performance requires the musician to understand when not to deviate from the community's understanding of competence.

Part of the difficulty in learning how to perform music is paying attention to the distinction between good and competent. Listening is essential, as is paying attention to the reason for rhetorical effects. The current progression of Cape Breton music is most notable in the use of chords, specifically in the use of complex chords. The use of this chord can create a powerful effect that generates lift. Plus a musician who can demonstrate that they know this chord might feel as if they too are on the cutting edge of the music's progression. Yet paying attention only to the effect of the chord ignores

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[454] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

that understanding how to use the chord requires understanding both when and when not to use the chord.

> "People who [use flashy chords] the whole time aren't concerned about taste. They're just concerned about doing something cool. That's how I used to be. As a kid, definitely. I thought "oh this sounds cool" and I didn't have a concept at that time of what Dave MacIsaac really is."[455]

This musician refers to guitarist Dave MacIsaac here in the same vein that the previous commentator referred to piano players John Morris Rankin and Tracey Dares. These musicians are set apart as especially influential because they understood how and when to adopt newness. They understood that the timing of making musical decisions affects the quality of performance. Because of this, when using the new chord sparingly, they had a greater effect on the community's understanding of that new chord. Newer musicians mistook that a performance was considered good solely because of the use of the chord, when the performance was good because the understood the appropriate use of the chord. The musician would have understood that in other situations, using that chord would have made a bad performance; the newer musicians would not have shared this understanding.

In order to decide the proper place of using a chord, or of any technique that might elicit an effect, the musician must think about more than just that moment of the performance. They have to put that moment in relation to the entire set of music. For a musician to express a tune to the level of good would be a decision that adds to and compliments a tune without drawing from the tune.

> "Un-tasteful is something that takes attention away from the tune as opposed to something really cool that goes with the tune. You don't miss the tune, but you say 'Oh, that's cool.' Something that brings out the tune that you don't expect. To

[455] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

> me there's a line that Tracey [Dares] does, this little chromatic thing that she does, it does not take away from the tune, but it's great."[456]

This is not to say that there is a single method for a good performance. On the contrary, each musician brings their own style to bear when making decisions. But there is a commonality in the approach that these musicians make in that they seek to fit their decisions into the music's framework, rather than forcing their decisions into the music.

> "My approach to something is one of simplicity. I like to be thought of as its simple and I'll dress it up on the 'ins' or something. I would never want someone to think that I play the fancy chords all the time. I don't think that fits the music."[457]

This musician echoes the importance of subtlety, but also highlights the audience perception. If the audience perceived this musician to use "fancy chords all the time" then his use of the chords, even if used sparingly, were used in such a way that distracted from the music.

This also illustrates how, in order to make a good decision, one must consider previous decisions. Some decisions, especially if the decision's effect is considered good partly because of surprise, will lose their effect if made again and again. In fact, this could backfire, and destroy even the initial successful decision. "If I do it once, then everyone's like, 'oh that's cool.' It builds intensity. But if you play it every time, it looses its effect."[458] Musicians need to subtly vary how they approach the music, since by making a decision once, they have altered the possible effect if they were to make that same decision a second time.

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[456] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

[457] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

[458] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

> "Players like Mary Jessie, and guitar players like Dave, they play in a way that enhance tunes, but in a way that was innovative. That followed the melody. There's cool ways of subbing chords, but, appropriate. Say if you're playing G minor, he would play a C7 chord. But every time you're going from G minor to F you can't do that. Because that's too much. So incorporating it is great, and if it's a long selection, then it's nice for something like that. But if the fiddle is not doing anything different, then the rest can become confusing."[459]

The emphasis here is that good decisions require the musician to consider the entire event. Musicians can undermine their own decisions if they do not consider whether they have overused a particular expressive choice. The musician must be attuned to how a particular choice can be perceived, whether it is already considered fanciful, and whether they can overindulge the audience's desire for innovation to the point that the choice becomes distracting and untasteful.

