

FIDLING IN LANARK COUNTY: A MEDIUM FOR THE EXAMINATION OF ACCULTURATION IN CANADIAN FOLK MUSIC

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Lanark County, Ontario, is situated approximately forty kilometres west of Ottawa. Part of the Ottawa Valley, it is between the Rideau Lakes district to the south and the Ottawa River to the north. The Mississippi River system contributed significantly to the development of the county, being its major waterway for the transportation of timber and produce.

Settlement took place in the nineteenth century because of Britain's desire to increase security against American invasion and to solve domestic problems created by overpopulation. Scottish settlers arrived beginning in 1816 and Irish settlers, victims of the potato famine, arrived beginning in 1823. Both groups brought a rich folk music culture with them. Not surprisingly, these cultures overlapped, particularly during a timber boom with Britain during the last half of the century. Social life in the lumber camps was colourful with singing, fiddling and dancing taking place during the winter nights. As the Ottawa Valley borders on both Quebec and Ontario, French-Canadian lumbermen influenced the Scottish and Irish music with their own style.

The county has not been immune to the influences of artists made famous by the media. In particular, Don Messer has influenced old-time fiddle playing, as well as step dancing and square dancing. The commercialization of what is essentially a regional art form has resulted in warnings from ethnomusicologists that folk music is becoming an endangered genre. The influence of the media, combined with the increased mobility of the masses, has resulted in the conclusion that the folk music environment is being destroyed. However, the conclusions in this article concur with the observations of current research which suggest that music passed on by the aural tradition is a vibrant art form that remains resilient despite acculturative and technological pressures.

Folk music must be examined as a functional art form which is subject to change depending on sociological and historical events. Its function has been to serve the daily needs of its creators, those composers-performers whose strong aural instincts produced music for singing and dancing, grieving and celebration. It is a regional art form and although surprisingly insular to outside forces is capable of absorbing new ideas without losing its identity. It is the "aural" tradition that has protected folk music from being assimilated into other genres, a fact that our print-oriented mindset has difficulty accepting. Because folk music is primarily an aural medium, variation of the original tune or dance is the norm. The end result is that regional variations continuously change and develop within a national style.

Fiddle music, as a utilitarian art form, was invariably used to accompany dances. Although many traditional tunes were influenced by the idiosyncracies of the bagpipe (range, ornamentation, drones), the fiddle gradually evolved as the ideal instrument for cheap and versatile accompaniment. Traditional dances were group dances but the concept of a

solo dancer accompanied by a single fiddle is a naval tradition. In the sociological sense, there are few instances where men and women are forced to entertain themselves separately. In the navy, however, partnerless men were in need of exercise and entertainment. Jigs (especially the spritely Irish tunes) were part of the on-board routine.

In Lanark County, the navy-styled format evolved naturally when men were isolated from their wives or girl friends every winter during the timber boom which took place throughout most of the nineteenth century. Throughout the Ottawa valley, regional and national styles were cast together at an accelerated rate. On cold winter nights, one might sing and dance in the lumber shanties to fiddle music which reflected Irish, Scottish, or French-Canadian characteristics.

The music that has evolved can be allocated to one of four general categories which, for the purposes of this article, are identified as traditional tunes, old-time tunes, commercial old-time tunes, and new compositions. The determination of these categories is the result of analysis techniques gleaned from two sources. Using strategies from John D. White's *The Analysis of Music*, each tune is analysed on a micro, middle, and macro format. Tomas O Canainn, in his book, *The Traditional Music of Ireland*, uses a point system for each note of the tune. This becomes the basis for the microanalysis of the tunes. Points are given if the note is on a strong beat, is the highest or lowest note, is preceded by a leap of a fifth or more, is the first stressed note of the tune, is of significant length, or is ornamented. All of these factors play a role in determining the characteristics of the tune. Observations regarding the "strongest" note are then determined by adding the total number of points. The Interval Frequency column indicates the number of times each interval is present. This means the distance between melodic intervals (seconds, thirds, fourths) will be indicated without including the qualifiers (minor, major, Perfect). Repeated notes are categorized as '1'. This category is further subdivided into ascending and descending intervals. In all tunes, notes and intervals are counted without repeats.

