

was unique and had a built-in recipe for success” (6). Each broadcast begins with “a tune heard widely in blackface minstrelsy and early country music-testimony to the links between those forms of entertainment...” (13). Then bluegrass and early country music is performed, indicating the widespread popularity of this form of music in Newfoundland at this period. Following the country performances, local and Irish songs and tunes of Wilf Doyle and John White are included. The last sections of each show “mixes the Irish, local and country material in different ways, presaging the mixtures that would soon appear in popular Newfoundland acts of the late 1960s and beyond” (15).

This three-part set is a necessary addition to the collection of any scholar of vernacular or popular music in Canada as it makes available previously difficult to access materials and provides some new versions of older recordings. It will also be of interest to the general public who wants to understand the complexity and history of Newfoundland vernacular music. One hopes that the series will continue and that we will see more audio CDs representing other aspects of the culture of Newfoundland and Labrador. Perhaps the series will also expand to include other archival materials such as early television shows, films, video, or slide shows on DVD that represent the culture of Newfoundland and Labrador.



NOTE

1. In Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, where I am located, there were

similar radio and early television shows of local music that we know little about. The first reference to a radio show of Cape Breton music was a 1921 broadcast of dance hall music from the Rex Hall, Glace Bay by Harry Holden. In the 1930s, a weekly program that was nationally aired on the CBC was “Cotter’s Saturday Night,” produced by CJCB. Other shows included “Celtic Ceilidh” and “Highland Lassie,” featuring Winston Scottie Fitzgerald, in the 1940s, and “Cape Breton Barn Dance” in the 1950s. Local television shows such as “Melody Lodge” and “Oland’s Saturday Night” aired Cape Breton music in the 1950s and 1960s. The kind of research that informs *Saturday Nite Jamboree* needs to be done for Cape Breton Island and Nova Scotia.

Welta’q - “It Sounds Good”: Historic Recordings of the Mi’kmaq. 2008. Compact Disc. Research Centre for the Study of Music, Media, and Place (MMap), Memorial University of Newfoundland. Liner Notes by Janice Esther Tulk, photographs, song texts and musical transcriptions, 60pp.

BY CHRISTOPHER SCALES

Welta’q is the fourth and latest CD to be released by the Research Centre for the Study of Music, Media, and Place (MMap), an organization established in 2003 under the direction of Beverley Diamond, Canadian Research Chair in Ethnomusicology and affiliated with the School of Music and the Folklore Department at Memorial University. Ac-

ording to the MMAP website, one of the central missions of the centre is:

To foster pride in the cultural uniqueness of places and communities, not only by valuing contemporary practices and working with musicians on modern issues regarding appropriation and access, but also by working to make historical materials in the rich regional archives of Atlantic Canada in particular come alive through extended documentation, multimedia presentation, and scholarly engagement with issues of race, gender, ethnicity, class, and other aspects of collective identity. (<http://www.mun.ca/mmap/about/mandate/>)

Ethnomusicologist Janice Esther Tulk, the producer and writer for the *Welta'q* CD, could hardly have created a better project for fulfilling this mandate, and she has done a superlative job presenting the extraordinary breadth and depth of Mi'kmaw musical and expressive culture. Working collaboratively with many Mi'kmaw advisors and community members, she crafted a careful and meticulous work that is a model of how sound recordings can function effectively as illuminating and informative ethnographic texts.

The Mi'kmaq are First Nations peoples whose traditional homelands include parts of Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and Maine. They are part of the Wabanaki Confederacy, a political and economic alliance formed in the seventeenth century among a number of east coast indigenous nations, including the

Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, Maliseet, and Abenaki. According to Tulk, the title of the CD "welta'q" is a Mi'kmaw expression that literally translates as "it sounds good," and is used broadly to include "any sound that is pleasing to the ear, including chants, songs, instrumental music, and even stories" (Tulk 1-2). The 24 tracks included on this CD reflect this broad range of material and the selections are a mix of archival, field, and contemporary recordings, and range from traditional song/dance genres like *Ko'jua* and the Snake dance, to fiddle tunes, Christian hymns, popular country songs and contemporary intertribal powwow songs.

