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# **Towards an ethnography of a culturally eclectic music scene**

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Preserving and transforming folk music in  
twenty-first century England

**Élise Gaëlle Marie Gayraud**

A Thesis presented for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy



Department of Music  
University of Durham  
England

January 2016

# Towards an ethnography of a culturally eclectic music scene: Preserving and transforming folk music in twenty-first century England

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*Élise G. M. Gayraud (2016)*

## **Abstract**

This thesis presents an analysis of the recent transformations in the folk music scene in England. Through interviews of professional and amateur folk artists, it elicits musicians' points of view about the music they perform and their own compositions. Adopting an ethnomusicological approach, it compares and contrasts theories of cultural globalisation with the musicians' perceptions of their position within the music scene and in relation to musical traditions in the twenty-first century.

Exploring changes in music-making, collecting, and modes and contexts of transmission, this study considers how musical repertoire is exchanged, adapted and preserved within and beyond local communities through means such as archiving, pub sessions, workshops, festivals and formal tuition. From the perspectives of both artists and audiences, contemporary modes and contexts of transmission and the development of new technologies for recording, sharing and teaching music have been encouraging diverse transformations of perception, repertoire, composition and interpretation, as well as the dynamics of interaction between folk musicians.

This thesis sheds light on how folk musicians' horizons have expanded far beyond the local sphere; processes of globalisation have engendered global perspectives, new conceptualisations of what "traditional" and "folk" music are, complex identities reflected in musical hybridisation, new opportunities to access traditional and folk music, new forms of communication technology, demographical changes and cross-borders musical initiatives. The thesis demonstrates that, although the folk music scene in England might often be perceived as somewhat conservative in outlook and overshadowed by a profusion of widely disseminated contemporary popular musical products, many folk musicians have been open to transformation, adapting to new contexts and modes of transmission, embracing new communication technologies, and drawing influences from beyond the immediate local surrounding. At the same time as preserving musical heritage they have been enriching it in diverse ways to ensure its continued relevance.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Topic introduction

Within the folk repertoire, musicians are always liable to subject melodies to small variations, adding their own interpretations and influences to the existing material in such a way that, over time, the melodies can be evolved away from their previous states and into a number of different versions. To illustrate this, I shall briefly outline a single brief case study from my own experience as an amateur folk musician, relating to the Bear Dance, a very simple tune that is regularly played in pub sessions all across England, despite its origins most probably being on the continent, as debated on the website *thesession.org*.<sup>1</sup> It is highly significant that the Bear Dance, like the majority of tunes from the eclectic repertoire played in sessions, is readily available through online resources and sharing websites such as *thesession.org*. Being widely employed by folk musicians – both amateur and professional – such highly conspicuous and easily navigated modes of transmission and sharing encourage a certain degree of overlap in knowledge and practice – hence the Bear Dance’s inclusion in many off-line learning collections, such as the Durham University Folk Society (DUFFS) tunebook, which was the context in which I initially heard and learnt it as an exchange student at Durham University in 2008. Coming from France, I had been exposed to limited amounts of folk music before I arrived in Durham, and was used to learning music in the classical way, by initially reading from notation. As a novice to folk music-making, I therefore began by simply replicating the notation-centred learning method, internalising the notes one by one by reading them repeatedly from the printed page of the DUFFS tunebook.

Three years later, in 2011, several DUFFS members and alumni went to Nablus in Palestine with the charity “Ceilidh beyond Borders”<sup>2</sup>, to teach tunes to Palestinian children. For teaching purposes, we picked some simple tunes that we all had in common, with the Bear Dance being identified as a

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<sup>1</sup> The session website, discussions, <<http://thesession.org/discussions/4980>> [accessed 16 November 2013]

<sup>2</sup> A charity created at SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies, London University) and touring around the world performing ceilidh and teaching folk music.

particularly suitable introductory melody. Interestingly enough, however, when we had to break the melody down into its component phrases, we realised to everyone's fascination that there were some patterning discrepancies between our respective versions. The causes underlying the discrepancies were apparent: several of the group members had left Durham well over a year earlier, dispersing to other parts of the UK to undertake postgraduate courses in other universities (including Leeds and SOAS) and integrate with different communities of folk musicians. It was specifically those individuals' tune interpretations that had evolved away from the original versions circulated in the DUFFS tunebook – having been subjected to contrasting musical influences in the interim and, no doubt, with certain passages being “remembered creatively” as the precise details of the original notated version had passed from accurate recollection.

Printed below are two different versions of the Bear Dance as played by two different members of the “Ceilidh beyond Borders” teaching team, the first being closer to that included in the DUFFS tunebook while the second diverges in certain passages – typifying the kind of versioning that commonly occurs in the performance (and transcription) of a folk tune.

### The Bear Dance



Rhythm: polka

Figure 1: The Bear Dance, first version, created with *Concertina.net*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Tune converter on Concertina.net <[http://www.concertina.net/tunes\\_convert.html](http://www.concertina.net/tunes_convert.html)> [Last accessed 2 February 2012]

## The Bear Dance



Rhythm: polka

Figure 2: The Bear Dance, second version, created with *Concertina.net*<sup>4</sup>

When idiomatically consistent, such surface differences in patterning (as in the fourth bar of this example, Figure 1 and Figure 2) tend to be cherished within the folk tradition, generating richness and uniqueness and attractive complexity when rendered simultaneously by different individuals. In this way, with transformation and transformability being imbedded within the transmission and performance of tradition, each player is able to contribute a small piece of themselves to the musical event.

Nonetheless, when trying to apprehend a melody for the first time, learners tend to favour consistency and uniformity – step-by-step introduction to a single true “authentic” version rather than immediate exposure to a multiplicity of subtly differing versions – and this is especially the case in the classroom context where people expect to learn and play together in unison. Accordingly, in 2011, the Palestinian children with whom we were working were initially confused by our varying interpretations of the Bear Dance and we felt obliged to formulate a typical “average” version. However, while the two fiddle teachers (my friend and I) had formulated a single version well-suited to fiddle playing, the other teachers who were working in other classrooms taught subtly differing versions idiomatically suited to other forms of instrumentation. As well as fiddles, tin whistles and guitars, some of the children taking part in the Ceilidh Beyond Borders project played unusual musical instruments such as clarinet and qanun, not usually used for British traditional and folk music and requiring some hasty on-the-spot tune-adaptation adapted the arrangement of the tunes to include instruments (See photo, Figure 3 below). Hence, even in this classroom-based teaching

<sup>4</sup> Tune converter on Concertina.net <[http://www.concertina.net/tunes\\_convert.html](http://www.concertina.net/tunes_convert.html)> (Last accessed 2 February 2012)

context, the folk-style urge to adapt remained apparent, and was clearly revealed when the various classes all assembled to perform together; as the heterophonic folk sound rung out, I even noticed that some of the students were already subjecting what they had learnt to simple revisions – leaving out and adding notes.



**Figure 3: The Ceilidh Beyond Borders project in Nablus, April 2011**

Although operating in areas that are geographically far from England, the “Ceilidh beyond Borders” initiative and The Bear Dance case study are indicative of sweeping trends that prevail “back home” in England, introducing four key themes that are central throughout this thesis: the urge to diversify in musical interpretation; the extending of musical horizons and a concomitant penchant for hybridisation (incorporating non-traditional instrumentation and patterning); the development of new approaches to notation, collection and transmission (including online resources); and the diversification of fora for folk music-making, participation and consumption. As will be shown, these themes are widely and conspicuously evidenced in the ways that contemporary folk musicians in England currently engage in their music-making.

Central to my research is an exploration of globalisation and, specifically, how globalisation’s diverse processes and manifestations have been affecting folk music culture. My research specifically focuses on the activities of artists in England, exploring the range of measures undertaken to preserve and transmit traditional music as well as to encourage cross-cultural musical sharing. In many folk music-making contexts, from local sessions to festival stage performances, it is now common to see musicians drawing from a wide variety of musical traditions from beyond the immediate local sphere,

for example from nearby Celtic musical traditions. A number of widely-appreciated touring bands have been encouraging this trend on the grass-roots level, such as Blowzabella, merging influences from French Breton and English traditional music, and Baltic Crossing, whose members from the UK, Finland and Denmark combine Scandinavian and English influences. Meanwhile, other bands have pursued other forms of hybridisation, drawing from sources such as jazz, rock and popular music to generate a plethora of subgenres, stemming from the pioneering projects undertaken by influential folk-rock bands such as Fairport Convention (from the 1960s onwards) and Capercaillie, who continued to promote the use of electric instrumentation in the re-interpretation of traditional repertoire in the 1980s and 1990s. The range of instruments commonly used in folk music-making and even occasionally interpreted as “traditional” by cultural insiders has grown to include instruments like the Greek bouzouki and, of course, the guitar – mainstays of contemporary folk music-making that indicate how openness to new sounds is not an entirely new phenomenon in folk-music circles. Nonetheless, what is particularly striking about the folk music-making of recent years is the range and extent of diversification and hybridisation that is occurring, seemingly on all levels of involvement ranging from the amateur local session to the culture-leading professionals; as this study will go on to show, these processes have been facilitated, encouraged and supported by concurrent developments in recording and communication technologies. Globalisation and globalising technologies have ensured that folk musicians are both exposed to and granted easy access to a staggering array of musical creations from diverse cultures.

With so many different geographical and genre boundaries routinely traversed in folk music-making, the task of identifying how “folk music”, “tradition” and “authenticity” are defined becomes fraught with ambiguity. Formerly, the folk idiom operated within fairly narrow stylistic confines, with the musicians working together to preserve and transmit faithful renditions of the tunes – an approach that is clearly apparent in old ethnographic recordings. Nowadays, however, in the widely circulated recordings of leading bands, the reinterpretations of tunes can stray quite far from the traditional idioms, becoming more like revisions. As Amy Thatcher, accordionist, member of the Monster Ceilidh Band, and one of the music tutors at Folkworks Summer School 2011, put it: a tune tends to sound “more like the band than like the tune itself”.<sup>5</sup> The music ceases to belong so definitely within shared tradition.

## 1.2. Research questions

As an economic and financial phenomenon, globalisation has been studied extensively, and a large number of theories have been put forward to explain its mechanisms, primarily with the objective of

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<sup>5</sup> Personal Communication – hereafter abbreviated as “P. C.” (Amy Thatcher, August 2011)

predicting future possible evolution. As a social and cultural phenomenon, studies of globalisation are substantially less extended, often being based on the application of economic theories to the social and cultural spheres (as discussed further in Chapter 3). Nonetheless, in the last few decades, a number of cultural globalisation theorists have developed convincing ideas about the ways in which globalisation impacts upon cultural life (See for example El-Ojeili & Hayden, 2006). Extending out of a theoretical discussion regarding globalisation's broader impacts on culture, this study focuses in particular upon the ways in which globalisation is currently evincing transformations in traditional and folk music-making in twenty-first century England. Ultimately, it seeks to address two globalisation-related research questions: At the local level of musical communities, to what extent are recent transformations on the music scene due to the processes of globalisation? In such contexts, what are the mechanisms at work that facilitate musical globalisation and hybridisation?

In the context of today's increasingly globalised world, it is often hard to define a type of music on the basis of a single geographical association – specifically with the country in which it was created – simply because it may well evince a rich fusion of multiple musical influences. The case of folk music in England is no exception. A great deal of the repertoire that one encounters in England's varied folk music-making fora can not be labelled "English" and many instrumental playing techniques and idiomatic realisations are, likewise, not of "English" origin. Rather, a great deal is of Celtic origin – although it is often difficult to target particular places of origin within the broad range of disparate yet loosely-related cultural areas encompassed by the designation of "Celtic" (now even incorporating Diasporic communities as far afield as Canada and Australia). While continuing to draw extensively from neighbouring "Celtic" musical sources, many contemporary folk musicians in England are now open to drawing from other, more distantly-related musical cultures – with Scandinavian folk music being a good example of a fashionable new source. In this way, new channels of cross-cultural influence are being opened up and exploited, turning folk music-making events into far more than simply re-affirmations of English folk musical tradition. Rather, as indicated by this thesis's title, the prevailing approach is distinctly culturally eclectic in nature. Accordingly, this thesis attempts to scrutinise the recent phenomenon of hybridisation within the folk scene in England. Adopting a theoretical rather than a musicological analytical approach and, inevitably, focusing on particular groups of music-makers in particular locations (rather than attempting a truly all-encompassing survey), it considers: To what extent is folk music still understood in territorial terms, with each tune seen as coming from a single specific place of origin? Conversely, to what extent are pieces of diverse different origins now being conceptually categorised together, representing a breaking-down of boundaried territorial affiliations?

The aforementioned prevalence of hybridisation within the English folk music scene calls into question how the term “tradition” is understood by the cultural insiders. What aspects of the folk music-making endeavour are deemed “traditional” and which are not? As will be discussed in Chapter 3, the commonly held view is that traditional music is old and inherited from previous generations – although, as several academics have demonstrated, including Anderson (1983) and Hobsbawm (1990), many traditions that are commonly understood to be ancient were actually invented relatively recently and on the basis of little historical precedence, generally with the socio-political aim of unifying politically delineated territories into single cultural entities. Indeed, nation-bound understandings of “tradition” became particularly imbedded in popular consciousness in conjunction with the development of the ideas of Nation and Nation-State in the decades immediately preceding the First World War. This process of establishing clearly defined repertoires of traditional folk art corresponding to newly-defined political territories has had an enduring impact on the transformations of tradition into the modern era and on the ways in which those transformations have been represented in contemporary discourse. In effect, certain traditions that previously evolved within a micro-context (a village or county for example) have come to be selected to represent broader populations, while hybridisation and fusion between different localised cultures has continued to proliferate; the interests and goals of tradition have been expanded onto a different scale. Although a tendency remains to ascribe a whole tradition to a specific place (often nation) of origin, it could perhaps be more persuasively argued that tradition involves assembling a collage of different elements gleaned from multiple places of origin yet sharing some key characteristics in common. From this point of view, although hybridisation in tradition may sometimes appear to be a relatively recent phenomenon, in reality it is surely an age-old phenomenon that pre-dates contemporary delineations of nation state and recent accelerated trends of diversified cultural flow. Nevertheless, although hybridisation in past and current paradigms may be considered broadly comparable, the contemporary cross-cultural and cross-genre fusions are commonly seen to mark a significant departure from earlier practices, and this thesis seeks to evaluate the different ways in which hybridism is currently understood by folk musicians and academics.

The central aim of this thesis is thus to assess the impacts of globalisation on traditional and folk music in early twenty-first century England, with particular focus upon the folk music scene of the NorthEast but also touching on practices elsewhere. Analysis will identify recent changes, transformations and evolutions that have taken place within the folk music community, and explore the ways in which recent socio-political changes have affected traditional and folk music repertoires. Crucially, discussion will also consider how traditional and folk music is perceived, highlighting and explaining the different views fostered amongst professional and amateur musicians regarding the

defining of “folk” and “traditional” and the allocation of boundaries within and between musical repertoires – these being areas of enquiry that have not been fully explored before in the existing academic literature. Research has revealed that the relationship between the folk and the traditional repertoires is relatively complex, with musicians commonly disagreeing regarding the meanings, applicability and boundaries of such terms. As well as attempting to isolate and clarify the main points of view regarding these issues, this thesis analyses the impact of such delineations on the music scene and on performances and audiences. How have the dynamics amongst musicians, and between musicians and their audience, been affected by globalisation-fuelled socio-political changes? Moreover, the contexts in which folk music is played, taught, learnt and performed have also been dramatically affected by processes of globalisation and by associated developments in communication technology. Accordingly, this thesis also seeks to shed light on the ways in which contemporary musicians (both amateur and professional) currently engage with the scene, through participation in sessions, festivals, online affinity communities and other forums.

