

LP RECORDINGS OF TRADITIONAL NEWFOUNDLAND MUSIC

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There is no lack of traditional Newfoundland music on LPs. In the last five years, various Canadian record companies have become aware of the market for traditional songs and tunes, not only among the residents of Newfoundland, but also among those enclaves of Newfoundlanders in such mainland urban centres as Halifax, Montreal, and Toronto. Record bars in St. John's stores now display large sections of purely Newfoundland talent. The present twenty-fifth anniversary celebrations have been an added impetus for the production of Newfoundland music on LPs.

But even before this comparative "boom" period, traditional material had found its way onto phonodiscs. As early as 1928, Frank Crumit, a singer from the United States, recorded "Jack Was Every Inch a Sailor" (Victor 21668; His Master's Voice B.3054 [U.K.]; His Master's Voice E.A.454 [Australia]), and Arthur Scammell and Gerald S. Doyle's Commodore's Quartet recorded several 78s of traditional music in the 1940s. In the mid 1950s, the Rodeo Record Company started producing LPs of both traditional and popular Newfoundland music, thus marking the beginning of the modern commercial utilization of traditional Newfoundland material.

Since, by the very nature of the medium, traditional music has been "commercialized" on LP albums, it is important to see exactly how this factor has affected the content, style, and intent of the performances on disc. For the most part, the situation in which this music was performed is radically different from the context of the Newfoundland outport "time"² or other such traditional setting. The LP which most accurately places the songs in their traditional context is *SONGS FROM THE OUT-PORTS OF NEWFOUNDLAND* on Folkways FE-4075. This album is composed of selections from the field recordings which MacEdward Leach made in 1950 and 1951, and for the scholar interested in the songs as performed in a totally non-commercial atmosphere, this is the only LP available. All songs are discussed and annotated by Leach in an eight page accompanying pamphlet.

There are some professional singers who, in style and intent at least, are not too far removed from the traditional singers on Leach's album. Their intent is to duplicate, in the recording studio, the traditional style of singing which they found acceptable within their own communities. The most prolific of these performers are Christine and Wilf Doyle, who have been giving concerts in the outports of Newfoundland for over twenty years. They have been issuing LPs since 1956 and have produced the following albums:

¹This survey is a bi-product of the Newfoundland Popular Music Project, which was funded by the Canadian Folk Music Society. The author wishes to thank the society for its generosity, as well as the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA) for making available its Newfoundland record collection and other facilities.

²For a discussion of the Newfoundland "time" see George J. Casey, Neil V. Rosenberg and Wilfred W. Wareham, "Repertoire Categorization and Performer-Audience Relationships: Some Newfoundland Examples." *Ethnomusicology* 16 (1972): 397-403.

JIGS AND REELS OF NEWFOUNDLAND, Rodeo RLP-7; WILF DOYLE AND HIS ORCHESTRA PLAY THE QUADRILLES AND A SELECTION OF FAVORITE NEWFOUNDLAND OLD TIME MUSIC, Rodeo RLP-49; THE MIGHTY CHURCHILL, London EBX-4157; MORE DANCE FAVORITES, London NA-3508; THE ISLE OF NEWFOUNDLAND, London NAS-13514; THE SAILOR'S ALPHABET, Paragon ALS-306; SOUVENIRS AND MEMORIES, Audat 477-9061.

The two Halifax-based singers, Ray Johnson and Edison Williams, also fall into this category. Their conscious attempt to keep their style traditional is in part explained by the more conservative nature of the "expatriate" Newfoundlander who is more likely to want to hear songs that remind him of his outport days – i.e., songs that evoke nostalgia for the homeland – than would a continuous resident of the island. Williams' three LPs to date are THE ROVING NEWFOUNDLANDER, Audat 477-9006, MORE ROVING, Audat 477-9014, and I'M THE ROVING NEWFOUNDLANDER, Audat 477-9040. Most of Johnson's singing is found on his latest album, THE NEWFOUNDLAND I LOVE, Audat 477-9031.