What constitutes a good decision within the community changes over time. In order to keeping up to date with what constitutes a good decision, an individual must maintain constant participation with the community's conversation.[460] Decisions don't fall out of favor solely because a new decision has taken its place. Much like overuse of a particular decision will internally scuttle a single performance, overuse of a decision over time by multiple musicians affects the quality of that decision within the community.

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[459] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

[460] So when folklorists like John Shaw interview Cape Bretoners who haven't attended a dance or concert in twenty years, and takes their word as proof of the decadence of the community's current state of fiddlers, he bases his academic work on standards that have long since evolved. This might be helpful for insight into the museum of Cape Breton's past, but offers no insight into or understanding of Cape Breton's present. See my discussion of John Shaw's contribution to the academic discourse of Cape Breton in chapter 5.

> "Seamus did something like that in his first album, and at that point it was much more cool to me. For me I just got sick of the sound over time. Its distasteful as well, to play through the whole tune. One and done."[461]

The changing nature of what constitutes a good decision within the community is masked by the illusion of continuity. Thus an individual can step out of the community's conversation for a year or more, then reenter without the perception that anything has changed. But the conversation would have gradually evolved. Last year's 'hit' tune might be seen as cliché, and performing it would have a different effect from one year to the next. Some expressive elements might have gained popularity while others lost favor. New albums might have been released introducing new tunes or new concepts into the community's repertoire. These changes come about from the exercise of individual's musical decisions which have rhetorical effects within the community. These changes come about because of some musician's good decisions being recognized and adopted by the community. These good choices filter back into the community, and affect how the community judges and understands these various musical decisions. As the musician maintains contact with the community, the effects of these good decisions also affect the musician's own understanding. This constant reworking of what constitutes a good decision within the community indicates the vernacularity within the rhetoric of the Cape Breton musical community. To understand the rhetoric within it requires maintaining conversation within the community.

[461] Confidential Respondent, interview by Greg Dorchak, December. 2010.

# CHAPTER 9

# CONCLUSION

The purpose of this project was the develop the aural rhetoric of the traditional music community of Cape Breton Island. In order to do this, I outlined and explained the prejudices of the Cape Breton music community as they related to musical performance. In explaining any aural rhetoric for any community adequately, it is important to begin with the community's prejudices, and to discuss how individuals act within this framework. Specifically, musical rhetoric takes place when musicians act within a community's framework of understanding. Musicians make judgments based on how they understand the community's beliefs and expectations, as well as how their own beliefs and expectations of musical performance are shaped by this community. Thus the project of explaining an aural rhetoric is necessarily a critical hermeneutic project. It requires a focus on the community's understanding of practices. It requires clarifying the conditions where community understanding, community judgments, and community action takes place.

In the opening pages of this project, I introduced an anecdote about how some classical musicians are attempting to learn traditional music as if it were the technical application of rules, and about how this creates a clash between classical and traditional musicians. The purpose of contrasting these musicians was not to say that classical musicians lack the ability to make practical judgments, nor was it to disparage the ability of classical musicians. It was to illustrate how the skill of performing a musical instrument requires much more than understanding how to make the instrument produce noise. Understanding how to perform music requires understanding how to

make judgments. And these judgments depend on the understanding of the community that the music is performed within. So when classical violinists attempted to play the Cape Breton fiddle, they did so with an understanding of how to use the instrument, but without the understanding of the community's judgment. Nothing overtly indicated to these classical musicians, though, that performing the new genre of music was anything more than the reproduction of notes. Thus, this clash in judgment results in a friction. A similar lack of recognizing communal judgment within musical performance that has allowed musical rhetoric to flounder within rhetorical theory. Musicians make musical judgments based on the standards of the communities these musicians act within. Though ethnocentric inclinations often lead music to be mischaracterized as a universal language, musical rhetoric is more often than not a vernacular rhetoric. As such, it requires a discussion of prejudices and background practices.