The middle analysis section is labelled "Observations" and outlines patterns in harmony, rhythm, variation, ornamentation and form. A graph of the harmony and form is included. From this data, the macroanalysis process takes place. This means that general observations and conclusions are drawn from the evidence given in the micro and middle analysis stages.

Each tune is analysed on fiddle tune data sheets. These three-paged compilations are set in an appendix at the end of this paper. Each set of data sheets is accompanied by a transcription of the tune. Any variations by the fiddlers are included at the bottom of the transcription, marked in order of appearance, by number. Each eight-bar period is indicated on the transcript as P1 and P2. For easy reference, all bars in the transcriptions are numbered.

A well known tune in many parts of Canada is "Little Burnt Potato." A lesson in the process of the aural tradition can be learned by interpreting the performances by three Lanark County fiddlers. Colin J. Boyd, an Irish fiddler, composed the tune for Don Messer. It is a lilting Irish jig and is considered an old-time tune. However, because Messer broadcasted on radio, his performance of the tune is considered to be in the commercial old-time style. The lesson starts here!

Dawson Girdwood, a long-time resident of Perth, grew up and performed with local fiddlers. However, as an adult, he received a Canada Council grant to study with Jean Carignan. Although he could play “Little Burnt Potato,” he claimed he had to relearn the tune in order to play it in the “proper” style. As it observed in the analysis of his performance, the tune has become “Irish” again, through the use of lighter bowing, ornamentation, passing tones, and inverse drones. Although not evident without hearing the recording, his accompanist, Glenn Paul, uses a ii chord in the second period (other pianists rely on the V chord), a factor that enhances the Irish flavour. The combination of subtle changes has returned the tune to its original style.

On the other hand, Lloyd Brunton, a Carleton Place resident, gained his experience by listening to the radio. Although he had also listened to Don Messer’s performance of “Little Burnt Potato,” Brunton interpreted the tune according to his own aural and utilitarian experience. His style is heavy-handed and rhythmically strong, quite suitable for the step dance accompaniment which is his forte. Paul Gemmill’s aural experience has a Western flavour and step dance accompaniment is rarely required when he performs. As a result, the French-Canadian styled anticipated rhythms and Western-like use of double-stopped sixths have become part of his style. True to the folk music tradition, the purpose of the performance ultimately determines the style!

Although only one of the styles found in Lanark County has been reviewed in this article, the most valuable lesson from analysing fiddlers’ interpretation of tunes is that regardless of the source of the tune, the local fiddler will still perform it in his or her own style. Typical of the folk music tradition, when a tune has infiltrated the region, local musicians will work at giving it their own flavour. The biggest change in the last one hundred years is that the media has greatly expanded the parameters of “regionality.” However, it has not significantly altered the process of the aural tradition. What was once introduced by travelling dance masters or perhaps a broadside is now delivered by radio or television.

Twentieth-century technology has given musicians a chance to put regional styles on a national stage. However, rather than causing a “whitewashing” effect on regional styles, “nationalized” fiddle tunes, typical of the aural tradition, ultimately are returned to the idiosyncratic styles of regional fiddlers.

Example III-6

TITLE:	Little Burnt Potato
COMPOSER:	Collin J. Boyd, Antigonish, Nova Scotia
PERFORMER:	Dawson Girdwood
AGE:	42
ADDRESS:	Perth
MUSIC TRAINING:	No formal training until adulthood; received a Canada Council grant to study with Jean Carignan
PLACE RECORDED:	Carleton Place
BOWING:	Strong: clear; classical grip

A. PRINCIPAL NOTES:

Legend:

1. Note Frequency
2. Frequency given note appears on a strong beat
3. Highest note
4. Lowest note
5. Frequency that the note is preceded by a 5th or more
6. First stressed note
7. Frequency that the note is of significant length
8. Frequency that the note is ornamented
9. Total points allotted per note
10. The three strongest notes in order (1,2,3)