The final group in this category is the Kitty Vitty Minstrels, who in a sense are "re-discoveries." They originally played on radio in the 1930s and have been re-assembled and recorded on Audat 477-9033, THE CLIFFS OF BACCALIEU. The repertoire of the Doyles, Williams, Johnson, and the Minstrels includes many of the less well-known traditional songs of Newfoundland. Unlike other performers, they have gone beyond "I's the B'y", "Jack Was Every Inch a Sailor", "Feller From Fortune," or other old standards taken from such easily accessible collections as the Gerald S. Doyle songbooks.³ Williams's rendition of "Mary Hamilton" (Child 173) and the railroad song, "Washout On The Line" (both on Audat 477-9014) show the range and flexibility of his repertoire of traditional material. The Kitty Vitty Minstrels sing what was probably a broadside ballad (or at least it is in the style of such songs) concerning the Quidi Vidi Regatta, "The Time of 9:13."

Although there are relatively few performers who have retained the traditional style of singing, there are quite a number of traditional instrumentalists on LP. This may well reflect the greater influence of popular music on singing style than on playing style. Again, the Kitty Vitty Minstrels, consisting of violin, accordion, and mandolin, as well as Wilf Doyle's accordion playing, reflect traditional styles. Doyle's first album, Rodeo RLP-7, includes a complete Newfoundland square dance set, commonly called "The Lancers." Ray Johnson's first two LPs, AT THE NEWFOUNDLANDER, Audat 477-9003 and LITTLE NEWFIE BOY, Audat 477-9016, are almost entirely composed of jigs, reels, and waltzes. Traditional accordion can also be heard on Ray Walsh's two instrumental albums, FAVORITE REELS AND JIGS OF NEWFOUNDLAND, Arc AS-691 and NEWFOUNDLAND ACCORDION FAVOURITES, Audat 477-9022, as well as on Winston Saunders' album, WINSTON'S ACCORDION FAVORITES, Marathon ALS-351. The only example of Newfoundland French accordion-playing style is on an album by Gerry Formanger (who records under

³*Old-Time Songs of Newfoundland*, St. John's: Gerald S. Doyle Ltd., 1927, 1940, 1955, 1966.

the name of Gerry Reeves), **DOWN EAST ACCORDION**, Paragon ALS-211. Perhaps the album which most closely approximates a field recording is Minnie White's **NEWFOUNDLAND ACCORDION AND MANDOLIN FAVOURITES**, Audat 477-9058, since she is not a professional performer and seems to be less in touch with popular influences than the other instrumentalists.

Traditional Newfoundland fiddling is not well presented on LPs. The Shamrocks, composed of two popular St. John's fiddlers and a piano player, recorded an album for the Rodeo Record Company in 1957, **NEWFOUNDLAND FIDDLE MUSIC**. Banff RES-1055. This album can still be found in St. John's stores, which attests to its continued popularity. Recently, a Codroy Valley fiddler, Walter J. MacIsaac, produced a privately printed LP entitled **MUSICAL MEMORIES OF CODROY VALLEY NEWFOUNDLAND** (private issue LP-13). In contrast to the Anglo-Irish style of the Shamrocks, MacIsaac plays in the Scottish style native to Newfoundland's Codroy Valley. Unfortunately, no Newfoundland French fiddling has been put on disc.