I drew from Gadamer in this project, a theorist not usually identified with critical theory. But then again, you might ask, "how was this a critical project?" This was a critical project in that its goal was to expose prejudices, especially those prejudices that might be informed by technical judgment at the expense of practical judgment. At the outset of this project, I linked classical musicians with technical judgment. But throughout, I identified other groups, both within the Cape Breton community and groups that interact with the Cape Breton community, whose prejudices towards judgment favored technical judgment over practical judgment.

First among these were the oft-labeled 'romanticists' who I repeatedly mentioned. These are individuals both within the community and who are outside of the community but believe that they have a stake in the community's survival. These are individual's such as Seamus Taylor, who urges the community "to keep in mind that

this is NOT a malleable 'world music,' but rather the tribal music of our ancestors, preserved and revered for many centuries."[462] These are individuals such as Dr. John Shaw, who isolate Gaelic as the sole-defining feature of Cape Breton fiddle music that is played "correctly," referring to everything else as having "the character of an invented tradition with aesthetic and social points of reference increasingly distant from the region…"[463] Taylor and Shaw ignore that the community's local aesthetics have changed subtly with every musician who participates. They have ignored that the music has many influences, and that a musician has many decisions informed by many variables when performing. Instead, they would find a 'pure' Cape Breton community, unchanged since their unchanging Gaelic speaking tribal ancestors unchangingly played their unchanging music for unchanging millennia.

Second among these are the musicians within the Cape Breton community who don't listen during a performance.[464] These are musicians who don't pay attention to the musicians they are performing with, to the audience, or to the needs of the moment. Rather than adapting and adjusting within a performance as they perform, they perform informed by wrote memorization. These are also the musicians who play the 'fancy chords' thinking that simply by performing a chord, they will elicit an effect, without understanding that the decision of placing any given chord is contextual, and its success or failure to elicit an effect is dependent on much more than the use of the chord itself.[465]

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[462] Taylor, "Standing up for Gaelic culture," (June/July 1997): 5. See footnote 353.

[463] Shaw, "Language, Music, and Local Aesthetics," (1992/1993): 43. See chapter 5.

[464] See my discussion of listening, specifically the musicians who don't listen, in section 8.1.2.

[465] See my discussion of musicians who misapply chords, on page 226.

This project is critical because it raises the prejudices of the community to the surface. These prejudices were those that influence decision making concerning communal performances. These communal performances also inform community identity. When the community fosters practical decisions amongst these prejudices, this needs to be acknowledged. When the community favors technical decisions, these too need to be acknowledged. Of critical concern is when the prejudices informed by the practical are threatened by the technical. By raising prejudices of judgment to the fore, this project addresses this concern.

This critical project is also a rhetorical project; one of aural rhetoric, and one of vernacular rhetoric. Raising the community's prejudices to the fore allows for understanding the effects of rhetorical decisions. Though vernacular rhetoric occurs within the background of the community, the community still judges this rhetoric. Some rhetorical performances are judged by the community to be better than others. In doing so, the community's understanding is affected by these rhetorical performances. The community's understanding changes. The community expands its understanding of possibilities based on rhetorically adept performances. Cape Breton musicians introducing new use of chords, new use of progressions, or new use of embellishments affect the community. When the community likes these performances, other musicians potentially adopt these new elements until they themselves become communal norms.

## 9.1. The Vernacular Rhetoric of Cape Breton Music

The Cape Breton community carries its own local knowledge, own modes of argument, and own local rhetorical salience. This discourse extends to the community's music. Musicians acting within the Cape Breton community have to make a number of

decisions in order to perform in a way judged acceptable by the community. Musicians and the community acquire the understanding of this rhetoric, not through a single performance, but through the background repetition of many performances. In Cape Breton these performances are a part of the community's everyday background practices, and are more than one-off special events. These performances occur at the nightly square dances, at community festivals, at house parties, at church, and at the local restaurants. They have the potential to occur even when not planned, and such spontaneity does not surprise the community.