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
A	= 29	13		1	2	1	1		47	A = 1
B	= 10	6	1						17	
C#	= 9	1							10	
D	= 13	8					2		23	D = 3
E	= 11	3							14	
F#	= 21	11			2		3	4	41	F# = 2
G	= 13	5							13	
G#	11	0		2				13		

B. INTERVAL FREQUENCY:

	Total	Ascending	Descending
1st =	10	NA	NA
2nd =	86	32	54
3rd =	12	5	7
4th =	4	0	4
5th =	1	1	0
6th =	5	3	2
7th =	1	1	0
8th =	0	0	0

C. OBSERVATIONS:

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Note Use | Strongest notes are the three notes of the tonic chord; g sharp is viewed as ornamental in function |
| 2. Interval Pattern | 95% of intervals are a 5th or less; 5% of intervals are a 6th; |
| 3. Tonal Centre | D major |
| 4. Chord Use | I, V, ii |
| 5. Range | 9th; a1 to b2 |
| 6. Tessitura | mid to high; first position |
| 7. Variation | variation 1 indicated; removal of inverse drone; variation 2 indicated; removal of g sharp |

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8. Ornamentation | 4 mordents on f sharp; use of g sharp as a grace note to a2 |
| 9. Metre | 6/8 |
| 10. Metronome Marking | $\downarrow = 120$ |
| 11. Prominent Rhythms | $\text{ } \text{ } ; \downarrow \uparrow \downarrow \uparrow$ |
| 12. Phrase/Period | 2-bar phrases; 8-bar periods |
| 13. Form | a, a1, b, b1, a1, b1 |

D. FORM AND CHORD GRAPH:

2nd ending equivalent to Coda

Example III-6. Little Burnt Potato — Girdwood

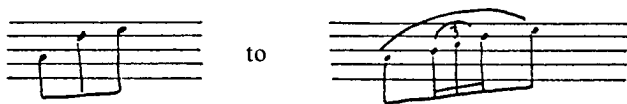
E. CONCLUSIONS

1. This tune was composed by Colin Boyd and used by Don Messer. It is an old-time tune in that it was composed in Canada, but a commercial old-time tune in that it was marketed through the media. Boyd was Irish and a number of Irish characteristics are evident.
2. The tune is in D major with the three notes of the tonic chord prominent. There is no departure from this key, as was noted in Irish traditional tunes.
3. Similar to other Irish tunes, the interval range focuses on a range of a fourth or less. There is a higher degree of sixths in this tune. This may be because the melodic line is not always arpeggiated and larger leaps are inevitable. Girdwood's version has intervals of a seventh created by a $g\#$ that is not in other tunes. This is viewed as incidental.
4. The fiddlers' training can result in quite different performances (See Brunton, Example III-7, and Gemmill, Example III-7b). Girdwood's experience was informal in that he learned the tune from the radio. He relearned the tune with Jean Carignan in order to play closer to the intended style. This includes:

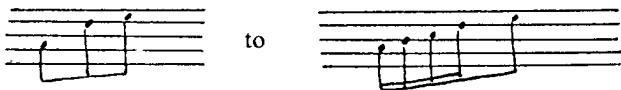
i) use of ornamentation

a) mordents

b) expansion of original melody by use of triplets



c) expansion of original melody by use of passing tones



- ii) use of inverse drones (bar 4)
 - iii) rhythmic variation
 - iv) clean bowing with lengthened phrasing
 - v) lilting, jig-style rhythm
 - vi) expansion of tune using DS al Coda; creates a 64-bar rather than a 32-bar tune
5. Note that in bar 3 and 4 of the second period, Glenn Paul (accompanist) uses a ii chord, although the V chord will work. This gives the tune a more traditional flavour.