In line with this thesis’s focus on developing an understanding of the broader social and cultural aspects of England’s folk music communities, in the course of discussion, only very few tunes and songs from the traditional and folk repertoires will be analysed. Instead, the core of the original research is based on interviews with artists and active participants in the folk music scene in England, considered through the lens of the critical analysis of existing academic literature.

### 1.3. Literature review

This thesis explores the transformations occurring within the folk music scene<sup>6</sup> in twenty-first century England in the light of anthropological and ethnomusicological theories. Hence, while drawing much of the primary data from extensive fieldwork, observations and interviews, the study’s theoretical basis is drawn from major pre-existing studies within those two fields. Other fields of study have also provided pertinent ideas and interpretations – particularly those fields that likewise address the key areas of enquiry: globalisation, cultural hybridisation and folk music. In particular, the broad fields of cultural studies and folk music studies have proved useful, not only providing relevant information but also highlighting other scholarly approaches and readings. Of course, it has been essential to consult previous studies that address this thesis’s focal subject matter in depth, namely folk music – in order to access past views, conceptualisations, perceptions and academic research methods. Howes' *Folk music of Britain and Beyond* (1969) was particularly useful for helping to situate my study within the academic heritage. His study is particularly thorough, notably exploring the definition of folk music, as well as looking at the contemporary contexts of transmission of folk music, the

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<sup>6</sup> My rationale for the use of the term "music scene" is dependent on the concepts of "cultures" and "communities", and is explained in Chapter 3, where the conceptual bases for my research is presented.

current socio-political interest in folk music, the work of collectors, and key concerns within scholarship. In a similar way, albeit in a more politicised manner, Harker's *Fakesong: The Manufacture of British 'Folksong' 1700 to the Present Day* (1985) offers another survey of the folk music repertoire, notably looking back at the processes by which traditions have been recorded and collected, and identifying a wide-reaching top-down initiative to employ selected songs for nation-building purposes. Understood in their time, these two studies offer an extremely interesting and valuable view on the folk music scene in Britain before and during the folk revival. A number of other surveys focussing on specific aspects of folk music in the British Isles, published after Howes's (1969), have been drawn from in my analysis, for example Chapman (1997) and Mathieson (2001), examining the Celtic folk music scene, Burns (2007) looking at the Folk-Rock movement, and McKerrell (2011) on the issue of authenticity in the Scottish contemporary music scene.

In the early stages of undertaking this study, it was essential to explore the key concepts, processes and terminologies associated with the central theme of globalisation, thereby establishing a firm basis for evaluating my subsequent fieldwork findings. Two of the most helpful studies in this regard have been Williams' *Keywords, A vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1986) and Bennett's *New keywords, A revised vocabulary of Culture and Society* (2005). Published almost twenty years apart, these two studies provide slightly different yet wholly complementary and deeply insightful evaluations of contemporary phenomena, convincingly interrogating the meanings of associated terminology and discussing broader socio-cultural implications. As this current research mainly focuses on folk music's place in the contemporary globalising world, as opposed to its historically localised practice, I found the *Critical theories of globalization* by El-Ojeili and Hayden (2006) to be highly relevant, providing not only a strong and detailed account of globalisation's complex processes but also a convincing account of the roles played by technology in furthering those processes. Being a collection of essays, this book offers a variety of differing perspectives on globalisation, expanding further into discussions about cultural globalisation, which, in many other studies, tend to be ignored in favour of discussions about economic and political globalisation. Shedding light specifically on the cultural impact of globalisation, Appadurai's *Modernity at Large, Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation* (1996) proved a very fruitful read, notably in resituating the focus of cultural studies upon local communities and their understandings of and responses to global cultural forces. Indeed, Appadurai's approach rang true with my own: my study similarly focuses on the local (folk music scene in England) to make sense of the global, and vice versa.

Taylor's *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets* (1997), developing thought on cross-cultural collaboration and hybridisation in the global context and for global audiences, was particularly useful – shedding light on the globalisation-related transformations that have been taking place in other

music scenes around the world. Many other studies on the topic of globalisation have usefully identified common trends and provided case study examples, including Featherstone, Lash & Robertson's *Global Modernities* (1995), Nederveen's *Globalisation and Culture: Three Paradigms* (1996), Holton's *Globalization's Cultural Consequences* (2000), and Honor Fagan's *Globalisation, Identity and 'Ireland'* (2001). Other literature exploring the central theme of globalisation will be evaluated in further detail in the third chapter of this thesis. Moreover, Sweers' works, notably including *Electric Folk: The changing face of English traditional music* (2005) and *Contemporary British Music Traditions* (2004), were valuable in developing my understanding of the modernisations, fusions and electrifications of traditional music in England.

Furthering my endeavour to construct a convincing ethnography-based analysis of a contemporary music scene, Amselle's *Mestizo Logic: Anthropology of Identity in Africa and Elsewhere* (1998) proved a great help, particularly by shedding light on the ethical issues surrounding the researcher's involvement in the object of study. Moreover, Amselle's thoughts on classification and imagined boundaries between and within cultures, as well as his discussions on the search for syncretism and hybridity as defining characteristic for human behaviour, informed my understanding of the eclecticism in the folk music scene in England.

Amongst the other works that have played a major role in the formation of this thesis are, predictably, some of the authoritative works of ethnomusicology, such as Nettl's *The study of Ethnomusicology, Thirty-one Issues and Concepts* (2005) and Merriam's *The Anthropology of Music* (1964), as well as Stokes' *Ethnicity, Identity and Music* (1997) and *Music and the Global Order* (2004). Alongside the aforementioned *Global Pop* by Timothy Taylor (1997), these publications have provided an ample range of case studies in musical hybridisation, presenting cogent analyses of the ways in which local musicians respond to broader socio-cultural changes while, crucially, identifying common trends. Drawing extensively from texts such as these has helped to situate my own research within the broader field of ethnomusicology. Another ethnomusicological study that has proved particularly useful is Slobin's *Subcultural Sounds, Micromusics of the West* (1993), which elegantly articulates how small localised musical traditions have been responding to broader socio-cultural forces within the rapidly globalising world – again, echoing my own research concerns. In his volume *Encounters in Ethnomusicology* (2002), Nettl reflects back on his personal fieldwork experiences and on the extensive contributions that he and others have made to the academic literature on ethnomusicology. Here, he systematically singles out and re-evaluates the most significant theoretical concepts that he developed in previous work, focusing on the interpersonal dynamics of field research and music-making. By forging connections between his fieldwork observations and my own, I have sought to create more coherent and well-founded concluding reflections.

Regarding those studies and academic publications that are most similar to my own in terms of research topic, Keegan-Phipps's *Déjà Vu? Folk Music, Education, and Institutionalization in Contemporary England* (2007) and his doctoral thesis *Teaching Folk: The Educational Institutionalization of Folk Music in Contemporary England* (2008) have been especially informative and insightful, informing my assessment of interview and fieldwork materials gathered at festivals and summer schools, and offering a contrasting perspective on how institutions impact upon the folk music scene as a whole and on individuals who are active in the organisational hierarchy or who participate in their events. Although she only focuses on the folk singing scene, Fay Hield's doctoral thesis, *English Folk Singing and the Construction of Community* (2010), shares a number of features with my own study, most obviously fieldwork techniques and methods and a strong focus on the local folk community. Her thorough study of the concept of "community" was extremely helpful when trying to identify similar patterns within the instrumental folk music scene. Looking further into the theme of communities, and relating this to the close study of music making in social groups, Kaufmann Shelemay's *Musical Communities: Rethinking the Collective in Music* (2011) presents an enlightening appraisal of the various approaches and terminologies that academics across the broad field of social studies have applied to the analysis of musical communities. Also addressing the nature of music making in the community, but writing in a non-academic style, the poet Ciaran Carson presents another perspective in *Last Night's Fun: In and Out of Time with Irish music* (1996), focusing in particular on a primary context in which this study's fieldwork was taking place, namely the pub folk music session. Vividly and humorously relating his own session experiences, Carson presents deep insights into the habits and implied rules involved, framing the insights of my own findings.

A number of other academic studies have provided useful models for assessing local music scenes in England, while also highlighting common trends and patterns. For example, *Folk revival: The rediscovery of a national music* (1979), Woods' insightful depiction of the second folk revival as perceived by a contemporary, was particularly interesting to analyse with more hindsight the short- and long-term impacts of such processes to the local communities. Similarly, *The Hidden Musicians, Music-making in an English town* (1989), Ruth Finnegan's study of music-making in Milton Keynes, sheds light on "the folk music world", offering a terse snapshot of how a specific folk scene functions in a typical town at a key point in time, namely after the second folk revival and before the widespread use of the Internet. A more recent study that similarly focuses on a small geographical area of music making but centres around a biographical account is Joey Oliver's *The Music and Life of Will Atkinson* (2004), which retraces the life of a particularly significant folk musician throughout the twentieth century. This study presents a helpful chronological account of the broad transformations that folk music scenes underwent over the course of the twentieth century.

The volume edited by Barz and Cooley, *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives in Ethnomusicological Fieldwork* (1997) has provided extensive useful practical advice regarding how to conduct effective ethnographic field research, with the various ethnomusicological contributors offering a variety of different methods tailored to differing contexts and objectives. I developed further reflections on fieldwork practice and analysis through reading Wolcott's *The Art of Fieldwork* (2001), a text that not only presents insightful viewpoints on methods of observation, data collection and interpretation, but also alerts one to the potential pitfalls and ethical issues linked to fieldwork. Many of Wolcott's points resonated particularly closely with my own fieldwork experiences. Further insights regarding effective ethnographic method have been gleaned from consulting studies such as the following: Lysloff's *Musical Community on the Internet: An On-Line Ethnography* (2003), Russell's *Working with Tradition: Towards a Partnership Model of Fieldwork* (2006), Satterwhite's *"That's What They're All Singing About"* (2005) and Waldron & Veblen's *Learning in a Celtic Community: An Exploration of Informal Music Learning and Adult Amateur Musicians* (2009).

Monaghan and Just's *Social and Cultural Anthropology, a very short introduction* (2000) has substantially informed this study in a number of ways. It has provided a firm base of anthropological theory upon which to develop my interpretations, offered a tight and convincing model account of how to conduct fieldwork effectively, and demonstrated a particularly incisive and evocative style of presenting ethnographic findings which encourages the reader's immersion in the writer's environment and experience. On reading their study, I was particularly inspired by the skilful way in which they put themselves in the picture, acknowledging how their own personal experiences, values and personalities influence facts, situations and events, as well as their analysis.

Vansina's *Oral Tradition as History* (1985) also deserves special mention at this juncture. Even though this study mainly addresses an African cultural tradition, Vansina's theory about chains of transmission, whereby tradition is passed down from generation to generation between individuals within a community, has proved remarkably applicable to the case of folk music in England, acutely echoing a number of my interviewees' views about tradition and its transmission and transformation. Vansina's study is therefore one of those that has encouraged comparative analysis with situations in cultures elsewhere, putting my research alongside others in the overall body of literature examining the transformation of musical traditions.

During the research process, I have also gleaned a great deal from consulting non-academic volumes intended for popularising the folk music scene. *The Rough Guide to World Music (Europe, Asia & Pacific)* (Broughton, Ellingham, & Lusk, 2009) constituted a good starting point for identifying widespread popular views on artists, festivals and other aspects of the folk music scene in England,

showing how the folk music scene is situated within the wider marketing context of “World Music” and exposing commercial and popular viewpoints that are not commonly represented in ethnomusicological scholarship. Meanwhile, Skinner Sawyers' *Celtic Music, A complete guide* (2001) offered further potential for broader contextualisation, highlighting how the trends I have observed locally are echoed more broadly within the wider world of Celtic music making.

A vast body of literature has been developed in connection with archiving and collecting – practices that are explored in this current study in the context of folk music research and preservation. Not surprisingly, many studies about archiving and collecting are focused particularly on museum practices of acquisition, storage and display, a typical example being MacDonald's *A Companion to Museum Studies* (2006) which details different forms of “collecting practice”, and identifies definitions of, reasons for and principles of collecting. Beyond the museum studies field, another academic work that has proved particularly enlightening for exploring the psychology of collecting – as commonly evidenced by folk music enthusiasts – is Thomas Tanselle's article "A rationale of collecting" (1998). Here, Tanselle insightfully clarifies the reasons why human beings collect and preserve items.

While the preceding literature review identifies those works that have been particularly influential in shaping the development of this project, there are, of course, a large number of other publications that have also been drawn from to shed light on the focal topic and to situate the research within a broader academic context. These latter sources and their significance will be explored as and when they become pertinent to the discussion.

#### **1.4. Thesis structure and chapter summaries**

This introductory chapter has identified the key themes that permeate my enquiry, stated my research questions, and presented a concise literature review focusing on those texts that have had the greatest impact on my research, thereby introducing the main concepts that will be explored in this thesis and showing how my work fits into a wider academic context. Chapter 2 then casts more light on the nature and scope of my field study, critically analysing the main methodological and ethical issues that arose during the fieldwork undertaken, and clarifying exactly how I have undertaken my fieldwork ethnographic research, who my informants have been, and how I have handled the extensive data gathered. After these essential reflections, the thesis is divided into five subsequent chapters, followed by a more general concluding part.

Chapter 3 focuses on global perspectives and new conceptualisations, exploring prevalent theories relating to the core concepts of identity, culture, tradition, and globalisation, and thereby establishing the theoretical basis for the further development of this thesis' argument. It underlines

how these theories and concepts are linked to ambiguities and variations in the definition of key terms such as 'folk' and 'tradition'. Chapter 4 then looks at different perceptions regarding what folk music is, its different styles and the place of tradition within the larger music scene of twenty-first century England. It also discusses how music is classified, assessing controversial categories such as "World music" and "Celtic music", and considering how these differing perspectives and systems of classification affect the most recent creation of folk music. Following on from this analysis, Chapter 5 focuses on fast-evolving contexts of folk music making, and current teaching and musical transmission practice. Chapter 6 then explores the communities in which folk music is played, and the dynamics of cooperation and networking that have developed within these contexts. Chapter 7 then explores the various ways in which folk musicians cultivate their own individualised and wholly unique repertoires, focusing on the processes of collecting and the wide-spread use of online resources. Firstly, it explores the nature of the personal collections built up by active folk musicians for their own use, which often contain both well-known and original items. Here, my study examines several specific collections of folk music notations and related materials owned by key interviewees, before then moving on to consider the use of institutional archives, focusing on the Ralph Vaughan Williams Memorial Library in London. Discussion then turns to analyse how folk musicians currently use the internet to enhance their personal repertoires and community engagement, employing various forms of networking and resource exchange. The chapter closes by assessing the broader impact of internet technology on the folk music scene

A concluding part (Chapter 8) furthers this analysis, notably through further linking the theories developed and explored in the first half of the thesis to the fieldwork critically analysed throughout the second half of the thesis. In particular, these conclusions draw from all aspects of the thesis and compare the different points of view within both the academic literature and the folk musicians' and enthusiasts' communities. From the overall research project and the resulting thesis, the conclusion also offers further research openings that have arisen from my work.