Within these performances the musicians seek to move the audience. In the case of dances, the musician seeks literally to perform in a way that excites the crowd and motivates them to dance. The musician seeks to create a pensive mood in airs, and then spring from this to the lighthearted jig or the exciting reel. The musician seeks to musically move the audience to catharsis and does so by manipulating the community's expectations through musical choices. Their instruments become extensions of their body as they act within the community's everyday background practices. This community's local vernacular rhetoric is also musical.

This project was necessarily a hermeneutic project, because in order to understand how rhetoric works within a community requires understanding how the community itself understands.[466] Understanding within any community is not static, and is in a constant state of flux. New individuals, new actions, and new experiences expand how the community understands possibilities of action. Musicians in Cape Breton have consistently affected the community's understanding of the possible, as

[466] Double-sided relationship

well as the community's standards for acceptability. Fifty years ago it wasn't uncommon to hear a piano player perform using only three chords. Now the community would judge such a performance to be subpar. Pianists are expected to use substitute chords and advanced bass lines. Musicians rhetorically introduce new possibilities in a way that the community accepts and embraces. The communal standards shifted from three chords to near unlimited possibilities because musicians have rhetorically pushed the community's understanding of the possible and change the community's understanding of the acceptable.

The ability of a Cape Breton musician to be open to expanding their own understanding is essential to their success within musical performances. Cape Breton musicians who are open to expanding their horizon listen to their surroundings. They listen and are open to the acts of other musicians. They listen and are open to the audience. And they listen and are open to the needs of the situation. This orientation allows the musicians to adapt and act based on their understanding of the situation. Conversely, musicians who do not listen will be acting based on a pre-conceived understanding of musical action—essentially a blueprint. By listening, the musician is able to expand their understanding of performance within the community. They can learn new possibilities and they can test prejudices of performance. Musicians routinely label listening as the key to musical performance, and this is because listening contributes to and informs a musician's understanding.

Music is intertwined with the everyday practices of the Cape Breton community, both in the foreground and the background. Developing a vernacular rhetoric requires developing these background practices, since it is where the background rhetoric occurs. In Cape Breton, community members might attend events where music is the main

purpose, such as the dance or a ceilidh. Or the music might exist in the background, when at church or at a restaurant. But whether the practice be at the fore or aft of any given community practice, it is a point of communal judgment. The community judges and contributes to the community identity in deciding whose music they feature, whose dances they attend, and whose style they emulate. The act of the restaurant manager of the Mull Diner playing a Donald Angus Beaton album is a disclosure of communal judgment. The act of attending a Howie MacDonald dance at Glencoe Mills is a disclosure of communal judgment. A musician's performance of a Jerry Holland composed tune is a disclosure of communal judgment. Collectively, these disclosures of judgment within communal practices shape the community's understanding of acceptable action.

Individuals engage with the Cape Breton community when they meet together in these practices to perform their routine social actions. They come together at the local dances, they come together at the local ceilidhs, and at the house parties. And when here, they engage in a routine of practices, where there are certain expected actions for musicians, dancers, and the audience. The musicians are expected to perform a particular repertoire of tunes in an expected way. Fiddlers are expected to act in one way, pianists in another, and guitarists in yet another. These individuals' actions performed both in acknowledgement of one another, and to distinguish themselves from one another, establish the community's social relations. Through these actions, the community contests its common identity as the individuals simultaneously proclaim their individual identity.

These venues where the Cape Breton community exists—the dance halls, the pubs, the house parties, the concert halls—are places where individuals demonstrate

that they are part of the community by exercising judgment. They appear together and perform music, or dance, or react to music. In how they perform these actions, these individuals exercise judgment. Like Arendt's *polis*, these spaces for this community's judgment exists as part of the community's everyday.[467] These spaces allow for musicians and dancers to act in ways that the community judges to be extraordinary. Any given performance allows the potential for extraordinary performance, and because of this, the potential for extraordinary performance is ordinary. On any given night, a musician can perform for a dance that will be long remembered by those within the community. These extraordinary acts are acknowledged by the community as part of the everyday. It is in this way that the *polis* of the Cape Breton community exists within its everyday—it is a place that allows the extraordinary to be ordinary. It allows individuals to appear and act, both in an attempt to acknowledge others, but also in an attempt to distinguish themselves.[468] A vernacular rhetoric needs to account for understanding the spaces of background appearances as part of the everyday, but also needs to acknowledge for how these spaces allow for action that allows extraordinary action to be part of the everyday.