Of slightly less traditional nature are two singers who may best be described as Newfoundland-Irish in style: Harry Hibbs and John White. Their blend of Irish and Newfoundland material and their Irish tenor-type voices associate them more with a St. John's music-hall stage than with an outport "time." Both are highly polished professionals who have had great media exposure, yet their styles of singing may indeed reflect the type of performance popular in Newfoundland one hundred years ago. As might be expected, Irish music and Irish singers have always been a part of Newfoundland popular music. Hibbs albums, to date, are **HARRY HIBBS AT THE CARIBOU CLUB**, Arc AS-794; **MORE HARRY HIBBS VOLUME II**, Arc AS-809; **THE INCREDIBLE HARRY HIBBS**, Arc AS-818; **HARRY HIBBS FOURTH**, Arc AS-821; **A FIFTH OF HARRY HIBBS**, Arc AS-826; **SOMEWHERE AT SEA**, Caribou CCLP-7004; **THE ALL NEW HARRY HIBBS WITH SHRIMP COCKTAIL**, Caribou CCLP-7007; and **ALL KINDS OF EVERYTHING**, Marathon MMS-76026. Hibbs' later albums are more eclectic, both in content and style, but his accordion instrumentals have remained traditional. John White's albums of Newfoundland songs are **VOICE OF NEWFOUNDLAND**, International Artists IA-3014, and **JOHN WHITE PLAYS FAVOURITES**, Audat 477-9030.

The next category of artists represents Newfoundland traditional music in its most popularized form. These are the showbands, to use a general term, and their repertoires are often highly eclectic, taking in country and western, rock and roll, and Irish music, as well as traditional Newfoundland material. The instrumentation is more sophisticated and complex than on the albums of Williams or Johnson, but quite similar to that of the accompanists on some of Hibbs's LPs. The Dorymen, another Halifax-based group, have the most traditional repertoire; their albums are **THE DORYMEN**, Paragon ALS-321, and **A MUSICAL CATCH**, Marathon ALS-365. The Newfoundland Showband is more a blend of country and western and traditional Newfoundland music, with such songs as "Bed of Roses" and "It's the B'y" sharing the same LP. Their output, to date, consists of **NEWFOUNDLAND SHOWBAND**, Paragon ALS-315; **VISIT TO NEWFOUNDLAND**, Marathon ALS-350;

NEWFOUNDLAND SHOWBAND, Marathon ALS-393; and an LP featuring their lead singer, Ray McLean, ALL ABOARD FOR NEWFOUNDLAND, Marathon ALS-392. (The accordionist for the group, Winston Saunders, has also issued an album mentioned earlier.) The Ducats Showband is even more eclectic, and their album, THE DUCATS SHOWBAND, Paragon ALS-242, has traditional accordion jigs on one side and country and western and calypso on the reverse.

The popularity of country and western music in Newfoundland cannot be underestimated. Its influence on traditional repertoire extends to local singers in the most isolated outports on the island. The one singer who has most successfully incorporated a country and western style of singing into traditional Newfoundland material is Dick Nolan. His voice is reminiscent of Johnny Cash and, indeed, he has put out many LPs of purely country and western content. He often accompanies his Newfoundland songs with a pedal steel guitar or electric piano. His albums of Newfoundland songs are I SE THE B'Y WHAT CATCHES DA FISH, Arc AS-694; LUKEY'S BOAT, Arc AS-810; BE TRUE NEWFOUNDLANDERS, Arc ACS-5024; FISHERMAN'S BOY, RCA/Camden CAS-2576; HOME AGAIN THIS YEAR, RCA/Camden CASX-2603; HAPPY NEWFOUNDLANDERS, RCA/Camden KCLI-0012; and HAPPY ANNIVERSARY NEWFOUNDLAND, RCA/Camden KCLI-0050. Nolan may be classified as a country-Newfoundland singer, and, although he is the only singer of this type to produce an all-Newfoundland LP, there are many other performers in this category. The significance of this artist's popularity on the island should not be overlooked in trying to understand the many influences of mainland culture upon traditional Newfoundland music.