## 2. Methodology and ethical reflections

### 2.1. An ethnographical approach

#### 2.1.1. Challenges in defining geographical and cultural areas

Politically, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is a delineated country member of the United Nations, and unambiguously composed of four nations: England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Culturally, meanwhile, it is the setting of very diverse music scenes and musical genres, coexisting alongside and interacting with one another in various ways and to differing extents; culturally, the boundaries are not so unambiguously demarcated.

Ireland, Scotland and Wales count Celtic cultural aspects as core defining features of their respective cultural identities, linking them to cultures found in regions as varied as French Brittany and Spanish Galicia (See further details in Chapter 4.3). Despite the existence of traditionally strong cultural exchanges between the four nations, England is usually counted outside of the Celtic cultural area. Instead, it belongs in the circle of Anglo-Saxon cultures. Points of commonality between musical traditions within the United Kingdom are undeniable, and the current folk music scenes, for example, share a number of similarities both in musical content and contexts of performance. Reflecting changing inter-national relations and patterns of migration, there have been many periods of hybridization across borders, within which musical material has been swapped, adopted and adapted. Instances of hybridization have relied on the existence of musical similarities linking the nations' respective musical repertoires (instruments, formal structures, keys, rhythms and metres) and also similarities in performance and transmission contexts (in sessions, folk clubs, dances and so on). Hybridisation and its consequences are developed further in Chapter 3.3.

In folk musical practice, stylistically diverging away from the older Celtic and Anglo-Saxon musical attributes, the continuing processes of hybridization have recently expanded their reach to draw influences from popular music culture – not only musical content but also techniques and attributes of marketing, advertising and staged performance practice. Through these means, recent folk artists

such as Seth Lakeman, Catriona MacDonald, Capercaillie and Mumford and Sons have managed to connect with music enthusiasts outside of the more tradition-focused folk music circles. Nonetheless, this hybridization has rekindled debate amongst academics and musicians alike regarding what characteristics define and mark the boundaries between popular, folk, and traditional practices and where particular individuals' creativity should be categorised. (See further discussion in Chapter 4.4)

In this context, a consideration of the recurring concept of revival is crucial to further understand how musicians perceive themselves in relation both to surrounding musical genres and to the past and the future of tradition. Revival is a key concept that is commonly alluded to in discourse relating to folk music in the United Kingdom, specifically to qualify two significant periods in which interest in traditional and folk music surged and spread throughout many sectors of society.

The first folk music revival, identified by academics as peaking towards the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, coincided with the development of nationalism, paralleling equivalent folk revivals taking place in other European countries. This period was marked by the vigorous collection, partial revisioning, compilation and dissemination of folk song and tune collections by pioneering figures, typically driven by socio-political and conservationist agendas as well as simple musical appreciation (See Chapter 7.3). The collectors of this era, notably including Cecil Sharp and Lucy Broadwood, intended to record and preserve a national heritage that seemed to be disappearing in a fast changing society. They travelled across the country listening to traditional singers and musicians, transcribing and writing down the songs, as well as recording when possible. Prior to the existence of ethnomusicology as an established sub-discipline within musicology, such individuals had a profound influence on the documentation, transmission and performance of folk culture, with their findings and theories going on to influence not only musicians but also cultural institutions and social policies. Some of their methodologies, motivations, and subsequent projects have been criticized by later generations of academics – in particular their highly selective approach to collecting, their frequent “ironing out” of irregularities in melody and text, and their often-explicit promotion of folk music for spurious social-engineering goals, working in close tandem with the authorities (See for example Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). Nevertheless, the collections which they gathered and published remain crucially important, supplying many of the core pieces in present-day repertoires. Meanwhile, their in-depth studies of local musical histories constitute invaluable historical background for contemporary ethnomusicological studies seeking to examine longer-term trends in folk musical culture.

The second folk revival in the United Kingdom is usually placed around the 1960s and 1970s. In great contrast with the previous revival, this period's new growth of enthusiasm and involvement in folk

culture was driven by musicians and audiences, rather than academic and government agendas. While still being interested in rediscovering old, forgotten and near-extinct repertoires, many enthusiasts were keen to exercise a more experimental and boundary-challenging approach, both in their adaptations of existing music and in their creation of new music drawing on older models. This was accompanied by a resurgence of folk music activities in local communities, through the proliferation and growth of periodically held folk club meetings, festivals and pub sessions, and the undertaking of further collection and archiving projects (see, for example, "Folk Archive Resources North East"<sup>7</sup>).

Before, during and subsequent to these two revivals, waves of migration have also played an important role in the diffusion and adaptation of folk musical practices within the United Kingdom. Whilst it is widely recognized by researchers that cross-regional migration occurred in waves throughout history, provoking a variety of musical responses including hybridization, since the nineteenth century, major social and technological developments have encouraged major surges of change in musical traditions (see, for example, Goldstein, 1982). More particularly, the industrial revolution and increased migrations from rural areas to urban centers has had a profound impact upon folk music practices traditionally developed in local settings. Perhaps most significantly, in the case of folk music-making in England, the migration of Irish workers to British cities during this period profoundly influenced repertoires, techniques, and perceptions (see Kearney, 2013, p. 178).

Since the second revival, folk clubs and pub sessions have constituted the main settings for the intergenerational transmission of traditional music in local communities. As standard tune categories such as reel, jig, and hornpipe indicate, much of the traditional musical repertoire was originally accompanied by dance and realised within the context of local dancing events, such as ceilidhs (or ceilis) and barn dances, which served important entertainment and social functions within communities, and especially rural communities. Although the dance element is more seldom encountered in current practice, dances are still highlighted at large scale social get-togethers, particularly at folk festivals, which are held annually across the country and form a core component within the broader folk music scene. Examples of present-day folk festivals include Sidmouth Folk Week, Cambridge Folk Festival, and Shrewsbury Folk Festival (See Chapter 5.1 for further discussion about folk music festivals and their significance).

Technological developments have also been profoundly transforming traditional music culture throughout the United Kingdom, with the internet in particular facilitating major changes in the ways that folk music is disseminated and transmitted, enabling the quick and efficient sharing of resources

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<sup>7</sup> FARNE website <<http://www.folknortheast.com/>> [accessed 22 January 2016]

in diverse formats, both intra- and inter-culturally. Some members of the folk music community have suggested that the recent growth of interest in pop-folk hybridisation, accelerated internet dissemination and transmission, and flourishing folk festival and club scenes may in fact mark the onset of a third folk revival (See Chapter 7 on the uses and impact of the Internet). However, these trends are still in the developmental phase and, furthermore, it is difficult to assess socio-cultural trends without the benefit of hindsight.

Whether designated as a “third revival” or not, the current folk music scene is also marked by new opportunities for specialisation and professionalisation, which are in turn related to the institutionalisation of musical resources, transmission and evaluation. Not only are musical resources and archives contained within and managed by institutions (such as the Vaughan William Memorial Library, the British Library Sound Archives and some university archives), but large numbers of practitioners actually acquire much of their performance skill and knowledge within institutions, specifically through university courses, community-centred evening classes, and workshops conducted during festivals. There is great diversity in the type and level of institutionalised educational provision, ranging from beginner to highly advanced (See Chapters 5 and 6 on transmission contexts and local community learning). While there is much debate in folk music circles regarding whether these developments are ultimately beneficial or corruptive for folk music culture (see, for example, Keegan-Phipps, 2008), it is clear that the institutionalisation of resources and transmission processes is having a profound impact both on musical canons, determining which tunes become central and which become peripheral, and on the styles of performance that are accepted as normative. These multiple debates and differing opinions on contemporary folk and traditional music reflect the diversity of musical heritage and the differing practices present across the United Kingdom.

### **2.1.2. Theoretical bases**

In Seymour-Smith's words, "ethnography is characterised by the first-hand study of a small community or ethnic group" (2005, pp. 98-99). Shuker adds to this, pinpointing ethnography's focus on real-life practice: "ethnography refers to the description and analysis of a way of life, or culture, and is based on direct observation of behaviour in particular social settings" (1998, p. 113). While observing and describing community activities in Africa, Amselle alludes to yet another key characteristic of ethnography, namely its essentially non-judgemental, cultural-relativist documentation of practice: "the essential characteristic of cultural anthropology [as] its representation of the world as a plurality of cultures without established hierarchy: in other words, cultural anthropology is based on what is commonly termed 'cultural relativism.' [...] each society is deemed to have developed certain institutions or cultural traits." (Amselle, 1998, p. 25) As a French

researcher finding myself immersed in “foreign” cultural activities, involving localised customs and behaviour, I have naturally sought after this goal while conducting my own research.

Ethnomusicology is, of course, closely allied to social and cultural anthropology in its goals and research methods. Indeed, Merriam (1964) famously defined ethnomusicology as “the anthropology of music” (see also Blacking 1976, p. 3). As Bohlman explains, the ethnographic approach has long been a characteristic and even defining feature of the discipline, since the 1950s when ethnomusicology separated from historical musicology, due to the latter’s “unwillingness to listen to most music of the world” (Bohlman, 1992, p. 118); it became recognised that, to understand the musical cultures of others, one had to travel to musical sites and then really get to know the “others” themselves – their conceptualisations and behaviours – through prolonged interaction and detailed documentation. Thus, comparative musicology was superseded by musical ethnography, with a new tendency towards “self-examination, self-criticism and self-reflection” following soon after (Bohlman, 1992, pp. 116-118). It is now widely recognised that ethnography is a defining feature of ethnomusicological study, with the conducting of fieldwork remaining of paramount importance. As Cooley tightly sums up: “fieldwork is the observational and experiential portion of the ethnographic process during which the ethnomusicologist engages living individuals in order to learn about music-culture” (1997, p. 4). It is clear that anthropology’s rigorous scientific approach to the study of social behaviour, based solidly in ethnography, has enriched methodologies with ethnomusicology and, undoubtedly, other fields of study also; Bohlman for instance refers to “new ethnography sub-disciplines” such as ethnohistory and ethnolinguistics (1992, pp. 121-122). Based firmly within the field of ethnomusicological research, my study is similarly based on fieldwork ethnography: focused on a specific music scene, it relies heavily on interviews conducted with musicians and observations of their music-related activities, at sessions, performances and festivals.

At the same time, my research traverses multiple loci and contexts rather than exclusively focusing on single local folk music community. In this respect, my approach can be likened to that of Waldron and Veblen (2009) who, in their study of adult music learning, chose to concentrate their fieldwork ethnography on the observation of multiple different Irish pub sessions and explore the experiences of a diverse range of individuals (Waldron & Veblen, 2009, p. 63). However, my research explores a far greater range of contexts and loci and draws from a far larger number of interviewees, looking beyond the local sphere to assess the dynamic interrelationship between micro- and macro-spheres. This is now a well-established approach, adopted for example by Ogbu (1981) in his ethnography-based study of school education. Ogbu explicitly recognises the need for consideration of both “micro- and macro-ethnographies” to establish perspective, placing localised practices within

the bigger picture (Ogbu, 1981, p. 14). In essence, my study goes a step further, exploring the intersections between local, regional and global.

This study is very much centred upon an exploration of contemporary practices within the folk music scene in England (with particular focus on the NorthEast), applying ethnographical, sociological and ethnomusicological understandings to fieldwork data. As such, it highlights the inherent diversity within current repertoires and outlooks, emphasising that the contemporary folk music scene in England is by no means limited to the performance of English traditional music. Rather, folk musicians' repertoires tend to have expanded well beyond the boundaries of English-origin traditional music with many events notably displaying a heavy prevalence of different influences, Irish music in particular being one of the most significant at folk music sessions. Outside influences upon folk musical life in England are even more apparent at folk music festivals where English folk musicians regularly include pieces, instruments and stylings that are clearly not from traditional English sources and where folk musicians of a variety of nationalities and musical influences are granted prominent performing positions, be they from Scotland, Ireland, Sweden, France, Canada or elsewhere. The English folk music scene is distinctly eclectic in nature, drawing together multiple repertoires and communities while forging and strengthening international ties. In all of the sessions, venues, and contexts in which I have carried out fieldwork, the significance of foreign influences in the musical repertoire was recognised. Only a very small proportion of the folk music making contexts that I encountered (a minority of traditional sessions and folk clubs) exercised a policy of limiting the repertoire to particular types of music, representing only a tiny fraction of the total musical heritage. As mentioned earlier, this is the rationale behind this thesis' title formulation "a culturally eclectic music scene" (See Chapter 3.1.1 for clarification of the word "scene").

Even though my research has not involved extensive collection and analysis of music recordings, somewhat unexpectedly, it has still raised particular interest amongst my interviewees to learn about the outcomes and conclusions of my study. Much has been discussed amongst ethnomusicologists about the need to foster mutually beneficial relationships with one's interviewees. Hield, for example, quotes Stock (2004) to underline the responsibility of researchers to the group which they are studying, and the necessity to take into account the impact that the study might have on the community of musicians (2010, p. 34). This responsibility concerns not only the need to preserve valuable resources effectively but also the need to share findings with both the academic and the music making communities. Thankfully, the development of globalised modern technology has allowed wider sharing of musical and research resources. Of course musicians already have their own well-established methods and resources for the development of shared knowledge, both concerning the traditional tunes and the more recently composed folk tunes. However, they tend not to have

such ready access to sociologically sensitive readings of their activities within the global context. Baumann notably critically analyses the "paradox" of the insider and outsider (academic) interests in the documentation of local music, emphasising that "the local thinking does not necessarily have the 'global' insight coming from outside" (Baumann, 1991, p. 24) Nevertheless, I have found that musicians' interests in academic interpretations is increasingly apparent, notably with more and more prominent folk musicians emerging from university programmes such as the one offered at Newcastle University. Indicating the extent to which the scene has been transformed by higher-education institutionalisation, one of my informants – evidently a strong proponent of Folkworks – told me: "before [the creation of] Folkworks, you had to be born into folk music, and inherit it from your family, or know people like Anthony [Robb]".<sup>8</sup> Clearly this is not the case any more.

### 2.1.3. Fieldwork contexts

The aims and methodology of this thesis are firmly placed within the heritage of understanding the musical scene not through the close musicological analysis of tunes and songs but rather through scrutiny of activities, perceptions and representations. As Bohlman explains, a great number of monographic studies have chosen to explore musical cultures without even demonstrating "a need to master music notation" (Bohlman, 1992, pp. 124-125); the complexities of music sound are "not the 'only' object of study in ethnomusicology" (Bohlman, 1992, p. 125). Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, this research has involved extensive participant-observation in music-making activities as a primary tool for accessing culture-specific behaviours and conceptualisations. Like Hield (2010, p. 21), who bases her fieldwork methodologies on Strauss and Corbin's theories of qualitative fieldwork analysis (1990), I have actively immersed myself in the focal music making processes and cultural events, dances and festivals, integrating with the folk music enthusiast community to the best of my abilities. However, in great contrast with Hield's strong involvement within the folk community as a performer before the start of her study, and hence her extensive knowledge of the topic, my involvement in this group preceding the start of my study was substantially less. On beginning my PhD research in 2010, participation in university societies' events and in Folkworks Youth Summer School in 2010 was the sum extent of my knowledge of the current folk music scene in England. Nonetheless, these events have remained at the core of my reflections and interrogations of the current folk music scene in England.