Cape Breton musicians make their decisions based on what they understand as appropriate sounds within their community. In doing so, the musicians hold themselves accountable to the community.[469] Musicians acknowledge that they will make decisions on what tunes to perform or how to embellish tunes based on who they see in the

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[467] See discussion of Arendt's *polis* as being part of the everyday on page 88.

[468] See discussion of Arendt's development of the *polis* beginning on page 83; see also discussion the Cape Breton musical venues as spaces of appearances in section 7.4.

[469] See discussion of accountability and appropriateness beginning on page 66

audience. They also know that in any given performance, there are certain decisions that would be inappropriate, such as an accompanist drawing too much attention to themselves, a fiddler playing a tune more than once, or transitioning between keys too many times within a set. The musicians understand that they can shift the community's understanding of appropriate decisions. They know that there is flexibility to introduce new musical decisions that are within the community's understanding of acceptable musical actions. If successful, these choices influence other musicians and become part of the community's everyday understanding.

Understanding the Cape Breton community's understanding of appropriate actions is essential to understanding how musical rhetoric works within the community. Musical decisions that are appropriate in Cape Breton might not be considered appropriate elsewhere and vice versa. In Cape Breton, it is considered acceptable for a fiddler to play a note that sits between G and G sharp. In many other communities this would be considered out of tune and therefore unacceptable.[470] But because the Cape Breton community's understanding of music is influenced by the bagpipes, and because this note exists within the bagpiping scale, it is part of the community's understanding. This understanding changes over time, so in order for a musician to continue making good decisions throughout their career, they have to listen to the community, and adapt to the times.[471] It is less likely to hear younger musicians play the G derived from bagpipes, and it is possible that performing this note fades from the community's range of acceptability.

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[470] See discussion of the Cape Breton community's understanding of the G sharp, and the musical scale, on page 189.

[471] See discussion of vernacularity on page 41.

Decisions that were once acceptable fade from the community's understanding because communal judgment is not unanimous, nor do all of the musicians in Cape Breton make the same decisions. In Cape Breton, some members of the community appreciate certain sounds but abhor others. Others might favor the opposite. Diversity of opinions exist within the community over which musical decisions are better or worse. But decisions that are acceptable in the community do not require that all community members appreciate or agree on the decision. The rhetorical nature of these decisions can shift the momentum of the community, so that proponents of a particular musical decision dwindle and eventually fade from the community. This can be heard in the community's eventual movement away from the simple three-chord piano accompaniment. This shift came about a single musician at a time, and was not necessarily embraced by everyone within the community at first.

This project has focused on how the musicians of Cape Breton make decisions within performance. Those musicians who are considered better musicians by the community are considered better because they make decisions that appeal to the Cape Breton community. They operate rhetorically by making decisions about how to move their audience through musical action. But do not mistake this description as an assertion that the better Cape Breton musicians are infallible in their judgment. These musicians fail, but in the aggregate they succeed more. They understand how to appeal to their community, and they understand that musical decisions that lead to this rhetorical success cannot be made according to a script. Musicians from different communities must make different decisions in order to appeal to their respective communities. It is the judgment, not the skill with their instrument, that necessarily distinguishes musicians from different communities.