Other categories include the Lidstone Sisters' THE LIDSTONE SISTERS SING FAVORITE HYMNS OF NEWFOUNDLAND on Banff RBS-1030. Although these hymns are not locally composed, they represent the type of sacred song which would be commonly sung in traditional Newfoundland culture. This LP has been available in St. John's for nearly twenty years. The only albums of locally composed Labrador songs are sung by Gerald Mitchell on his THE HUNT AND OTHER SONGS OF LABRADOR, Marathon MS-2101, and SONGS OF LABRADOR, Horizon HS-101 (privately produced). These songs represent the culture of inland Labrador more than the south-coast culture. Choral arrangements of traditional Newfoundland material may be found on the Terra Novans' WE'LL RANT AND WE'LL ROAR, TN-1001 (privately produced); the St. John's Extension Choir of Memorial University of Newfoundland's NEWFOUNDLANDERS SING SONGS OF THEIR HOMELAND RCA/Victor CC-1024; and the CJON Radio and TV Glee Club's CJON GLEE CLUB SINGS NEWFOUNDLAND FOLK SONGS AND OTHER SELECTIONS, Rodeo RLP-83 and THE GLEE CLUB OF CJON-TV AND RADIO, ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND - VOL. 2, Rodeo RLP-84.

The singer Gordon Pinsent may be placed in still another category. He sees Newfoundland traditional music as, first and foremost, *folk music* which is a part of the heritage of his culture. His intent is to preserve this music, but to do so in a style which will be palatable, or at least understandable, to mainland culture. In the liner notes to his album, Pinsent says, "The sound of Newfoundland folk song deserves to be included in the master sound of folk songs everywhere." Pinsent's performing style, as heard on his album ROOTS, Arc ACS-5027, is consciously stereotypic of traditional Newfoundland singing. Pinsent may be categorized as "folk revival" in his intent.

Most non-Newfoundlanders who have recorded traditional Newfoundland songs are similarly "folk revival" singers. Omar Blondahl, the most prolific of these mainland singers, is of special interest. He actually lived and performed in the province in the 1950s, and actively sought out traditional material from primary sources. His name is still widely known on the island, and his records of Newfoundland content are SONGS OF SEA AND SHORE, Arc A-537; ROVING NEWFOUNDLANDER, Banff RBS-1142; THE GREAT SEAL HUNT OF NEWFOUNDLAND, Banff RBS-1173; 16 NEWFOUNDLAND SONGS, Banff RBS-1231 (a reissue of cuts from previous albums); ONCE AGAIN FOR NEWFOUNDLAND, Melbourne AMLP-4007; THE SAGA OF NEWFOUNDLAND IN SONGS, Rodeo RLP-5; DOWN TO THE SEA AGAIN, Rodeo RLP-7; and A VISIT TO NEWFOUNDLAND, Rodeo RLP-34.

Kenneth Peacock, who has done extensive folk-song collecting in Newfoundland, has put out an album of his own singing called SONGS AND BALLADS OF NEWFOUNDLAND, Folkways FG-3505; and the well-known Canadian folk revival singer, Alan Mills, has produced two albums, both entitled FOLK SONGS OF NEWFOUNDLAND, Folkways FW-6831 and FW-8771. Ed McCurdy devotes half of ED McCURDY SINGS FOLK SONGS OF THE CANADIAN MARITIMES, Whitehall LP-850, and half of HOMEWARD BOUND (A SELECTION OF CANADIAN FOLKLORE), Rodeo RLP-102, to Newfoundland traditional music, and Tom, Jim and Garth have produced an album of the standard traditional songs entitled SONGS OF NEWFOUNDLAND, Banff RBS-1252/SBS-5252. The repertoire of Pinsent, Peacock, Mills, and especially Blondahl includes many of the less well-known traditional Newfoundland songs.

For the student of folk song, all these LPs are important. The Leach album, the LPs of the Doyles, Johnson, Williams, and the Kitty Vitty Minstrels, and the instrumental albums all give some indication of how the music is performed in a traditional setting. The Irish-Newfoundland, showband, and country-Newfoundland albums give clues to the influence of outside cultures on the popular and folk traditions of Newfoundland. Similarly, the "folk revival" albums indicate the effect of Newfoundland traditional music upon mainland popular culture. The esthetic of the Newfoundlander can be judged, not only by which songs and singers have been recorded, but which LPs have been successful sellers.