To develop a clear sense of the state of the contemporary folk music scene in England, over the course of my doctoral studies, I attended a number of folk festivals hosted in English towns and villages, each having different characteristics and reputations within the folk musicians' community. Towersey Village Festival, which I attended in August 2011, is mainly campsite based has a reputation

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<sup>8</sup> P. C. (Anonymous contributor, 2012)

for being a family friendly festival with relatively big headlines. In a very similar context, at very similar dates, and in a very similar format although on a slightly bigger scale, I also attended Shrewsbury Folk Festival in August 2012. Involving very different settings, duration, events, headlines and organisation, I took part in Whitby Folk Week every year between 2011 and 2015. Amongst workshop-based festivals, I attended Folkworks Youth Summer School in 2011, 2012 and 2013, as well as the biannual festival Fiddles on Fire in Gateshead in 2009, 2011, 2013 and 2015 (See Winter and Keegan-Phipps (2013, p. 29) for more detail on the creation and impact of Folkworks). Moreover, to expand my overview of British folk music in the contemporary international music scene and to shed light on the current manifestation of "world music", I attended Ethno Sweden, the oldest event from Ethno-World (on its 22nd consecutive year running) in 2012, as well as Ethno Flanders in 2013, Ethno Estonia and Ethno Australia in 2014 and the first Ethno Finland in 2015. These different contexts of traditional and folk music transmission, and their broader impacts on the folk music scene, will be analysed in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

Besides these one-off, yearly and biyearly events, I also regularly attended weekly and fortnightly traditional music pub sessions in Durham throughout my doctoral studies as well as the two years before. Amongst these, the Dun Cow sessions, which, for a time, had the reputation of especially fostering Northumbrian repertoire and style, had been attended and recorded by Keegan-Phipps for his doctoral study (2008, p. 379). I also regularly attended the weekly Monday session at Ye Olde Elm Tree pub, in which the music played is more often Irish (or other styles, even Rock and Roll), as well as occasionally taking part in the Tuesday session, well-known for being slower and easier for less experienced musicians. Furthermore, I periodically went to sessions at the Shakespeare pub. This session has gone through a lot of changes in the years of my doctoral studies, in particular turning from being a weekly event to happening only in the first and third weeks of each month. I also participated in the weekly Durham University Folk Society sessions, also on Wednesdays, which changed from initially being hosted in the Court Inn to being held in the Market Tavern, and taking place only in university term time. In the event of travelling around the British Isles, I also made a point to try to attend folk sessions in other cities, whether as close as Newcastle, after folk concerts at the Sage in Gateshead, in Cork during a personal holiday journey, or in Belfast while going to an academic conference. I have used my experience and findings in all of these contexts as a part of my fieldwork to draw conclusions about the current state of the folk music scene.

As already mentioned above, despite the majority of this fieldwork taking place in England, in all of these music-making contexts, I found that the boundaries of "English folk music" were routinely traversed in a myriad of ways. Indeed, in these contexts, the repertoires performed demonstrated a variety of origins ranging from relatively closely-related material, such as Irish and Scottish tunes, to

less expected items from further afield (France and Scandinavia for instance) and from different musical genres (jazz, blues, classical and popular music, to list only a few). The musicians' openness to hybridity reflects not only their individual artistic choices and expressivity but also the impact of broader globalising influences, now widely prevalent throughout modern life. In accordance with what I encountered, therefore, the focus of my study quickly morphed from English folk music into folk music in England, becoming an assessment of the eclecticism that proliferates throughout the folk music scene today. The few folk music events which I attended beyond the political boundaries of England, are the sessions in Ireland, offering a point of comparison and perspective on the current situation in England, and Ethno, which, as will be discussed in Chapter 5.2, involves folk musicians from England and exerts a substantial impact on the folk music scene for many.

Like many other ethnographers and ethnomusicologists, Beaudry vividly relates her experiences of living amongst the community that she is studying (1997, pp. 68-70). She analyses her attempts to develop research-benefitting relationships, community member's perceptions of her as a researcher, the consequences of her work and her short-term presence in the community, and the fundamental issue of research funding and its implications for the number and duration of her fieldtrips. My experiences as a researcher in England contrast acutely with those of Beaudry. Based in Durham for the full duration of my research period, I have enjoyed living close to multiple folk music venues and have had the economic and logistical means to attend a myriad of other folk music events, either paying the relatively low entrance fees or stewarding at the events that I attended (be they ceilidhs, concerts, festivals, summer school or other kinds of gathering). In the case of summer schools, I occasionally obtained funding to take part, but it has to be underlined that they represented only a minority of my research fieldwork events. Meanwhile, my integration into community music-making events in England was never fraught by unacceptance or prejudice. Nettl points out that ethnomusicologists studying traditional musical practices in countries such as America or the UK tend to be of that same nationality themselves, therefore frequently finding themselves much closer to insider status (Nettl, 1980, p. 1). However, despite having a partial newcomer/outsider status as a French woman relatively new to the UK, I have tended to be regarded as neither native nor sufficiently different (in regards to behavioural norms, language, or musical knowledge) to be regarded as alien to the culture. After all, the presence of foreigners is not uncommon at many events. Furthermore, because my involvement in folk music events had actually preceded the start of my research, I found myself reasonably well-accustomed to established codes of music-making conduct and a known face in certain circles. Accordingly, I found that I was generally regarded and treated as "just another folky" – although one who asked a few more questions. This perception must undoubtedly have had an impact on my interviewees' behaviour, with familiarity engendering

openness. Furthermore, in the various workshops that I attended, because the workshop leaders perceived me to be just another student (- and advancing my musical skills was indeed a concern for me), they did not noticeably modify their behaviour in our interactions – for example by becoming more “serious” to engage with a researcher.

Monaghan and Just underline that "every ethnographic description at least implicitly participates in the cross-cultural comparisons that also engage anthropologists" (Monaghan & Just, 2000, p. 20). By drawing from interviews conducted with diverse musicians of different nationalities involved in the folk scene in England (as well as abroad at Ethno events), my research methods aims to support and emphasise this aspect of ethnographic fieldwork, the intention being to deliver an in-depth cultural study which is sensitive to broader global processes.

## 2.2. The interview process

### 2.2.1. Interviews in the field

To answer the research questions defined for this thesis, the primary aims of my fieldwork were both to observe folk musicians in their musical and broader cultural interactions and to interview a representative number of them on their views about the music they perform. Choosing which participants would constitute a representative sample to answer the research questions was a progressive and evolving process which adapted in line with new discoveries in the course of my research. Thus, my initial intention was to interview mainly professional folk musicians who constitute the headliners of the current folk music scene in England. However, from talking to them about their involvement in folk music, I quickly realised that local amateur community music-making still formed the bedrock of tradition and was the environment in which their initial interests and skills were forged. Hence, I resolved to expand my interviewing to include amateur folk musicians of all ages playing in social contexts such as pub sessions – seeking to represent the activities and views of all types of contributor, from professional to hobbyist, well-seasoned “folky” to novice.

I received some funding to go to Folkworks Summer School in August 2011, in order to meet and interview folk musicians. Folkworks Summer School is “a residential week of folk music, song and dance for adult, youth and junior participants”, held every year in Durham.<sup>9</sup> It gathers a large number of professional folk musicians who lead workshops in their instruments and in mixed-instrument bands. At the end of the week, the participants are all invited to play at the festival organised by Folkworks, the “Durham Gathering”, which happens both in Durham city centre and the Gala theatre. It quickly emerged that these were majorly significant events for several generations of folk musicians, whether they were participants or tutors. Therefore, obtaining further information about

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<sup>9</sup> Extract from the promotion leaflet published by the Sage Gateshead

the motives, ethos and practical operations of such events turned into a new research interest, and obtaining organisers' testimonies became crucial in the development of this thesis.

In connection with the Folkworks Summer School, my original intention was to interview as many of the music tutors as possible on a one-to-one basis over the course of the week. However, lack of time and the fact that my first two interviewees, Kathryn Tickell and Sam Pirt, were only available at the same time compelled me to pursue another approach. I duly settled upon conducting the interviews in pairs, and was pleased to discover that this novel method yielded a number of advantages. Most significantly, my questions would commonly stimulate a conversation between the two interviewees, which would then develop in directions of the interviewees' own choosing, without me imposing artificial constraints through a string of pre-formulated questions. The pairs of interviewees would not only answer my original question and often the subsequent ones, but they would also raise and answer their own questions. In this way, the interview methodology managed to reduce the problematic dimension of impartiality which overshadows any interview context.

However, pairing informants for interviews could not be done randomly. After a few interviews conducted in this way, I realised that the most effective means to elicit valuable information was to pair together musicians who were of different generations, musical backgrounds and experience. I discovered that differences naturally fuelled the conversation. For example, in several of the paired interviews, individuals mentioned being turned on to folk music through school experiences, thereby initiating a reaction of surprise and a deeper engagement in the conversation from the other paired interviewee.

Only one of the interviewees (Ian Stephenson, August 2011) had a chance to see my questionnaire before answering its questions. This was another choice which I made, in the aim of obtaining more spontaneous answers, and, to some extent, of enhancing the possibility of hearing the progress of their thoughts instead of a more formulaic and pre-formulated answer.

### **2.2.2. The questionnaire (and tangential questions)**

The research questions developed above, together with the understanding of the existing literature on similar or related topics, led me to design a questionnaire that would be useable for professional and non-professional folk musicians alike. The questions were grouped into four sets as follows (See Questionnaire in Appendices): The first set was to establish how they identify themselves as musicians, in particular in terms of tradition, style and genre affiliation. The second set of questions was aimed at exploring the musicians' personal perceptions of traditional music, as well as typical patterns regarding how they became interested in folk music, whether through family background or later exposure. The third set of questions sought to elicit musicians' ideas about the different

influences integrated in their playing and their compositions, the transformations they could perceive in their musical development, and whether those transformations happened on purpose or involuntarily. The fourth set of questions focused on the different modes of transmission experienced by the musicians, and their points of view regarding those modes' efficiency and impact on the continuing tradition.

To facilitate comparability and insure that all research areas were consistently addressed, I decided to use exactly the same questionnaire for all informants, both in spoken and written contexts. Moreover, the questions were addressed in a relatively similar order, unless I thought that a particular question had either been previously answered or, in this particular case, was irrelevant. However, if a specific answer appeared worth following up, I would add an appropriate question. Indeed, the specific context of the interviews was often a key factor in determining which research areas were followed up with additional questions. Thus, when carried out in the context of Folkworks Summer School or Ethno, my interview focused on the significance of those particular events and the subjects' personal interest in them, since a particular part of my research is dedicated to exploring this kind of gathering. In a similar way, when interviewing students or alumni from the Folk Degree at Newcastle University, questions about their understanding of the impact of this initiative were developed, or if an interviewee mentioned owning a personal collection, further questions were asked on that particular aspect of their musical practices.

Through a "nonmodel" for fieldwork practice, Beaudry emphasises the need to "listen". Her observations about conducting research in the Inuit community could beneficially be applied to research in other communities (1997, p. 68) since they emphasise being sensitive to the observed community's own values and designing research accordingly, as opposed to applying western (or personal) expectations and prejudices to our research. In a similar way, prior to beginning my research fieldwork, I spent time preparing a rigorous and lengthy questionnaire in the hope of eliciting data that was easily comparable in a scientific manner. However, in the field and during the interviews, I quickly realised that each of my interviewees had their own particular areas of interest, expertise, or strong opinions, which they wished to develop further, whether on tradition, hybridisation, instruments, transmission or even some areas that were not included in the questionnaire. This was particularly notable in the case of older musicians, some of whom were keen to talk lengthily about issues that they were especially passionate or opinionated about. These interviews were often the most enriching and enlightening, yielding personal insights outside the somewhat reducing frame of my anticipated questionnaire. Many of the most richly detailed and revealing conversations (or monologues, to some extent) were conducted with older musicians (including, for example Anthony Robb and Alistair Anderson), who talked at length about their

childhood music-related experiences, their perceptions and opinions regarding different types of music and music scene (in both the past and present), and their learning and teaching experiences (including attitudes towards teachers and approaches to self-teaching). Such testimonies were extremely useful, revealing in detail each musician's intensely personal story of involvement in folk music, while cumulatively highlighting points of commonality (in practice and belief) and wide-sweeping transformations within the culture, and throwing into relief the contrasting experiences and values of younger musicians.

In the case of modern projects, such as the Cecil Sharp Project and Ethno, it seemed essential to interview members of the organising teams, as well as musicians, in order to shed light on prevailing aims, motivations and logistical considerations. Moreover, the process of contrasting feedback from organisers and participants helped to reveal the envisaged and practical impacts of the projects on the folk music scene, and show how they have been received by folk communities. Later in my research programme, I adapted the standard questionnaire to suit the more particular research interests presented by other types of interviewee. This was particularly the case when I interviewed young folk musicians from different countries at Ethno Sweden, folk event organisers, such as those working for Ethno Sweden, and people working for archiving and preservation projects such as Malcolm Taylor, the librarian at the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, and individuals involved in specific projects, such as the Cecil Sharp project. In the case of the young musicians I interviewed at Ethno Sweden, who were not all British nationals, my study focused on their assessment of the event's impact on their music making and on their music-related social lives. For people working for organisations, I refocused my questioning towards the history of the organisations they were personally in charge of or taking part in, their motivations, and their assessment of the organisations' impact on the English folk music scene. The questions I asked to Malcolm Taylor were particularly focused on the aims and objectives of Cecil Sharp House and the Vaughan Williams Memorial library. To evaluate the impact of this institution on the contemporary folk music scene and how it is perceived by folk musicians, I was specifically interested in the practices of the library towards the renewal and addition of resources to their collection, whether by donations or purchase, and their values about the archived collections.

Current social media proved to be another particularly powerful tool for contacting interviewees and gathering points of view. The fact that online social networks have appeared only recently means that this topic has not been extensively academically studied. As Wilson, Gosling and Graham (2012) point out, studies have been oriented towards a "wide variety of disciplines" ranging from law, economics, sociology, and psychology, to information technology, management, marketing, and computer-mediated communication" (2012, p. 204). One such study is Aydin's article (2012), which

explores the educational uses of Facebook as a means of communication between teachers and students (2012, p. 1097). Although many studies similarly recognise the importance of Facebook as a topic of study, little is said about using Facebook as a research tool for interacting with culture members, studying their interactions, and collecting data. For my research, however, I have frequently employed Facebook for these purposes, using it as a vehicle for questioning in a very similar way to face-to-face interviewing – typically, using personal instant messaging (not publically visible) to ask musicians specific questions and adapting subsequent questions in accordance with their answers. In this way, for example, the majority of my interviewing with Liz Davenport took place via Facebook. My interest in her experiences as a folk musician grew from a comment she had published about Anne Cockburn's collection, discovered while I was working on the personal collections of traditional and folk tunes held by folk musicians. I initially focused my questioning on Anne Cockburn's collection, and on her and her husband's role in its valuation and transmission. Nonetheless, after a few questions, Liz mentioned their own extensive personal collection. When I met both of them at Whitby Folk Week in August 2012, I followed up on this conversation, obtaining more details about their own collection. Furthermore, I sent them my initial standard questionnaire, which Liz filled in in writing. I similarly employed Facebook to interview Ffion Mair, asking about her experiences as a folk singer and about her use of the Internet to find musical resources. In this case as well, my questioning did not follow any of the set questionnaires that I had created – rather focusing on areas of particular interest to Ffion and myself. Overall, I found that musicians were more likely to respond through this mode of communication than through conventional email. In fact, in the instances where I sent the full questionnaire in emails, very few individuals replied, presumably judging that task to be too overwhelming and time-consuming.