Thus, while I opened up this project by contrasting classical musicians and Cape Breton musicians, it is not that classical musicians lack the ability to make practical judgments. It is just that practical judgments are necessarily different in the classical music community than in the Cape Breton music community. These differences rise to the surface when the classical musician attempts to play Cape Breton music. Classical musicians' notes are determined for them on the printed score. Cape Breton musicians use sheet music as a rough guideline. Embellishments used by classical musicians, such as spiccato and vibrato, are used differently than embellishments by Cape Breton musicians, such as droning and cutting. Learning when to apply these embellishments is not as easy as learning a set of rules, but rather requires learning communal standards, which itself requires understanding social relations.

The Cape Breton musician who makes good musical decisions within the community understands how music moves individuals in the community. This requires the musician to be attuned to the audience's reactions, both when the musician performs and when others perform. When performing at a dance, the fiddler attuned to the audience might recognize that the crowd is simply going through the motions, so might choose particular tunes that they think will generate excitement. At a concert, the accompanist might understand that a particular tempo is too slow for the audience's desires based on the crowd's reactions, so might choose to increase the pace. The musician might learn this through his own performances, but also might learn what works and what doesn't work through watching the performances of others, and paying attention to how the musical decisions of other performers affects the audience. The key here is that the musician is not simply focusing on the music, but is attempting to

understand the effects that the musical decisions have upon the individuals within the community.

## 9.2. Cape Breton Music as Action

Cape Breton music prompts both debate and dialogue within the community. The music itself *is* dialogue. Though art, this music is not performed by musicians for its own sake. The Cape Breton musicians perform the music for the community, in recognition of those within the community. The music is action within the Cape Breton public sphere and generates communal opinion. This opinion is expressed in a multitude of ways. It is expressed via attendance, with the message being that the community will attend the events headlined by musicians they approve of, and will forego attending the events of those musicians they don't appreciate. Opinions are expressed by the very act of inviting a musician to perform. Opinions are also expressed at the gas station, the freshmart, and at church, each of which are locations where the community discusses the merits of performances. Opinions are also expressed by musicians musically emulating each other, either through performing another musician's composition, or adopting another musician's musical idea.

While the Cape Breton musician performs in recognition of the community, they also perform in order to reveal themselves. They do this through the way that they express their music. Through musical action the musicians make decisions in an effort to display their individuality. Accompanists make choices in chords or in bass lines or rhythmic patterns. Fiddlers use embellishments or perform a variation of a given tune. Through these expressive decisions, musicians distinguish themselves as unique. Performing sets that are replicas of other musicians' sets are frowned upon. Rather,

these musicians feature a range of stylistic nuances that might be unobserved to the outsider, but are readily apparent to the community member. So much so that many in the Cape Breton community could successfully identify the identity of musicians simply by listening.

Cape Breton musicians seek to distinguish themselves in order to be seen by the community as one of the community's better performers. There is a pantheon of current and former musicians that the community recognizes for their elite ability. Musicians from the community's past like Winston Fitzgerald, Buddy MacMaster, John Morris Rankin, and Jerry Holland, are remembered by the community for their virtuosity. Musicians from the community's present such as Natalie MacMaster, Ashley MacIsaac, Dave MacIsaac, and Tracey Dares, are recognized for their ability to perform at this elite level, and for their contributions to the music's state. These are all musicians who have influenced the community's understanding of musical possibilities, and have altered the community identity through their performance. Other musicians perform with the goal of achieving this level of recognition within the community, and also influencing the community through their action. The community expects this level of performance from its musicians, and they attend events understanding the possibility that the musician's performance will rise to a level that will be talked about long after the performance.

This project contributes to vernacular rhetoric by acknowledging that vernacular communities judge some vernacular actions as better than others. Not all products of the 'folk' are created equal—at least not to the folk themselves. Though these practices of Cape Breton are in the background of the community's everyday practices, the community judges some performances as better than others. Vernacular rhetoric needs to account for how the community judges these performances, lest it slip into

romanticism by ignoring that the community can allow for some individuals within it to be better than others. Vernacular rhetoric needs to account for communal norms, and how communal arguments that exist within the background are won. Outsiders might not even recognize that the argument exists. When a Cape Breton pianist performs a new chordal pattern or a new bass line, there is nothing to indicate to the outsider that something new was introduced to the community that will result in communal judgment. But the community does judge these actions. The community does not judge these actions with preset standards, and what might be a good performance today might change tomorrow.