Example III-7

TITLE: Little Burnt Potato
COMPOSER: Collin J. Boyd, Antigonish, Nova Scotia
PERFORMER: Lloyd Brunton
AGE: 45
ADDRESS: Carleton Place
MUSIC TRAINING: Informal; learned many tunes from radio and records; enjoys Cajun and Bluegrass
PLACE RECORDED: Carleton Place
BOWING: Heavy; generally clear; classical grip

A. PRINCIPAL NOTES:

Legend:

1. Note Frequency
2. Frequency given note appears on a strong beat
3. Highest note
4. Lowest note
5. Frequency that the note is preceded by a 5th or more
6. First stressed note
7. Frequency that the note is of significant length
8. Frequency that the note is ornamented
9. Total points allotted per note
10. The three strongest notes in order (1,2,3)

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
A	= 29	13		1	2	1	1		47	A = 1
B	= 10	6	1						17	
C#	= 9	1							10	
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E	= 11	3							14	
F#	= 21	11			2		3	4	41	F# = 2
G	= 13	5							13	
G#	11	0		2				13		

B. INTERVAL FREQUENCY:

	Total	Ascending	Descending
1st =	10	NA	NA
2nd =	86	32	54
3rd =	12	5	7
4th =	4	0	4
5th =	1	1	0
6th =	5	3	2
7th =	1	1	0
8th =	0	0	0

C. OBSERVATIONS:

1. Note Use	Strongest notes are the three notes of the tonic chord
2. Interval Pattern	94% of intervals are a 5th or less; 5% use of 6th only; 1% of octave; repeated notes increased in use
3. Tonal Centre	D major
4. Chord Use	I and V; occasional ii
5. Range	9th; a1 to b2
6. Tessitura	mid to high; first position
7. Variation	first bar of second period downward leaps use repeated notes on second time through
8. Ornamentation	none, except for triplet pattern on a2
9. Metre	6/8
10. Metronome Marking	$\downarrow = 126$
11. Prominent Rhythms	$\downarrow \downarrow \downarrow$; $\downarrow \downarrow \downarrow$; $\downarrow \downarrow \downarrow$
12. Phrase/Period	4-bar phrases; 8-bar periods
13. Form	a, a1, b, b1, a1, b1

D. FORM AND CHORD GRAPH:

The chord graph shows the harmonic structure of the piece. The first system covers measures 1-8, and the second system covers measures 9-16. Roman numerals (I, ii, V) indicate the chords used in each measure. Vertical lines with 'v' marks indicate phrasing or structural boundaries. The graph shows a sequence of chords: I, I, I, ii, V, V, V, I, ii, V, I in the first system, and I, I, I, V, V, ii, V, V, I, ii, V, V, I in the second system.

Example III-7. Little Burnt Potato — Brunton

The musical score is written in treble clef with a 6/8 time signature. It consists of five staves of music. The melody is characterized by eighth-note patterns and triplet figures. Fingerings (1-3) and breath marks (n) are indicated throughout the piece. The score includes various ornaments and articulations, such as slurs and accents, particularly over the triplet patterns.

E. CONCLUSIONS

1. The data sheet for Lloyd Brunton's performance reveals few changes. The contentious g sharp in Girdwood's version is missing, as is the 64-bar format.
2. Training plays a role in Brunton's performance:
 - i) the tune was learned from the radio — Don Messer
 - ii) his bowing technique is heavier and less fluid than Girdwood's
 - iii) his rhythmic style lacks the lilt required for an Irish style
 - iv) ornamentation is rare, suggesting that the intent in performance is to accompany dancing
 - v) the overall style is too heavy and ponderous to sound Irish
3. Training plays a role in Gemmill's performance:
 - i) the tune was learned from the radio — Don Messer
 - ii) his bowing technique is similar to Brunton's
 - iii) he adds double stops in several bars
 - iv) his own tastes are apparent in both harmony and rhythm:
 - a) in the first ending, period 1, he uses parallel 6ths
 - b) he uses a double stop of major 6th (bar 4, period 2); this forces the accompanying chord to the IV, which in this context sounds Western
 - c) he uses an anticipated rhythm which sounds French Canadian in bar 2, period 2; he does not appear to realize that he is overlapping several styles
4. A commercial artist can market an old-time tune, but if it is well received, it will become adapted within the regional and individual tastes of the fiddlers who assimilate it.

Example III-7B. Little Burnt Potato — Gemmill

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Little Burnt Potato" by Gemmill. It consists of five staves of music written in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The notation includes various musical symbols such as slurs, accents, and fingerings (e.g., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). The score is divided into measures, with some measures containing double stops or parallel sixths. The piece concludes with a final cadence in the fifth measure of the fifth staff.