Besides this interview-like use of the personal messaging function on Facebook, some of the public conversations, including posts and threads of comments on community groups, have proved particularly useful for shedding light on the various uses and impacts of communication technologies on musical practices and resource sharing. With concern to the ethical issues such observations might raise, if quoted, the contributors to such community groups are referred to anonymously, as they may be under the age of 18.

For all interviews, ranging from the most formal interviews conducted in person to the most informal Facebook conversation, I submitted a standardised consent form to each of the participants (See Consent form in Appendices). As well as confirming the aims of the research and mentioning the address of the researcher (should they have any further questions), this form allowed them to choose whether they wished their name to be quoted in the thesis, or if they preferred to remain anonymous. The majority of the interviewees accepted for their name to be quoted. Nonetheless, a

number of them took the opportunity to mention that they would like to be contacted if their name was mentioned, and review the quotation before publication.

## **2.3. Interpretations of results: some technical and ethical matters**

### **2.3.1. Qualitative and quantitative data analysis**

I am particularly aware of potential problems and ethical concerns deriving from the uncommon method of interviewing which I used, notably in pairing interviewees. Counterbalancing the advantages of generating a conversation and minimising the interviewer's input, one problem raised by this method was the occasional tendency for one individual to dominate the discussion while the other simply agreed. In those instances, I made sure to alternate between the two individuals when asking my questions. The paired interviewing method also raised difficulties regarding how to quote in the text of the thesis, as, in many instances, the interviewees complemented each other's answers. In such cases, the citations are quoted in the thesis referencing both contributors. Moreover, from an ethical point of view, I have to consider the eventuality that, in a one-to-one context, artists may have expressed slightly differently nuanced notions.

Another issue that was raised directly by the questionnaire<sup>10</sup> and its formulation was the recurrent answer to the questions in section 3 about influences upon music, and particularly influences upon new compositions: specifically, musicians repeatedly explained that, in terms of influence, their musical products were essentially "a mix of everything" (See Chapter 6 about perceptions of musical styles and their classifications). This allowed very few conclusions to be drawn. Nonetheless, giving the exact same format of interviews and questionnaires to all the informants allowed me to compare the results in a clear way. With this aim, I created an Excel document (See extract, Figure 4 below) to report the answers to each question from every informant. Using the functionalities of the software, I could create a column for every possible answer, with one informant per line. Reporting the interviews consisted in ticking a box if the possible answer was mentioned, and adding an extra column if an original answer was formulated.

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<sup>10</sup> See questionnaire in Appendix 1

	Words	Playing										Composing										Traditional											
		Folk	Traditional	Contemporary	European	Celtic	English	Scottish	Irish	Borders	Northumbrian	Folk	Traditional	Contemporary	European	Celtic	English	Scottish	Irish	Borders	Northumbrian	Characteristics	Old	Unknown author	Simple	Short	Structure	Two parts	Repeat	Dance	Development	Musician	
Alistair Anderson			x						x	x		x								x	x		x									x	
Andy Cutting		x	x		x		x	x						x	o										x	x	x		x		x		
Kathryn Tickell		x	x																		x		o										
Claire Mann								x																									
Sam Pirt		x																			x												
Ian Stephenson				x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x													x		x	x				
Shona Mooney		x	x	x						x	x	o								x				x		x	x						
Peter Trickell		x	x	x				x	x		x	o												x				x					
Amy Thatcher		x		x	x		x	x	x																x				x			x	
Becky Unthank		x																															
Rachel Unthank		x	x																			x	x										
<b>TOTAL</b>		8	6	4	2	1	3	4	4	2	2	3	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	2	1	3	1	4	1	3	3	1	1	
		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	

Figure 4: Extract from an Excel spreadsheet recording quantitative interview data

In this spreadsheet, the answers are recorded following the order of the questions (from left to right).<sup>11</sup> Thus, in the extract, the answers to the very first question (question 1.1.), which indicate the specific labels used by musicians to describe the non-original music that they typically play, are represented on the left; the answers to the second question (question 1.2.), indicating the specific labels used by musicians to describe their own original compositions, are represented just to the right of that – and so on similarly for subsequent questions. The “total” lines allow comparing commonalities (in the shades of blue) and discrepancies (in the shades of red), in calculating the total number of times the word at the top of the column has been mentioned (blue) or actively pinpointed as irrelevant or inaccurate (red). The qualitative analysis was carried out for approximately a third of the interviewees (24), as this was considered to be a representative sample sufficient to reveal salient tendencies that could then be explored further throughout the thesis. It proved particularly useful in relation to Chapter 4 in which the categories and terminologies employed by contemporary folk musicians are explored.

In order to understand the tendencies within these results, it was also necessary to consider demographical characteristics, in particular differentiating informants according to professional status and length of involvement in the folk music scene. Thus, the first interviewees, listed at the top of the spreadsheet, constitute the most experienced musicians, whereas towards the bottom are the youngest participants, visually differentiated into categories through the use of various shades of grey. While this quantitative approach was used to collate data from the entire questionnaire, I

<sup>11</sup> See questionnaire in Appendix 1

found it particularly helpful for identifying tendencies in relation to changing methods of transmission and access to the tradition between the last two generations<sup>12</sup>.

This process de facto resulted in the translation of some of the qualitative data collected in the field into quantitative data. The aim of this process was not to reduce the interviewees' contributions to shortened answers. In fact, throughout the thesis, the nuanced points of views of the musicians remain at the core of the findings as demonstrated by the extensive use and analysis of direct quotations. Rather, the purpose of this quantitative methodology was to facilitate comparison of relatively similar and antithetically differing answers, as well as to uncover and represent general tendencies of agreement and disagreement. Concretely, as examples of these interpretations, in the cases where the "total" line reached a high number in blue, it could be concluded that a large number, or a majority, of the interviewees would agree on this point, whereas when a red number in the "total" line would underline irrelevancy of such an interpretation from the points of view of the participants. In consequence, high numbers on both blue and red totals would mean significant disagreements amongst the folk music community on the use of the term in question. It has to be underlined that these tendencies, as revealed through quantitative analysis, have served primarily as the starting point of my investigation and hence are infrequently directly referred to in the final thesis

### **2.3.2. Ethical issues in ethnographical study: criticism and counter-criticism**

According to Cooley, for many academics, "fieldwork [is] a process in which observation is inseparable from representation and interpretation" (Cooley, 1997, p. 4). In this way, he points towards a variety of ethical issues that ultimately derive from the researcher's inevitable exerting of his or her own personal expectations, motivations, individualised reading and agenda upon the project, and which form the base of much of the criticism levelled against ethnomusicological research.

The most fundamentally problematic issue that Monaghan and Just underline concerns the objectivity of the ethnographer while using ethnographic methods to carry out research (2000, p. 23). They underline the difficulties of obtaining a representative sample of testimonies from focal social groups, since it is the researcher's own personal decision whose testimony merits drawing from and whose should be put aside (Monaghan & Just, 2000, pp. 26-27). As a means to ensure that objectivity is achieved (as much as that is possible), they propose placing strong emphasis on undertaking extensive open dialogue with diverse informants, and making interview materials central

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<sup>12</sup> Considering a demographical definition of a generation being around 25 years

to the formation of interpretations – as I have sought to do in my own project (2000, p. 23). Taking a critical stand regarding issue of the ethnographer's objectivity, Wolcott notably underlines:

“Rather than dismiss bias as something we should guard against, I have come to think of it not only as something we must live with, but as something we cannot do without” (2001, p. 164)

Further developing on "good" and "bad" or "excessive" bias, his argument discredits the search for objectivity and neutrality in research, rather advocating that fieldworkers become aware of and duly acknowledge their own subjectivities, emotions and biases toward their objects of study (Wolcott, 2001, pp. 164-166). This reflexive approach to ethnography is now well-known in anthropology-related disciplines with many, like Cooley, advocating usage of the first person when relating personal experience and also description of observed events, even though it remains problematic to “admit passion” (1997, p. 6). Cooley remarks that the problem of interpretive bias remains a major concern even in those cases where the researcher has relative insider status (as in my case):

"Fieldwork within one's own country and among individuals who share the fieldworker's nationality might seem to exonerate the scholar from the critique of ethnography that seeks to describe the Other, but musical folklorists created an Other within their national borders by creating cultural and evolutionary development borders separating them from the individuals studied" (Cooley, 1997, p. 11)

### **2.3.3. Recording interviews**

During my fieldwork trips, I focused my interest on contacting, and, if possible, interviewing a diverse range of folk musicians and enthusiasts who have been playing a role in the English folk music scene, either as professionals or amateurs, with national or local prominence. Organising interviews face-to-face on the spot tended to be the most reliable way to ensure their contribution, even though it was sometimes difficult to find a sufficiently quiet place nearby to record the interview. As previously explained, I clearly stated to my interviewees that the recordings I made were not to be published but rather were exclusively for my own research purposes, with repeated listenings allowing me to accurately capture and represent their input. For some interviewees, I endeavoured to conduct filmed interviews, subject of course to their consent. In those cases, I made sure to capture both the interviewee's and my own image throughout the duration of the interview, and asked them to clearly state their name at the beginning. In effect, face to face interviews (either audio or video recorded) provided the vast bulk of my original fieldwork materials, as I received only very few written answers from artists to whom I sent the questionnaire by email, or other social media (such as Facebook).

In conclusion, like any sensitive ethnographer, I have devoted much care and attention to undertaking a challenging balancing act – adopting a complex set of research methods appropriate to

meet the needs and desires of the focal culture members (all of whom have their own busy lives and agendas), to elicit information required to answer my central research questions, and to meet the high ethical standards required of contemporary academic research.

## 3. Conceptual bases and global perspectives

### 3.1. Identities and cultures in contemporary socio-political contexts

#### 3.1.1. Culture and cultures

Although "culture" is an oft-used term both in academia and everyday life, it is interpreted in a variety of ways, rendering its definition rather complex. Even just within the field of anthropology, Monaghan and Just underline that "there have probably been more anthropological definitions of 'culture' than there have been anthropologists" (2000, pp. 34-35).

Williams (1986) has provided a very helpful extended definition of "culture", which still applies to current understandings. He begins this definition by reviewing the word's etymology, identifying variations of meaning between European languages (see also Amselle, 1998, pp. 25-26), and charting how its meanings and usage have changed throughout history. Drawing from Tylor's pioneering work, he highlights how the term has developed from referring to a specific process to functioning as a noun that is related to, but different from, "civilisation" in its meaning (1986, p. 87; see also Amselle, 1998, p. 26). He clarifies that current academic usage typically recognises "culture" to denote a set of shared symbolic behaviours and conceptualisations which serve to create order and meaning in human life; as Boas poignantly stated, "Culture, like a set of glasses, focuses our experience of the world" (cit. Monaghan and Just 2000, p. 39). At the same time, Williams recognises that there are in fact an enormous multiplicity of "cultures" (in the plural) spread across time and space, with each social group having its own complex cultural configuration linked to overarching national, traditional and folk cultures (1986, p. 89); essentially then, there are cultures within cultures.

Continuing his extended definition, Williams then goes on to identify how, in modern interpretations, the symbolic systems of culture are thought to be imbedded and negotiated within and expressed through core cultural media, namely music, literature, painting, sculpture, theatre and film – with

commentators deliberating analysing culture's complex workings through philosophy, scholarship and history (Williams, 1986, p. 90). In such contexts, Williams discerns an underlying duality of "'material' and 'symbolic' production", exemplified by the way that people have come to regard culture as a "'high' characteristic" and thereby a means for social class differentiation (ibid.). Naturally, while cultures may compete in close proximity they can also be broadly divided into mainstream and peripheral, with the latter – sometimes denoted "subcultures" – commonly involving a degree of subversion. In this respect, as Monaghan and Just emphasise, the concept of "culture" has evidently been deeply influenced and shaped through political interests, which are ultimately traceable back to the German nationalist understanding of "kultur", notably composed of "language, folklore and customs" transcending political divisions (Monaghan & Just, 2000, pp. 47-48).

In their study of the Chilean revolution and the invasion of industrially produced culture, Mitchell and Rosati (2006) provide ample illustrations of how culture works to unite communities, highlighting additional key defining characteristics. For example, they demonstrate how culture essentially comprises a fusion of people, identity and location, bound together through "local needs and desires and larger-scale processes" (2006, p. 147). They also pinpoint how culture tends to be viewed hierarchically, with "high culture" seen as opposed to "popular culture", expressing elitist readings of cultural configurations as comprising "the best thought and knowledge of the time" (Arnold 1993, cit. Mitchell and Rosati 2006, p. 147). Drawing from Berger (1972) and Williams (1977), Mitchell and Rosati also demonstrate the tight conceptual ties between culture and tradition: "traditional values" lie at the core of culture's systems of meanings. This point is particularly pertinent for the current study, recognising as it does that traditions are a crucial means through which culture is defined, communicated, perpetuated and evolved. Finally, Mitchell and Rosati make a valuable contribution by presenting "culture as a way of life" (2006, p. 147) – a complex web of meaning-generating principles that are current and active in the daily lives of culture members, encapsulating "dominant", "resistant", "emergent" and "residual" ways of life. These understandings certainly ring true with my observations of contemporary folk music culture in England.

Drawing from Williams (1979) and Clifford (1988), Bennett (2005, p. 68) usefully proposes that "culture" can best be understood by "breaking it down into its component parts", specifically "beliefs, ideas, art and traditions" – here, again, showing how culture is explicitly tied conceptually with tradition. While recognising culture's multifaceted complexity, Bennett also usefully highlights the "fluidity and impermanence of cultural distinctions and relationships" (Ibid.), evoking the widespread existence of "cultural hybridity" – which this thesis will go on to demonstrate is a conspicuous characteristic within the current folk music scene of England. In a context of exchanges and floating boundaries, Bennett therefore underlines the paradox and fallability inherent within

attempts to define and analyse distinct “cultures” according to regional areas (as alluded to earlier in Chapter 2.1.1).

Of course, within ethnomusicology, the term “culture” is often paired with “music” to form “music culture”, defined by Slobin and Titon as “sounds, concepts, social interactions, materials – a society’s total involvement with music” (cit. Cooley, 1997, p.4). In other words, the term “music culture” denotes exclusively the music-related portion of a society’s overall web of symbolic behaviours and conceptualisations. In many ways, “music culture” is closely related to another oft-used formulation “music scene”, although the latter term is slightly more restrictive, focusing more on the contexts in which the culture members assemble to celebrate their shared culture – the get-togethers that see a coalescing of perceptions, behaviours and community (see, for example, Cohen 2006, pp. 240-242). Many ethnomusicologists favour the term “music scene”, feeling that it matches their research focus. Significantly, Sweers is one of them, using this terminology in her study of the development of electric folk music in England, exploring bands such as Fairport Convention, Oysterband and Steeleye Span (2005, p. 111). With my current study similarly focusing on musical involvement at sessions, festivals, online forums and so on (rather than venturing into the tangentially music-related aspects of culture members lives), I too consider the term “music scene” to be well-fitting, and this is duly registered in my thesis title. At the same time, as Cohen recognises, it is increasingly the case that “music scenes” may be multi-sited in nature, spanning a broad range of contexts and regions, as demonstrated in my own study:

“[R]esearch of an ethnographic, comparative nature could prove particularly helpful in illuminating the nature of local scenes [...] further ethnographies of scenes could help to illustrate the way in which scenes are lived, experienced, and imagined by particular groups within particular situation, and to explore their local, national, and transnational connections. Such ethnographies would not study scenes as local culture in particular places, but attend to the ways in which scenes both produce the local and move across and connect disparate places.” (Cohen S. , 2006, pp. 248-249)

Cohen subsequently underlines: “Local music scenes certainly have their own distinctive characteristics, conventions, and identities” (2006, p. 242). Here, like many others, she recognises another key feature of cultures (and “music cultures”), namely that, while they are expressed outwardly through convention-bound behaviours (such as music-making), they are imbedded within the identities of their participants; thus, the concepts of culture and identity are intimately linked. Naturally, the expression of identity, whether individual or collective, is a vital human concern within the cultural domain, and musical performances offer ample opportunities for participants to articulate where they fit in within their worlds, pinpointing a myriad of personal and shared affiliations. At traditional musical performances, participants can express personal and shared

identities through conversation and musical patterning and, in some cases, through dance, costume and ceremony. Thus, the articulation of identity happens in conjunction with the transmission of tradition.