Vernacular rhetoric also needs to account for recognizing that not all vernacular rhetorical performances are equal, neither are all vernacular rhetoricians. Though Cape Breton musicians might have an understanding of the community's rhetoric, this alone will not make them exemplary musicians within the eyes of the community. Rhetoric is an art, and musicians' talents will vary. Treating vernacular rhetoricians as if they were all equally adept at their community's respective sites of rhetorical performance veers on romanticizing the vernacular community and ignoring that the vernacular community is made of individuals. Ignoring that the community is made up of individuals ignores how the community itself recognizes its own background everyday practices, and ignores how rhetoric within the community actually works.

In order for a Cape Breton musician to perform good, they must listen and be open to others. They must listen and adjust to the musicians they perform with. They must listen and adjust to their audience. They must have a genuine openness towards these dialogues. But this also reveals the second side of recognizing that vernacular rhetoric can allow for good performances: vernacular rhetoric can also fail within the

community. Musicians who do not listen within a performance, or who approach performance as if they are working from a blueprint will fail within the community. Understanding a community's vernacular rhetoric requires understanding the source of rhetorical failures.

## 9.3. The Evolution of Cape Breton's Communal Judgment

A Cape Breton musician must make many musical decisions in any given performance. These decisions have the potential of affecting the community's understanding, and thus have the potential of changing the community's rhetorical practices. Musicians who enter this community, walk into a community that has been shaped by musicians who came before them. These are not nameless faces, but are musicians who are still remembered for their influence. Fiddlers recognize the affect of Winston Fitzgerald, and pianists recognize the affect of John Morris Rankin. They brought new routines that the community adopted. This contributes to the understanding within the community that each new musician can also impact the community's musical expectations. Traces of these musical influences exist, so that when listening to Troy MacGillivray, you can hear how his music was influenced by Winston Fitzgerald and others. While when listening to Glenn Graham, you can hear how his music was influenced by Donald Angus Beaton and others. These community routines that Graham and MacGillivray perpetuate still have the traces of those musicians who influenced them. Which in turn carry the influence of those musicians before them, and so on.

Drawing from Arendt and Gadamer allowed me to explain community and tradition as a dialogue between the individual and the group. By acknowledging that

the community is a collection of individuals, my project highlighted how action, judgment, and understanding are the ties that bind communities. Individuals judge how to act amongst others who then pass judgment upon this action. Through judging this action, the community's understanding changes. In helping to flesh out action and judgment, Arendt and Gadamer contribute to understanding the everyday and help to explain the possibilities for vernacular rhetoric. As each musician enters into the Cape Breton community, they act amongst a group that already understands their community's music in a particular way. When the musician performs to influence the community, and simultaneously distinguish themselves, the community judges this performance. This performance has the potential to alter how the community understands its music. In this way, the musician alters the community's understanding. Over time, the collective performances of multiple individuals change the community. This model of community evolution, driven by Arendt and Gadamer, differs from notions of communal change that see the community to naturally evolve, as if driven by the invisible hand.

In this same capacity, when the musicians act within Cape Breton, they act politically. They act with the intent to influence the community's understanding. They act with the intent to establish new standards for musical possibility. In order to succeed rhetorically, the musician needs to act within the constraints of the community's understanding acceptable action. But these constraints still allow for newness and can be opened to allow for new possibilities. Cape Breton musicians understand their own ability to change the music because they are surrounded by musicians who they

recognize for changing the music.[472] Musicians like Troy MacGillivray know the effect that contemporaries like Dave MacIsaac and Tracey Dares had upon the community, so he recognizes that he too can have a similar effect. In this way, Cape Breton musicians exhibit political agency in attempting to shape the community's identity.