Just as the scholar cannot afford to overlook broadsides in studying older folk song traditions, he cannot afford to ignore LPs in studying modern folk song traditions.

The following is a numerical listing of the LPs discussed above:

Arc A-537 Omar Blondahl: SONGS OF SEA AND SHORE
Arc ACS-5024 Dick Nolan: BE TRUE NEWFOUNDLANDERS
Arc ACS-5027 Gordon Pinsent: ROOTS
Arc AS-691 Ray Walsh: FAVORITE REELS AND JIGS OF NEWFOUNDLAND
Arc AS-694 Dick Nolan: I'VE THE B'Y WHAT CATCHES DA FISH
Arc AS-794 Harry Hibbs: HARRY HIBBS AT THE CARIBOU CLUB
Arc AS-809 Harry Hibbs: MORE HARRY HIBBS VOLUME II
Arc AS-810 Dick Nolan: LUKEY'S BOAT
Arc AS-818 Harry Hibbs: THE INCREDIBLE HARRY HIBBS
Arc AS-821 Harry Hibbs: HARRY HIBBS FOURTH
Arc AS-826 Harry Hibbs: A FIFTH OF HARRY HIBBS
Audat 477-9003 Ray Johnson: AT THE NEWFOUNDLANDER
Audat 477-9006 Edison Williams: THE ROVING NEWFOUNDLANDER
Audat 477-9014 Edison Williams: MORE ROVING
Audat 477-9016 Ray Johnson: LITTLE NEWFIE BOY
Audat 477-9022 Ray Walsh: NEWFOUNDLAND ACCORDION FAVOURITES
Audat 477-9030 John White: JOHN WHITE PLAYS FAVOURITES
Audat 477-9031 Ray Johnson: THE NEWFOUNDLAND I LOVE
Audat 477-9033 Kitty Vitty Minstrels: THE CLIFFS OF BACCALIEU
Audat 477-9040 Edison Williams: I'M THE ROVING NEWFOUNDLANDER
Audat 477-9058 Minnie White: NEWFOUNDLAND ACCORDION AND MANDOLIN
FAVOURITES
Audat 477-9061 Wilf Doyle: SOUVENIRS AND MEMORIES
Banff RBS-1030 Lidstone Sisters: THE LIDSTONE SISTERS SING FAVORITE
HYMNS OF NEWFOUNDLAND
Banff RBS-1055 Shamrocks: NEWFOUNDLAND FIDDLE MUSIC
Banff RBS-1142 Omar Blondahl: ROVING NEWFOUNDLANDER
Banff RBS-1173 Omar Blondahl: THE GREAT SEAL HUNT OF NEWFOUNDLAND
Banff RBS-1231 Omar Blondahl: 16 NEWFOUNDLAND SONGS
Banff RBS-1252/SBS-5252 Tom, Jim & Garth: SONGS OF NEWFOUNDLAND
Caribou CCLP-7004 Harry Hibbs: SOMEWHERE AT SEA
Caribou CCLP-7007 Harry Hibbs: THE ALL NEW HARRY HIBBS WITH SHRIMP
COCKTAIL
Folkways FE-4075 SONGS FROM THE OUT-PORTS OF NEWFOUNDLAND
Folkways FG-3505 Kenneth Peacock: SONGS AND BALLADS OF NEWFOUNDLAND
Folkways FW-6831 Alan Mills: FOLK SONGS OF NEWFOUNDLAND
Folkways FW-8771 Alan Mills: FOLK SONGS OF NEWFOUNDLAND
Horizon HS-101 Gerald Mitchell: SONGS OF LABRADOR
International Artists IA-3014 John White: VOICE OF NEWFOUNDLAND
London EBX-4157 Wilf Doyle: THE MIGHTY CHURCHILL
London NA-3508 Wilf Doyle: MORE DANCE FAVORITES
London NAS-13514 Wilf Doyle: THE ISLE OF NEWFOUNDLAND
Marathon ALS-350 Newfoundland Showband: VISIT TO NEWFOUNDLAND
Marathon ALS-351 Winston Saunders: WINSTON'S ACCORDION FAVORITES
Marathon ALS-365 The Dorymen: A MUSICAL CATCH
Marathon ALS-372 Newfoundland Showband: MEMORIES OF HOME
Marathon ALS-392 Ray McLean: ALL ABOARD FOR NEWFOUNDLAND
Marathon ALS-393 Newfoundland Showband: NEWFOUNDLAND SHOWBAND
Marathon MMS-76026 Harry Hibbs: ALL KINDS OF EVERYTHING
Marathon MS-2101 Gerald Mitchell: THE HUNT AND OTHER SONGS OF
LABRADOR
Melbourne AMLP-4007 Omar Blondahl: ONCE AGAIN FOR NEWFOUNDLAND