### 3.1.2. The Nation and its Folk Music

In popular consciousness and academia alike, there is a close pairing of nationhood and identity – a fusion that derives from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when European political powers actively promoted the notion of the “nation” as a geographically bounded unit composed of individuals sharing various identifiable characteristics, as an essential tool for the control of diverse populations (Hobsbawm 1990, p. 41; see also Anderson 1983). Still today, nationality remains a key defining characteristic within people’s conceptions of personal and collective identity (see Anderson, 1983), accompanied by the enduring but highly questionable notion that, to a substantial extent, “a nation state is a distinct and homogeneous social group” (Avgerou, 2002, p. 112).

Probably from the dawn of civilisation, music’s identity-defining prowess has been harnessed by a wide range of political powers, who have actively sought to forge tight links between particular forms of music and particular notions of belonging. Non-elite traditional musics have always been ideally suited to this purpose and, as Gelbart explains, it was in nineteenth century Germany that such music was first influentially reframed and celebrated as “volk musik” – the music of the “folk” populace (2007, pp. 257-258). Gelbart clarifies that it was especially the shared nature of the traditional musical heritage and the collective endeavour of its performance that appealed to figures such as Herder, who did much to shape and promote this enduring understanding in nineteenth century Germany (ibid.). As Middleton argues, the construction of “national music” serving to represent “the people” inevitably carries substantial ideological meanings and consequences regarding musical styles and how they are used and perceived:

“Admittedly the popular/people signifier could have positive as well as negative connotations: ‘the people’ was in some sense held to be the author of the American and French revolutions, the force underlying romantic nationalisms the progressive mainspring of democratic politics. But the concept was always mixed, confused, slanted-destined to end up, commonly absorbed into the object of mass-culture critique, distorted into the fascist Volk, or reduced into the virtual subject of Stalinist class-struggle.” (2004, p. 396).

Bohlman sheds further light on the origins of the nation/folk-music pairing, demonstrating how inherently selective and unfair the project was:

“In the nineteenth century, folk music found its way into European history almost entirely as national music. Folk-music collectors and arrangers contributed to the building of national traditions, not by concerning themselves with the musics of the ethnic minorities.” (Bohlman P. V., 2004, p. 223)

In other words, Bohlman identifies a tendency for collectors and other commentators to seek and promote uniformities within national boundaries while discounting non-conforming elements (For further analysis about the processes of collection, see Chapter 7). Amselle provides further clarification about the culture-manipulators’ values, also emphasising that their project has had enduring implications:

“The Nineteenth century valorized a "high culture" based on writing, a class of professionals of power and the sacred, and the territorial state [...] All groups, whether exterior or in the minority, not fully part of the territorial nation-state are henceforth relegated either to exotic race or ethnic groups or to domestic minorities.” (1998, p. 24)

Similarly, Storey retraces the creation of “folk culture” within the context of nineteenth century nation building, underlining how the quest to collect music from rural areas was underscored by a “wilful fantasy” (2003, p. 9), specifically that “folk” and “primitive” culture constituted the most “pure” authentic heritage, threatened by the onslaught of industrialisation and urbanisation (Storey, 2003, pp. 2-6). Storey also underlines how the project paired romanticism with distrust, expressing an urge both to re-imagine past life and to appropriate, noting: “Increasingly, the peasantry, like the urban rabble, could not be trusted with the nation’s folk heritage. Fortunately, the middle-class collector was at hand” (Storey, 2003, p. 5; see also Boyes, 2010). Thus it was that the initial nineteenth century folk music revivals were far from being grass-roots movements; rather, as Atkinson explains, they constituted a “deliberate process of intervention... with the intention of pressing [the music] into the service of an ideology of national unity” (2004, p.144; see also Harker, 1985). And it is clear that the revivals have had a lasting impact upon how people regard traditional folk music; writing in 1969, Howes emphasises how it is still conceptually tied first-and-foremost to nation:

"The Nation is a modern conception but it is the main classification in the modern world, and folk music is a national phenomenon most easily studied nation by nation." (Howes, 1969, Chapter 3: Ethnology and Nationalism)

Stokes provides an elegant analysis of the roles played by traditional music in the construction of national identity, pointing out direct links between traditional musical styles and politically bordered regions (Stokes, 1997, p. 8). He particularly focuses on the example of Northern Ireland, where musicians are simultaneously under the influence of Irish and British folk traditions, reflecting complex and fraught political dynamics and the paradox of Northern Irish identity. In that context,

music has become a valuable tool for uniting disparate elements and fostering a sense of shared Irish identity. Kaul (2009) similarly stresses Ireland's fragmented status, in addition alluding to the massive influx of non-Irish immigrants and the mass-departure of Irish to widespread diasporic communities (Kaul, 2009, p. 5). For a long time then, music's unifying identity-promoting reach has had to be expansive and powerful, competing with major socio-cultural upheavals – although, evidently, nowadays many Irish people are turning away from older Irish traditional sounds towards hybrid and globalised forms of expression that more adequately express their current identities. Nonetheless, Irish musical traditions are still viewed by many culture-leaders as intangible elements of national heritage, integral to the definition of national identities and therefore needing to be preserved and passed on and, accordingly, various initiatives to revive their tuition to younger generations have been taking shape (See Chapters 5.3 and 7.3).

In England also, as Winter and Keegan-Phipps explain, folk music continues to be a particularly useful tool for promoting particular understandings of national identity and "Englishness" (2013, pp. 12-13) – continuing a long tradition that extends back to the nineteenth century collectors and to the wide-scale circulation of their findings in early publications and in the works of composers such as Vaughan Williams (see Leyshon, Matless, & Revill, 1998, p. 9). Indeed, Storey convincingly argues that nineteenth century "roots" remain central in the construction and expression of cultural identities today (2003, pp. 81-85); looking both at the ideological and psychological aspects of cultural identities, he explains the importance of memories, notably collective and national memories for establishing shared senses of identity (Storey, 2003, p. 84).

Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that national identities (and how they are represented musically) are by no means static; rather, as Winter and Keegan Phipps underline, they are "constantly in flux, being made, contested and remade" (2013, p. 131). Amselle concurs, stressing that the defining attributes of any culture are invariably contested, and hence the characterisation of national music has always been questioned by cultural stake-holders, and still is today:

"Culture as a collective identity, as a classification, is thus continuously the subject of a political struggle, of a struggle for recognition that takes the shape of an incessant reclassification, such that even the appearance of the society must be subjected to constant re-definition" (Amselle, 1998, p. 42)

Accordingly, nowadays, there are sizeable factions within the folk community in England (and surely elsewhere also) who actively oppose overly backward-looking perspectives and efforts to promote notions of unified identity (while increasingly marginalising minority traditions). O'Shea explains that this trend is linked to wider socio-cultural changes in value and commodification:

"a clinging to 'tradition' [...] has long been understood as a characteristic of most English cultural and intellectual elites. [...] The debates on postmodernity include the suggestion that this opposition between high and popular culture is breaking down, particularly as elite cultures have themselves been commodified." (O'Shea A. , 1996, p. 32)

The willingness amongst contemporary folk musicians to hybridise old repertoire, assimilate fresh new influences and compose new folk music does indeed demonstrate a present- and future-focused outlook – very much contrasting with the prevailing ethos of the first folk revival, for example, which was "unthreatening in its absence of any direct engagement with contemporary society" (Boyes, 1993, p. 98). Bringing together different regional and ethnic identities challenges and ultimately reconfigures existing boundaries and classifications. Tellingly, Amy Thatcher, professional accordionist and member of the Monster Ceilidh Band, explained to me that she is English, but does not play English music; rather, her compositions sound closer to the Scottish traditional repertoire.<sup>13</sup> It is certainly not unusual for musicians to draw from diverse national, regional and local traditions in their music making, thereby playfully expressing their own complex identities.

### 3.1.3. Complex identities

A large number of theories about complex identities have been developed, in particular in the second half of the twentieth century, at the time when the idea of the "nation" started to be criticised. For example, Tehranian and Lum in particular confront the impact of globalisation upon the definition and redefinition of identities (2006), showing how diversified and increased inter-cultural flow and migration have greatly enhanced the complexity of personal identities.

In his definition of identity, Robins (2005, p. 174) considers how globalisation has affected people's understanding of the concept, specifically underlining that "the national frame, in which people have constructed their identities and made sense of their lives, has been significantly challenged", thereby encouraging people to base their self-identification on "familiar identities" such as "traditional cultures". Korobov similarly addresses the nature of complex multiple identities, following White and Malinowski in his demonstration that symbols and their interpretations have a crucial role in identity definition and recognition (Korobov, 2006, p. 52). Korobov is careful to highlight that, for many minorities, it is difficult to maintain their regional identities within powerful Nation-states; there is widespread prejudiced representation in the media, with mixed minorities being cast in opposition "global culture". As Korobov usefully points out, culture is mediated by economic factors: culture is what the people think, do and produce (Korobov, 2006, p. 50).

Stokes (1997) elegantly clarifies how music is an ideal medium for communicating complex identities – pinpointing diverse affiliations concerning social status, origins, ethnicity and much more through

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<sup>13</sup> P. C. (Amy Thatcher, August 2012)

the medium of sound. Storey also explores how music works as a banner of complex identity, acknowledging the diverse cultural inputs that inform self- and other- perception and musical representation but also recognising that certain facets of identity and expression are actually not obviously derived from culture at all but rather from what he terms "nature" (2003, pp. 79-87):

"our identities are made from a contradictory series of identifications, subject positions, and forms of representation which we have made, occupied, and been located in as we constitute and are constituted by performances that produce the narrative of our lives" (Storey, 2003, p. 91)

The observations of Stokes and Storey are evidently imbedded in comments made by Johanna Watt, a young Irish flutist who took part in Ethno Sweden 2012. She explained to me that, over the course of her life, tradition has become "engrained" in her, drawing from diverse different affiliations with teachers, friends, performance venues, bands, and so on, spread across multiple geographical regions. When she plays, her chequered past is being, in a sense, revived. At the same time, it is being reconsidered and revised: she stresses the need to "move with the time", re-interpreting existing musical knowledge in personal and current ways.<sup>14</sup>

Writing in reference to folk music in the British Isles, Young highlights how contemporary musicians' identities (like those of the rest of the populace) are increasingly mixed and heterogenous in nature (2010):

"Those who populate the British Isles are all, to some degree, of mixed race: the results of millennia of successive waves of immigration and foreign occupation, all slowly compacted into sedimental layers of accumulated culture, language and nationhood that has been known as many things, most recently 'British'. There's strength in these tree rings. The process simply continues, following several generations of post-colonial immigration, and with economic migration across Europe's borders." (Young, 2010, pp. 606-607)

With increased recognition and celebration of such heterogeneous complex identities, Young concludes that "the parameters of 'folk culture' in Britain are quietly being redrawn" (2010, p. 601).

### **3.2. Globalised cultural contexts**

Recognising the significant effect of globalisation on "cultures" and "identities" and their musical expression, it is necessary to shed further light on the various theories developed around this central theme. At the outset, it is helpful to draw attention to the two possible ways in which a person or a community may respond to globalisation, as summarised by Storey:

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<sup>14</sup> P. C. (Johanna Watt, July 2012)

"Globalization offers the possibility of cultural mixing on a scale never before known. This can of course produce resistance to difference, but it can also produce the fusing of different cultures and the making of new and exciting forms of cultural hybridity" (Storey, 2003, p. 117)

Globalisation thus offers, on the one hand, opportunities for tradition mixing and growing diversity and, on the other hand, a stimulus towards nostalgia as local communities fear the disappearance of their local cultures. O'Shea expands further on the psychology underlying these two possible responses:

"[T]o construct identity we have to establish who we are not, to invent an excluded 'other'; this 'other' not only reassures us about who we are, but also fascinates the more adventurous tendencies within us. Thus these forms do not simply fix us to the existing social formation; they continue to offer glimpses of something of something else. Our subjectivity is thus never settled; we are never fully socialised, and our incompleteness acts as a drive for continued innovation and transformation." (O'Shea A. , 1996, pp. 24-25)

In the folk music scene, this tension clearly persists – with urges towards hybridity often tempered by conservative tendencies. Indeed, for some, the construction, creation and revival of traditional music is evidently still being used as a form of resistance to the phenomenon of cultural globalisation.

### **3.2.1. Definitions and theories of globalisation**

The phenomenon of globalisation has been at the centre of constant academic debates, both regarding its characterisation and its significance. This is hardly surprising given that globalisation is commonly understood to be a defining feature of contemporary outlooks, as O'Shea points out: "one of the features of modernity has been its global aspiration; and one of the particular features of this century has been the internationalisation of culture - or rather, of some cultures" (1996, p. 17).

Monaghan and Just notably define the "globalisation of culture" as "the emergence of a set of hybrid, deterritorialized practices and images surrounding consumption, epitomized by fast food chains, world fairs, sporting events, cinemas, and tourist destinations" (2000, p. 105). As Baltzis emphasises, it is clearly a phenomenon that requires the adoption of a broad all-encompassing objective perspective if one is to acquire a convincing evaluation and representation (2005, pp. 137-150); there are many factors that fuel and shape the dynamics of globalisation including political, economic, cultural, technological and demographical – although it is only relatively recently that economic transactions and political relations have begun to be considered within cultural studies appraisals (2005, p. 140), following the pioneering work of theorists such as Appadurai (1996, pp. 18-23).

Hayden (2006) identifies three main points of view regarding the ongoing trajectory of globalisation (shared by academics and non-academics alike) (see also Holton 2000). Firstly, the globalist point of view suggests that disparate cultures are converging towards a single shared model – specifically, a "commodified and commercialized culture, with differences flattened into global uniformity" (Leyshon, Matless and Revill, 1998, pp. 14-15). However, Monaghan and Just warn: "we must regard the idea of the emergence of a single homogenized global culture with considerable scepticism... superficial similarities often mask profound cultural differences that may operate at deep structural level" (Monaghan & Just, 2000, p. 105, 106). Storey also criticises this point of view, saying that it is decidedly simplistic and inaccurate to regard "globalisation as Americanisation" (Storey, 2003, p. 110; see also Shuker, 2001, p.72). In his words: "it simply assumes that it is possible to inject the dominant globalizing culture into a weaker local culture and in so doing replicate a version of the dominant culture" (Storey, 2003, p. 110).