In Cape Breton, the music has evolved because musicians have a practical relationship with tradition. They are able to test the prejudices that inform their understanding against something new, which then expands their understanding. So when a musician hears a chord used in a way that they had previously thought would likely be unacceptable, and they actually like how that chord works, their understanding of how chords work has been expanded.[473] Listening to the new chord is placed in context of how the community has formed their existing understanding. The new chord is understood to work because the musician has tested it—not because they have simply tossed aside their previous understanding. Because they operate practically, the musicians attempt 'new' acts because they think that the act might work. They might gain new understanding of how an F chord works by performing a new tune, and then test to see whether the F chord also works in an existing tune they perform. If they think that the chord works, then they might attempt using that chord in public, and test to see if the audience appreciates it. If the audience finds the chord acceptable, then it enters the community's understanding. If the audience likes the chord, then other musicians might emulate it. The community's standards change. The musicians are constantly

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[472] See my discussion of agency within the Cape Breton community in section 8.2.
[473] See the quote associated with footnote 443.

testing, listening, and judging. They are not simply tossing their pre-existing understanding aside for the sake of newness.

But the evolution of the music occurs at a pace that creates the illusion that music in Cape Breton has been unbroken, or at least might make the appearance that the community's understanding of music has only changed recently, after having been preserved for centuries. Time can hide the agency and the collective effects of all the musicians who have participated in the tradition. But musicians within this community have always been composing, and there have always been musicians who have stood out within the community for their virtuosity—meaning that the musicians have always been recognized for their unique expression.[474] And tracing this pattern further back to the music's origins in Scotland, the same can be said. Ignoring the rhetorical affects of the individual musician upon the community allows for romanticism. This also allows for romanticists to define the community by a single element, in the case of Cape Breton music, the defining element is either the Gaelic language[475] or "tribal" ancestors.[476]

This project has developed the musical rhetoric of Cape Breton island by focusing on how the community understands its everyday musical practices, and how individuals act within this framework. The purpose of this project was not to provide a technical manual that focuses on every single element of the Cape Breton musical style, or how implementing certain techniques will elicit certain effects. On the contrary, such a demonstration would be antithetical to my discussion of the vernacularity of

[474] See Alistair MacGillivray's chronicle of the biographies and stories of generations of Cape Breton fiddlers. MacGillivray, *The Cape Breton Fiddler.*

[475] See my discussion of John Shaw in chapter 5.

[476] See discussion of Seamus Taylor in footnote 353.

community, and would be out of date before it is defended. My purpose was to show how musicians operate rhetorically by making decisions based on the standards of the community, and also how musicians shape those very same standards. In operating rhetorically, Cape Breton musicians act informed by practical judgment, having to process many factors when making decisions. In making these decisions, while there is no 'right' way for the musician to perform, there are wrong ways, and some decisions are better than others. But whether a decision is better or worse depends largely on the communal judgment. Thus to understand musical rhetoric requires first recognizing that there is no single musical rhetoric, but that there are musical rhetorics. And to understand one of these musical rhetorics requires understanding community understanding as well as how the musician acts within the community.

A key theme throughout my project shows that the vernacularity of community requires constant conversation with a community in order to stay up to date with the community's understanding. In Cape Breton, though subtle, the community's standards have changed over time. The community's understanding of performance and possibilities is different today than it was fifty years ago, and different still than fifty years before that. Individuals who engage within the conversation of community and then leave, will likely not share the same understanding as those who have continuously engaged with community. Those in Cape Breton who have little participated with the musical community for the past twenty or thirty years cannot speak to how the Cape Breton community works, though they can speak to how the community worked. Assuming that they can speak to a current understanding of the community is to ascribe to a belief that social relations are static and likewise is to reify communal practices as if they were things. But to participate with the Cape Breton community is not to 'do a

thing,' as much as it is to act towards another. And to understand how these community actions are understood within the community is to maintain the conversation of community.

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