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MARIUS BARBEAU MEDAL AWARDED TO A TRADITIONAL SINGER

In 1985 the executive of the Folklore Studies Association of Canada decided to institute a Marius Barbeau medal to be awarded to a person who had made an important contribution to Canadian folklore. That year the medal went to Edith Butler, the well-known Acadian folksinger. The following year it was given to Father Germain Lemieux, whose remarkable collection of Ontario's French-Canadian lore has been documented in numerous books and forms an important archive at the University of Sudbury.

In 1987 the executive awarded the medal to LaRena LeBarr Clark, a remarkable traditional singer who has a repertoire of some five hundred songs. Although many of these are not what are generally thought of as folk — vaudeville, music-hall, and American popular songs — she learned them all orally, from members of her family, and most of them show interesting variations from the originals.

LaRena's unusual background makes her repertoire particularly interesting. Nine generations on LaRena's father's side have been born in Canada. The LeBarres were French colonists who came out to Acadia early in the eighteenth century. Her grandfather, John Edward LeBarr, moved to Ontario from Grand Anse, New Brunswick, and married Martha Ann Moore who was of Pennsylvania Dutch stock.

John LeBarr obtained a land grant near Lake Simcoe and built a cedar-shingled house on the shores of the Black River at Pefferlaw, near Beaverton, Ontario. There he and his wife raised fourteen children, one of whom was LaRena's father, Benjamin LeBarr. In 1917 LaRena was born in the house her grandfather built.

Her maternal great-grandfather, Edward John Watson, came out to Canada from northern England early in the nineteenth century and married Margaret Landau, the child of an Indian woman and a French fur trader. Their son, LaRena's Grandad Watson, married Annie O'Neill, the daughter of George O'Neill, an Irish Catholic who was an early settler in Pefferlaw. Thus LaRena's ancestry mingles English, Irish, French, Pennsylvania Dutch, and Indian strains, and her repertoire benefits from this mosaic.

Most of her English songs came from her Grandad Watson, most of her Irish songs from her grandmother Mary Anne Moore LeBarr, and most of her Canadian songs from her father.

LaRena's life as a child was particularly suited to the learning of songs. Her grandfather and her father were hunters and guides, working in the woods and rivers of Northern Ontario, and as a child she often went with her father when he was hunting or fishing or following a trap-line. In the evenings at home the family's main pastime was singing.

She knows nine Child ballads, of which her versions of "Fair Annie" (Child 62) and "Lord Gregory" (Child 76) are the only versions so far

reported in Canada. She has some seventy British broadsides, including several not previously reported in North America. Some of her old English songs are either unique or very rare: "The Old County Fare," "Thyme, 'Tis a Pretty Flower," "The Rifle Boys," "The Banks of Inverness," "I Once Loved a Lass," and "Rattle on the Stovepipe." She also knows several Ontario lumbering songs that are quite uncommon: "Fine Times in Camp Number Three," "The Roving Shantyboy," "Hurry Up, Harry," and "The Raftsmen's Song."

In addition to minstrel, vaudeville, and Irish music-hall songs, her repertoire includes songs from the American Civil War, the Boer War, and World War I, a number of children's play-party songs, and an unusual song version of a widespread neck riddle which she calls "King Henry Has Set Me Free."

LaRena performed at various folk festivals and sang for many different groups. She has been interviewed on radio and television, and a number of articles about her were published in the 1960s. She composed many songs which she sang along with her traditional family groups. She has made nine records, and some of her songs have appeared in books, and been performed and recorded by contemporary singers.

The surprising wealth of her repertoire has enriched our Canadian folklore heritage and fully entitles her to receive the award named for Canada's great pioneer folklorist.

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Resumé: L'article de David Ennis traite des styles des joueurs de violon de Lanark County, et examine l'influence des immigrants irlandais, écossais, et canadiens-français sur la tradition musicale de l'Ottawa Valley. En employant des catégories «micro», «moyenne», et «macro», Ennis analyse la performance de Colin J. Boyd et Dawson Girdwood par rapport aux airs traditionnels et modernes.