The second point of view identified by Hayden regarding globalisation's trajectory is what he terms "the traditionalist point of view", which minimises the importance of the phenomenon in the long term, proposing that the move towards homogeneity will naturally be hindered by people's enduring need to preserve traditional distinctiveness (2006). Thirdly, the transformationalist point of view emphasises unceasing cross-cultural influence happening in a myriad of directions and in diverse ways – an understanding that is persuasively upheld by many academics including, for example, Held (2004), who demonstrates that even in those cases where a strongly dominant culture influences wide-reaching changes upon a submissive and accepting culture, the latter also tends to evince significant changes in the former. Baltzis (2005) also promotes this reading. In a section pithily entitled "Asymmetries and paradoxes" (2005, p. 145), he alludes to Bourdieu's influential theory of the "inequality of cultural capital", according to which different cultures cannot easily be compared, neither in qualitative nor quantitative terms, and accordingly they do not receive the same response by the global public; hence, the democratisation of musical life has tended to reinforce cultural distinctions. Baltzis convincingly argues that new technologies and the consequent extension of communications may well actually be enhancing these asymmetries, supporting his argument using Kotzias' "theories on globalisation and asymmetries of reality", and evoking the phenomena of transculturation, fragmentation and diversity. Rather than promoting cultural homogenisation, he suggests that globalisation tends to promote diversity (2005, pp. 143-144). Nederveen similarly concludes that, from a cultural point of view, the phenomenon of globalisation does not systematically result in homogenisation but rather hybridisation and glocalisation (1996, p. 1393; see also Baumann, 2000).

Major developments in communication technology and transport have obviously played a critical role in facilitating and encouraging globalising processes, enabling accelerated diffusion of people and media (see Held), and enabling diversified social interactions and networking processes. As Webster underlines (2005, p. 239), even though networking is not a new concept (the word first appearing in the early sixteenth century), it has come to be conceived of in far more expansive terms. Monaghan and Just agree that it is precisely this enhanced inter-personal and inter-community communication that characterises contemporary globalisation, forging strong new links across old boundaries:

"We [anthropologists] have tended to talk about cultures as if they were well bounded and well integrated even when we may have recognized otherwise. In the concluding decades of the twentieth century, however, new technologies have vastly accelerated both the speed and the volume of flow of people and information, across regional and international boundaries." (Monaghan & Just, 2000, p. 104).

As Baumann adds, the accelerated capabilities of media technologies are also notable for their "omnipresence", deeply affecting people's media consumptions across vast swathes of the globe (Baumann, 2000, p. 124).

However, as Baltzis warns, although this predicament allows a large number and wide variety of cultural expressions (including music) to traverse vast distances, the flow is by no means unmediated and unrestricted; on the contrary it engenders a "tendency towards greater concentration and control of... creation". So while some local cultures are afforded new opportunities to reach remote recipients, others undergo a process of "disintegration" (2005). Complex patterns of inter-cultural hegemony and enculturation are at work, with the globalising pressures of cultural imperialism causing certain forms of cultural expression to be favoured over others. In recent times, of course, North American mainstream culture has exerted a particularly strong and wide-reaching influence.

### **3.2.2. Cultural imperialism and the "clash of cultures"**

Hayden's study (2006) demonstrates how, in the last few decades, American culture has come to dominate pre-existing cultures in many parts of the world through processes of cultural imperialism. Crucially, he shows how cultural assimilation can lead to either deep or superficial modifications – but in both cases distinctive cultural traits from multiple sources come to co-exist within the same territory, some based on older local tradition and others based on the assimilated American culture.

Many commentators have discussed the inordinate power exerted by particular dominant civilisational spheres, as illustrated by the phenomenon of "MacDonaldisation" (drawing from the ethnographical work of Talbott 1995 on fast food) (see, for example, Nederveen, 1996, p. 1391; Amselle, 1998; and Ritzer, 2004). Applied in the context of musical heritage, this phenomenon relates to processes of deterritorialisation of culture, due to the expansion of communication media on a

global scale. Nonetheless, as neoliberalist and Marxist ideologies argue, the movement toward the hegemony of a dominant culture typically leads to the commodification of mediated forms of culture in the late modern world (see, for example, Kaul 2007; see also Chapter 4.3).

Following Nederveen (1996) and Avgerou (2002, pp. 112-113), Hayden similarly raises a commonly evoked expression to describe the encounter between cultures – specifically that of a “clash of cultures”, derived from Huntington's theory of a “clash of civilisations”. In this “clash”, as mentioned earlier, cultures may either express “defensive identity”, this being the development or revival of previous identities in opposition to a new and imposed one. Or, alternatively, they may assimilate and adapt cultural traits in a variety of ways – and, as Nederveen points out, in many cases the clash may be regarded as a distinctly “creative clash”. After all, for many people, the maintenance and celebration of distinctiveness is highly valued, since perceived cultural differences are what distinguish one group from another.

Academics have identified a variety of ways that cultural imperialism impacts upon local cultures. Some, such as Ritzer (2004), suggest that cultural imperialism, in the longer term, more than contributing cultural particularities, tends to deny the existence of pre-existing traditional cultures, resulting in their disappearance. As Amselle points out:

"Some unities have disappeared, not because their members or descendants no longer exist, but because they did not capture the imagination of the social actor." (Amselle, 1998, p. 31)

Amselle goes on to clarify that the encounter may instead serve to marginalise a culture or enhance its prominence on the global stage. Indeed, he identifies a clear dichotomy between cultures that have "triumphed and flowered into nationalisms" and cultures "that have been conquered and relegated to the rank of ethnic groups or cultural minorities" (Amselle, 1998, p. 31). And, for cultures that “triumph”, one of the rewards is to be able to advance one’s own particular hierarchical vision of the overall cultural configuration:

“The definition of a given culture is, in fact, the result of a relation of intercultural forces: the culture that dominates spatially maintains the ability to assign other cultures that have the power to name other cultures to their respective places within the system, thereby making them subordinate of determined cultures.” (Amselle, 1998, p. 33).

Another very common response that occurs when local culture comes into dialogue with globalising imperialism is the oft-discussed phenomenon of glocalisation – wherein universalising tendencies come to be juxtaposed with particularising tendencies within cultural thought and expression (see for example, Lull, 2000, p. 251 and Avgerou, 2002, p. 114). It is even possible to claim that glocalisation is

actually the norm since, as Shuker rightfully points out, "the local and the global cannot be considered binary categories, but exist in a complex interrelationship" (2001, p. 72). Honor Fagan (2001, pp. 117-119) examines this phenomenon in her case study of Irish identity in the globalisation era, linking it to MacDonaldisation and the redefinition of tradition and succinctly concluding that "globalisation opens up a new era of more fluid and uncertain construction of identity" (2001, p. 119). Significantly, glocalisation has also been explored in reference to the English folk music scene, Winter and Keegan-Phipps identifying it as a key process underlying the creation of the band the Imagined Village, and greatly impacting their compositions and interpretations (2013, p. 151).

In short, as Korobov concludes in his "model of a global culture", the complex assimilation and adaptation of cultural traits that takes place on macro- and micro-levels in multiple directions renders the task of ascertaining cultural boundaries and even defining culture very problematic. The difficulty is exacerbated by what Naisbitt calls the "global paradox": as the world economy grows, its smallest players become increasingly powerful, meaning that an increasingly vast number of people are performing instrumental roles in diversifying cultural expression (Korobov, 2006, p. 45; see also, for example, Nustad, 2003, p. 122). This is illustrated in practice through the cross-cultural exchanges and eclectic hybridisations that happen in all levels of the folk music community – ranging from the prominent professional to the relatively inconspicuous amateur.

### **3.2.3. Globalising musical expression**

As Lull clarifies, a degree of musical adaptation is common whenever there are attempts at musical exchange between cultures, with these adaptations often being hybridising in nature: seeking to meet the tastes of the proposed audience, the musicians maintain certain fundamental style-defining characteristics while introducing other elements gleaned from beyond, with the commercial viability of the configuration obviously tending to be a crucial consideration (Lull, 2000, p. 252). In this way, "world music" typically involves the adaptation of local traditional music towards meeting the Western-influenced preferences of a more global public – the term "world music" itself indicating a clear desire to reach a wide audience, since the global paradigm has frequently been used to promote and mediatise other conspicuous products, phenomena and ideas. Gathering together diverse musics under the same name with global resonance is seen as an opportunity for traditional and folk music to find a wider diffusion in the global media system. (See notably Feld, 2000; see also Chapter 4.3.2 for more discussion about the significance of "world music").

This opening up of local traditions and folk music to foreign populations is not without consequences regarding the function and the perception of the music concerned. Effectively, in his study of ethnomusicology, Nettl (2005, p. 260) points out the fundamental difference between "insider's and

outsider's perspectives" on traditional and folk music. For anyone who is experiencing any form of music, their personal origins and places of association are crucial to their particular approach and interpretation (and Nettl stresses that this observation extends to academics' responses also). In the context of globalisation and the mass mediatisation of cultures, and the greater availability of "foreign" or "exotic" cultures to different populations around the world, this essential distinction between insider and outsider is highly significant. Furthermore, it has major consequences on the treatment of traditional music by the "home" population as well as by the media. Although it could be argued that there are different degrees of "insider-ness" and "outsider-ness", Nettl does not acknowledge this in his understanding. Furthermore, identities are more complex than belonging to one single group, and the prevalence of plural identities render the study of insiders' and outsiders' points of view particularly complex. Perhaps one could postulate that, between each extreme of "outsider-ness" and "insider-ness", lies an entire spectrum of belonging.

### **3.3. Tradition and hybridity in globalising contexts**

#### **3.3.1. Traditions in evolving contexts**

Before attempting to assess musicians' perspectives on their traditions and the relation between tradition and contemporary folk music, it is necessary to understand the differing definitions of the word "tradition" and what it encompasses. As pointed out by Hield, "the concept of tradition frequently features in cultural studies and the term has developed a complex a system of meanings" (2010, p. 59). In the field of ethnomusicology, as in other branches of cultural and sociological study, the concept of tradition is often analysed and discussed in relation to identity and multiple identities, with many reflections founded on the idea that it is based upon the social aspects of cultural practices. In this way, McDonald's definition of tradition stresses the "shared" aspect of tradition, and the "emotional power in the relationship-network of those involved" (1996, p. 116).

The word "traditional" denotes the transmission of a complex of knowledge, skills and expressive practices through subsequent generations, and as such is often associated with conditions of fixity. Accordingly, traditional music centres upon canonic or semi-canonic repertoires made up of "standard" pieces, exemplifying "standard" structures and "standard" patterns. People working within a tradition are generally expected not to stray far from these standards in their own creativity, working within clearly defined and well-recognised parameters and using specific musical material and music-making techniques, although this is not to say that improvisation may not be an integral part of the music making. Nevertheless, research shows that a degree of changeability within tradition is often recognised and permitted by musicians, particularly in present-day cultures, where people are increasingly aware that, historically too, musical traditions have undergone substantial changes and adaptations in response to broader socio-political circumstances (see, for example,

Nettl, 2005, pp.272-290). Recognizing the constancy of transformation is essential when attempting to understand the views of musicians regarding the musical practices that they find intolerable, acceptable, desirable or necessary for the successful continuation of their tradition.

Academics have also discussed the adaptation of traditional musical repertoires and practices as being a key means of ensuring survival in the face of changing contexts, reflecting sentiments that are commonly expressed by musicians – for example by Anthony Robb, who told me: "I don't think the tradition will disappear. I think it will change a lot". For example, Woods builds upon arguments from earlier folk music commentators including Broadwood and Vaughan Williams to develop an understanding of this constant adaptation as "self-renewal" of the repertoire (Woods, 1979, p. 101). He notably points out that "folk music has survived many vicissitudes - not least the Industrial Revolution - and it possesses an inner strength and a capacity for self renewal (indeed, instant and constant self-renewal)" (Woods, 1979, p. 101). Furthermore, Young explains another aspect of the self-preservation mechanism attached to folk music: "interest in folk music and other buried aspects of national culture tends to be reawakened at moments when there's a perceived danger of things being lost for ever" (Young, 2010, pp. 6-7). Like many in the folk community, academics like Woods and Young therefore regard traditional repertoire as a changing and adaptable resource – a position that is perhaps to be expected because the music scene, transmission and contents have always been undergoing substantial evolution and adaptation in accordance with the changing paradigm of the English socio-cultural environment. Thus, the perception of "more than a century of music [as] a continuum" is shared by many artists and academics alike. (Young, 2010, p. 7). Accordingly, Jim Moray describes his view of traditional music:

"Traditional music is music that is of a process, and the process is that it is passed onto many hands. I think songs [...] become traditional as their edges [...] smoothed off them, by passing through... I'm not sure you can quantify how far it needs to get to the original, how many people it's passed through, but I think tradition is assimilated music by many people."<sup>15</sup>

Jim goes on to stress that the evolution of tradition is absolutely essential, simply because each musician feels, almost inevitably, a need to re-interpret the old material in a way that fits with his or her present reality; thus, Jim states that he plays music "based traditional British folk music, but what I do with it is what I consider to be the most traditional thing you can do which is to put yourself into it."<sup>16</sup> In this way, talking about "rewriting" and "editing" song in a "sympathetic restoration" he expresses not only the constant changes in the British folk music repertoire, but also the adaptation

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<sup>15</sup> P. C. (Jim Moray, August 2012)

<sup>16</sup> P.C. (Jim Moray, 26 August 2012)

and the contemporisation of that same repertoire to the youngest generations or performers and audience. Jim goes on further to strongly oppose this idea of what he calls "the village green preservation society" that the revival in the 1950s and 1960s seemed to have turned into.<sup>17</sup> This predicament has led Mackinnon to conclude, insightfully:

"The British folk scene certainly exudes an odd contradiction. On the one hand it exists as a reaction to a dominant culture based on parody and nostalgia which has torn culture from the vernacular, from its function of embedding the identity of people into their socio-historical context. On the other hand, it has become part of that culture."  
(Mackinnon, 1994, p. 69)

Atkinson is another academic who skilfully sheds light on the issue of change within tradition, noting:

"'Tradition' is actually continually altering to suit changes in circumstances and new ideological requirements [...] tradition, therefore, expresses a relationship between the past and the present which is both continuous and discontinuous, or both real and imaginary [...] And however much such canon is selected, constructed or re-created in the present, it is *perceived* as reaching from the present, more or less continuously back in to the past." (Atkinson, 2004, pp. 147-148)

Accordingly, even musical products that involve quite radical departures away from traditional models, involving extensive cross-genre and cross-cultural hybridism, can eventually come to be broadly respected and accepted by culture members. Woods notably provides the example of Shirley Collins and Davey Graham's album *Folk Roots, New Routes* (1964):

"Not everybody appreciated this record for what it was, or the pointers it gave, for what it was probably a decade ahead of its time in its subtle blending of traditional English song with such foreign elements as Indian music, Blues and Jazz. If this record is respected now, it is largely a matter of hindsight, and even now its message has not yet been investigated fully." (Woods, 1979, p. 97)

This example points towards the boundaries of change acceptability as well as their relativity and their changeability according to fashion or simply time. Indeed, through time, composers and musicians have always challenged the boundaries of musical genres, from Bartok including Eastern European traditional music influences in his compositions following the classical forms, to the creation of the concept of world music in the late twentieth century, promoting traditional music beyond the boundaries of national traditional culture, encouraging cultural exchanges amongst different musical genres.