Paragon ALS-211 Gerry Reeves: DOWN EAST ACCORDION
 Paragon ALS-242 Ducats Showband: THE DUCATS SHOWBAND
 Paragon ALS-306 Wilf Doyle: THE SAILOR'S ALPHABET
 Paragon ALS-315 Newfoundland Showband: NEWFOUNDLAND SHOWBAND
 Paragon ALS-321 The Dorymen: THE DORYMEN
 Private issue LP-13 Walter J. MacIsaac: MUSICAL MEMORIES OF CODROY VALLEY
 NEWFOUNDLAND
 RCA/Camden CAS-2576 Dick Nolan: FISHERMAN'S BOY
 RCA/Camden CASX-2603 Dick Nolan: HOME AGAIN THIS YEAR
 RCA/Camden KCLI-0012 Dick Nolan: HAPPY NEWFOUNDLANDERS
 RCA/Camden KCLI-0050 Dick Nolan: HAPPY ANNIVERSARY NEWFOUNDLAND
 RCA/Victor CC-1024 St. John's Extension Choir of Memorial University of New-
 foundland: NEWFOUNDLANDERS SING SONGS OF THEIR HOMELAND
 Rodeo RLP-5 Omar Blondahl: THE SAGA OF NEWFOUNDLAND IN SONGS
 Rodeo RLP-7 Omar Blondahl: DOWN TO THE SEA AGAIN
 Rodeo RLP-10 Wilf Doyle: JIGS AND REELS OF NEWFOUNDLAND
 Rodeo RLP-34 Omar Blondahl: A VISIT TO NEWFOUNDLAND
 Rodeo RLP-49 Wilf Doyle: WILF DOYLE AND HIS ORCHESTRA PLAY THE
 QUADRILLES AND A SELECTION OF FAVORITE NEWFOUNDLAND OLD TIME
 MUSIC
 Rodeo RLP-83 CJon Glee Club: CJon GLEE CLUB SINGS NEWFOUNDLAND FOLK
 SONGS AND OTHER SELECTIONS
 Rodeo RLP-84 CJon Glee Club: THE GLEE CLUB OF CJon-TV AND RADIO, ST.
 JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND – VOL. 2
 Rodeo RLP-102 Ed McCurdy: HOMEWARD BOUND (A SELECTION OF CANADIAN
 FOLKLORE)
 TN 1001 Terra Novans: WE'LL RANT AND WE'LL ROAR
 Whitehall LP-850 Ed McCurdy: ED McCURDY SINGS FOLK SONGS OF THE
 CANADIAN MARITIMES

The Caribou and International Artists labels are subsidiaries of Arc; Paragon is a subsidiary of Marathon; Banff and Melbourne are subsidiaries of Rodeo.

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Résumé: *Michael Taft parle de la musique traditionnelle de Terre-Neuve
 enregistrée sur disques LP actuellement sur le marché, en donnant des
 détails sur les différences de style et de présentation des divers chanteurs,
 instrumentistes et groupements. Sa liste constitue également un supplé-
 ment à celle des disques incluse dans la "Liste de références sur la Musique
 folklorique Canadienne" parue dans notre première publication.*