The CD features a creative and thoughtful ordering of the tracks, grouping related styles and genres in a way that helps the listener navigate through this wide variety of musical selections while also serving an educational purpose, inviting the listener to compare and contrast the related performances. For example, the first three tracks of the CD are dedicated to various performances of *Ko'jua* songs, a unique Mi'kmaw traditional song genre that often translates simply as "Mi'kmaw song" (Tulk, p. 7). The plasticity of the genre is demonstrated in the three examples, the first a 1977 performance by renowned Mi'kmaw fiddler Lee Cremo who begins by rendering the tune on his fiddle, complete with stylistically and idiomatically unique ornamentation, followed by a sung verse of the same tune. The second track features another rendition of the same song "Jukwa'lu'k Kwe'ji'ju'ow" ("Bring Your Little Sister"), performed by Sarah Denny in 1986, with hand drum and rattle accompaniment. One final performance

from 1966 features Chief Peter Jeddore who sings an unaccompanied version of the Ko'jua song "Ke'ju a." Taken as a set we learn a great deal about Mi'kmaw musical practices, including the gender politics of singing – Denny, an important figure in the revitalization of Mi'kmaw songs in the 1960s needed permission from the Grand Council to perform many traditional Mi'kmaw songs (Tulk 7) – the elasticity of Ku'jua performance practice both in terms of musical accompaniment and social context, and the stability of performance practice across these different contexts (the melody of the two versions of "Bring Your Little Sister" are almost identical).

Another particularly effective set is the three-track grouping of the story of the "wizard of the forest," an extended narration about a magical, flute playing being who transforms children into animals (and sometimes back again). The story is presented first in the Mi'kmaw language (track 5), followed by a modern recording of a Mi'kmaw flute player performing an original composition on a "plains style" five-hole cedar flute (no archival recordings of Mi'kmaw flute playing exist)(track 6), followed by the same narrator telling the same story in English (track 7). Both narrations are transcribed in the liner notes with the first presented in both Mi'kmaq and English. This kind of thoughtful and creative ordering works not only on an aesthetic level (the solo flute track providing an effective and affective interlude between the two renditions of the story), but also invites the listener to contemplate the differences between the two storytelling performances. The varying strategies employed by the narrator, which result from

the two different languages used, remind the listener how the different levels of meaning that emerge from the story are entirely dependent on language. It is a compact and powerful lesson about how both the structural and performative aspects of language are packed with deep cultural meanings, and why language preservation is of such extraordinary importance for First Nations communities across North America.

Similarly, the grouping of four tracks of various Christian religious songs, performed in English in one case (track 16: "Promised Land") and with Mi'kmaw language text settings on three other tracks (tracks 17-19: "Kyrrie," "Ave Maria," and "Chant Sacré"), as well as the two Mi'kmaw translations of anthems (track 8: "God Save the Queen," and track 9: "Hymn for Flag Raising") are lessons in cross-cultural translation and transformation. The creative refiguring of "God Save the Queen," in Mi'kmaw translation, tells the story of "Mary, the Mother of God, and . . . how the Holy Spirit made God a human being when Jesus was born to her" (Tulk 12). The religious song "Promised Land," recorded by the pioneering Canadian folklorist Helen Creighton in 1944, is performed by Chief William Paul who, in his unique rendition, replaces "Father," with "mother," "brother," and "sister" in subsequent refrains, substituting family relations for the more common textual variations of "Savior" and "Crown." While earlier generations of ethnomusicologists and folklorists might be tempted to categorize these hymns and anthems as indices of "acculturation," Tulk resists this ethnocentric model of cultural analysis and instead lets the performances speak for

themselves as creative, culturally appropriate adaptations of “foreign” musical works.

Scholars and fans of indigenous fiddle music will also find the three fiddle selections (as well as the Ko’jua fiddle number by Cremo, discussed above) to be fascinating and instructive examples of indigenous East Coast fiddling and related musical styles (track 12: “Maple Sugar,” track 13, “Paddy on the Turnpike,” and track 14: “Timothy Wright’s Reel”). Most compelling to my ears was Michael William Francis’s 1985 performance of “Paddy on the Turnpike” using a singing technique known as “diddling” or “mouth music” – rendering the melody to the well known fiddle tune using vocables only.

The sixty-page booklet included with the recording features a brief introduction to Mi’kmaw culture, historical and modern maps of Mi’kma’ki (the network of Mi’kmaw communities scattered throughout eastern Canada), careful textual and musical transcriptions and translations, short descriptions of musical genres, biographical information about each of the performers and the context in which the recording was made (including identifying the fieldworkers and ethnographers responsible for the recording), and a highly useful and very welcome bibliography, discography (generically organized), and filmography. Certainly educators working in primary and secondary schools, colleges, and universities who are seeking easy-to-use, understandable, and accurate teaching materials on Mi’kmaw culture, or First Nations cultures more generally, will find this CD an invaluable resource. In the age of the mp3s, find-

ing this kind of packaging is becoming increasingly rare, and apart from the Smithsonian Folkways, very few recordings are produced with this kind of depth of liner note material. Members of the various Mi’kmaw communities will also find this a welcome and useful CD as it makes widely available many important historical recordings that were heretofore hidden away in academic or small community and personal archives.

In sum, this is an extremely thoughtful and carefully executed project that succeeds at every level. Dr. Tulk and her collaborators at MMAP have set the bar high and I look forward to the release of future MMAP recording projects. 🍁