At the same time, it should be recognised that there are always boundaries of acceptability regarding how far one may deviate from norms within the realms of traditional music-making. This is simply

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<sup>17</sup> P.C. (Jim Moray, 26 August 2012)

because tradition always serves an anchoring purpose, linking current life to past life in the face of dramatic socio-cultural change. Blake clarifies in reference to British folk music tradition:

“[T]he invention and reinvention of tradition have been constant companion of the urge within nineteenth- and twentieth-century states to modernise: to industrialise, to electrify, to build and rebuild. [...] it is by no means, therefore, a paradox that post-industrial Britain is also Heritage Britain, a land of castles and cathedrals, country houses and agricultural theme parks, of art exhibitions and of the music festivals. Music is often claimed to be among the most important of the national treasures; it is very much part of the solidities of Heritage Britain. And yet music, above all else, melts into the air.” (Blake, 1996, p. 208).

Stokes (1997) also pinpoints the anchoring and identity-defining qualities of tradition within his discussion about the relationship between Identity and music, specifically analysing the role, place and definition of “traditional music” in Nation-States, following the model defined by Anderson. Yet, because history is constantly in a state of being revised and cultural expression specifically serves to articulate current relationships to the past, tradition is also liable to register hybridism, post-colonial trends, migrations and the mixing of populations. Questions such as the following remain a constant source of debate within both musical and academic communities: Who defines and chooses what constitutes “traditional music”? What role should archiving, study and theorisation have in the transformation of music making? And how should traditional musicians respond to the general trends of cultural hybridity that accompany migrations and the mixing of populations?

### **3.3.2. Linguistic approaches to understanding eclecticism**

Another way in which theorists have approached rationalising the differences and boundaries of traditional musical genres is through allusion to the differences and similarities between languages (see, for example, Williams, 1986, p. 87; Nettl, 2005, p. 52; and Monaghan and Just, 2000, p. 43). Similarly, Amselle uses linguistic observations to explain culture, specifically clarifying that cultures, like languages (and also like music), are rendered comprehensible through the shared application of a complex set of structuring principles: “a language [similarly to a culture] is articulated and each language has a grammar, that is to say a set of rules, written or unwritten, appropriated by a subject and thereby making that subject a 'locutor'” (Amselle, 1998, p. 32). As Amselle points out, another vitally important shared characteristic is the overriding objective to stimulate emotional response: they are “symbolic schema[e] that can be recognized and can trigger feelings of emotion in a subject” (Amselle, 1998, p. 32).

The heterogeneity, or eclecticism, existing within musical traditions has prompted some ethnomusicologists to draw comparisons with linguistic patterns, and in particular with the way that languages are realised through a proliferation of co-existing dialects, and beyond that by idiolects;

every musician's realisation is the consequence of a highly individualised set of influences, on one level drawing from the immediate musical community, and on another, drawing from interactions with particular tradition-members that are entirely peculiar to his or her own life. In this way, Brailoiu underlines that "the regional 'dialects', particularly when they follow others, more ancient, are temporary and mark an epoch of social history" (Brailoiu, 1984, p. 56).

In addition, both language and music are widely recognised as being particularly powerful means for self and group expression and major components in the definition of identity. Slobin (1993, pp. 85-86) in particular chooses to take a linguistic approach of music in the case of "Euro-American" folk music, and leads the comparison to sophisticated musical characteristics, referred as "codes" differentiating the types of music from each other as "dialects", "levels" and "registers" do in the use of languages. According to him, this parallel would offer an approach taking into account the high sensitivity of people and the fine distinction they see in the style of their music. Nonetheless, using linguistic characteristics to geographically limit a cultural area and a musical style seems relatively more specific to the Celtic case. Moreover, he also underlines the variation of musical context in a diasporic case, as Irish music notably in North America, can result in, and the complexity and subtlety in the approach of the links to what can be called "Homeland" (Slobin, 1993, pp. 65-66).

### **3.3.3. Hybridisation: theoretical approaches and terminologies**

In order to understand the socio-cultural (including musical) changes taking place within the folk music community (discussed further in Chapter 6), it is essential to explore thoroughly the main theories developed around the consequences of globalisation, most notably hybridisation. The closely related interlocking terms hybridity, hybridism and hybridisation are derived from terminologies used in biology and agriculture and respectively refer to a state of being from a mixed background, and the process leading to this mix.

Nettl has presented a helpful typology of hybridisation, covering related terms such as "syncretic" and "syncretisation", "creolisation", "metissage" and "cross-over" and, crucially, differentiating between the mixing of surface and deep-seated cultural elements (2005, p. 345; see also Nederveen 1996). These terms have subtly different nuance but are all commonly used to denote transformational musical trends featuring the conspicuous mixing of elements from different sources (2005, p. 335; see also 2005, p. 440). The processes of hybridisation presuppose complex identities and ultimately derive from new opportunities to access diverse traditions, the development of new technologies, demographical movements and cross-borders musical initiatives. It generally coincides with the modification of perceptions, particularly regarding understandings of authenticity and origins, and the expansion of perspectives and stylistic palettes.

Another oft-used term that is particularly closely related to “syncretism” is “fusion” and, significantly, Nettl employs the latter in his definition of the former: “a fusion of elements from diverse cultural sources” (2005, p. 440). Sweers, notably looking at the development of English folk music during the second revival, chooses to use the term “fusion” to describe experimentations between folk and other musical genres (2005, pp. 240-266).

A number of major ethnomusicological studies have been published exploring the processes of hybridisation in a comparative manner. Kartomi and Blum (1994), for example, have identified contrasting cases of musical hybridisation, focusing particularly upon historical case studies of traditional musics from around the world. In the *Continuum Encyclopaedia of Popular Music of the World: Media, Industry and Society*, Erlmann (2003) offers a theoretical analysis of the phenomenon of hybridism in music and its direct link to globalisation, applying a diachronic perspective to the re-examination of diverse examples from the work of other ethnomusicologists. He concludes by persuasively arguing that, although the terms “hybridism”, “hybridisation” and “syncretism” are widely used in academia, the term “diversification” more accurately reflects the transformational trends at work within traditional music circles.

Slobin also analyses the phenomenon of hybridisation in culture, which he calls “interculture” (1993, p. 61). In his chapter specifically titled “Interpolating the intercultural”, he identifies three different types of intercultural. The first is “industrial intercultural”, mainly linked to industrialisation of the music, the apparition of “large-scale superculture”, markets and new promotion techniques (1993, p. 64). In Slobin’s analysis, the second type of intercultural is “diasporic intercultural”, which develops across borders in relation to a “mother country” (ibid.). He specifically quotes Anderson (1983) to explain the importance of the imaginary and symbolic around this “mother country” notion and gives examples from Jewish, Indian, Chinese, and other Diasporas. The issue with immigrants keeping and promoting their “home culture” abroad also falls into this category of intercultural, as Slobin defines it as “diasporic networking” (1993, p. 65). Finally, he identifies the “affinity intercultural” linked to active choices from performers and audiences appreciating various influences (1993, p. 68). This process is notably promoted through festivals and the diffusion of recordings.

In addition to studies exploring cross-cultural hybridism spanning large geographical areas, there have also been studies that consider more localised assimilations – one example being Richards’ “British Islands: An Obsession of British Composers” (2004), which addresses the sphere of classical music composition.

## 3.4. The inherent mutability of traditional music: eclectic influences and personal choices

### 3.4.1. Travels, compatibility and resulting eclecticisms

Working on a case study of music in Liverpool, Cohen (2011) examines how the city's musical culture has been shaped by a varied range of musical assimilations from beyond its geographical borders, succinctly describing how musical migrations have occurred. Her observations can clearly be extrapolated globally:

“[M]usical migration is a social, cultural and highly mediated process that can also be described in terms of movements and memory. Migrants take musical influence, instruments and traditions with them as they travel from one place to another; and, independent of this, music is disseminated through music and media industries and technologies. Cities have been centrally positioned along these migratory routes as nodal points within global networks of trade, industry, transportation, and communication technologies [...]” (Cohen S. , 2011, p. 246)

It has long been recognised that understanding patterns of migration is key to understanding the origins of musical stylistic features and of pieces within repertoires and is also essential for explaining the presence of shared elements across disparate regions. Hence, there is a large body of literature investigating the impacts of demographic movements on cultural heritage, stemming from early studies such as "How Folk-Songs travelled" (Barbeau, 1934), which considers how French-Canadian songs have crossed the Atlantic Ocean since the first exchanges between the countries.

As Nettl points out (1973, p. 13), prior to massive demographic movements of the kind associated with modern globalising trends, the scope for the genesis of new musical forms and the transformation of existing forms within local communities must have been profoundly limited. History has demonstrated that it is mass movements of populations that evince the most rapid and profound musical changes, with singular “hybrid” cultures tending to emerge whenever populations of differing origin and culture come to co-exist and intermingle – as in the case of Caribbean cultures for example (see, for example, Nettl, 2005, p. 128).

To illustrate how population migration can stimulate extensive hybridism within musical culture, the example of the idealised Northern American melting pot has often been used in ethnomusicological studies. Finson for example describes how successive waves of migration from different places of origin have added new influences to contemporary Northern American folk music, demonstrable through comparative study of lyrics and melody (1994, p. 313). Nederveen (1996, p. 1393) uses the same Northern American example, notably opposing it to the recent movement of “cultural differentialism of racial and nationalist doctrines”. He explains that the new desire of musicians to

have more various and wider influences in their music has revived debates on the will of populations to preserve the authenticity of their culture from fusion with other types of traditional music, in particular their seeking to maintain regional characteristics within the context of a national culture (ibid.). In other words, according to Nederveen, these changes in traditional and folk music are not only shaped by socio-political paradigms, but also have significant impact on the social evolution of society, notably due to the cross-borders characteristic of the music. In effect, this cross-borders characteristic has also played a major role in individual musicians' experience, career and legacy. These same inter-related factors – mass population movement combined with openness to cross-cultural exchange – obviously lie at the heart of hybridising transformations within other genres also, for example within American popular song (see Nettl, 2005, p. 53).

As Nettl goes on to point out, this same condition of openness also lies at the heart of cross-genre hybridism within localities – for example, with folk music being drawn from by classical composers, as in the case of Brahms' Hungarian Dances and Portnoff's Russian Fantasias from the nineteenth century (Arguably, the reverse influence of contemporary music on folk and traditional music is generally less easy to identify). Kaul explores another type of cross-genre hybridisation, whereby Irish traditional music was mixed with the newly popularised Jazz in the 1920s and 1930s (2009, p. 38). He states "the way this music was played and performed differed radically from the music played at ceili or a country house, even though the tunes themselves might have been the same" (p.38). Here, Kaul specifically underlines that in traditional music, differences, changes and evolutions do not only take place with the composition of new tunes and the creation of new types of tunes, but can also be led by changes in lifestyle, habit and musical purpose as well as the introduction of new influences. In a similar way, McKerrell explores the folk music scene in Scotland, specifically looking at particularly representative bands, such as Capercaillie and Ossian, which have adapted their music to the European market (McKerrell, 2011, p. 6). Focusing on the two decades between 1970 and 1990, he highlights instances of both cross-genre and cross-cultural hybridisation within the folk music repertoire, evinced in instrumentation and musical features and, crucially, encouraged by commercial motives (see Chapter 4.4).

It is when musicians, either individually or collectively, choose to adopt and adapt musical elements from beyond their own culture – rhythms, melodies, ornaments, playing techniques, types of musical interaction, and instruments – that new forms of cross-cultural hybrid are generated. Cross-cultural borrowing is not only a means for setting up new networks of association but is also an effective method for generating "fresh" original material that transcends more localised traditional styles of expression. As Nettl points out, hybridisation (of both the cross-genre and cross-cultural kinds) is always greatly aided and encouraged when the differently sourced musics share substantial points of

musical similarity (2005, p. 441). Although traditions may be separated by major geographical distances, linking elements can be facilitators of comfortable hybridisation despite the existence of other points of difference. For example, the compatibility of structures and chords between folk music from Canada and the United Kingdom, or even Scandinavia, is a particular incentive for a musician to attempt exploring cross-border exchanges. Accordingly, Ian Stephenson, an English professional multi-instrumentalist, specifically underlines the similarities between New England and Northern England folk music which encourage further cross-cultural borrowing.<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, another English musician, Steve Knightley (from the folk duo *Show of Hands*), acknowledges that, despite the already apparent similarities, an urge remains to adapt the borrowed materials further in line with one's already existing musical identity; thus, he told his audience how he "sometimes [borrows music] from other artists, from Canada or America [...] then you 'anglicise' the song."<sup>19</sup> McKerrell documents this same adaptive urge in the instance of Scottish folk musicians, notably for pipes bands adapting to a European audience (2011, p. 4).

Writing in the 1970s, Woods discusses the phenomenon of broadening hybridisation in folk circles – Erlmann's "diversification" – by looking at several artists including Steeleye Span and Fairport Convention, "one of the most inventive of the early electric bands" (1979, p. 97). Indeed, according to him, they "expanded their act away from purely musical, incorporating dances, mumming plays and even back-projected film in the act. [...] They also began to take liberties with traditional texts." (Woods, 1979, p. 98) As mentioned earlier, within folk music circles, such hybrid creations tend to promote disagreement regarding whether or not they belong in the "traditional" or "folk" musical categories, or neither. Furthermore, this creation of fresh, traditional and/or folk materials tends to result rather from an accumulation of influences emerging from musicians' experiences, rather than pre-calculated and planned inter-cultural crossovers. Accordingly, Ian Carr expresses his approach to the music which he performs and he composes as "traditional inspired [...] distilling the beauty of the music from England, Ireland, Wales, Sweden [...] without distinctions"<sup>20</sup>. His music may have "traditional sound or texture", but he emphasises that these characteristics of his music appear as a natural result, after the composition or the interpretation, rather than being considered and pre-thought.

Comparing cultures and analysing cultural exchanges, or "transculturalism", Amselle importantly underlines the preceding subjectivity of boundaries between different cultures which might potentially interact. In his words, "it is not, therefore, the existence of different cultures that leads to

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<sup>18</sup> P. C. (Ian Stephenson, August 2011)

<sup>19</sup> P. C. (Steve Knightley, August 2012)

<sup>20</sup> P. C. (Ian Carr, August 2012)

comparativism, but comparativism that constitutes different cultures as such. [...] The boundaries of each culture are in fact fixed by an outside party playing the role of observer and thus depend on the point of view employed" (Amselle, 1998, pp. 29-30). Nonetheless, referring to Anderson's *Imagined communities* (1983), he moderates this view expressing that "the delineation of different cultures [...] is not absolutely arbitrary (Amselle, 1998, p. 30).

### 3.4.2. Modern instrumentations and electrification

When I asked Paul Archer which instruments could be labelled "traditional", he poignantly answered: "Anything is classed as traditional now". While exaggerating for effect, Paul is nonetheless pointing towards a general tendency for folk musicians to accept processes of modernisation and knowingly choose to integrate modern instrumentations in their interpretations of traditional music. Rosie Doonan is just one of many British folk musicians who have integrated non-traditional musical instruments into their new compositions and arrangements, in her case including instruments such as ukulele (originally from Hawaii) and cello (usually seen in classical music) alongside the traditional fiddles, mandolins and guitars. Jessica Lamb and James Taylor, members of Folkestra, similarly cite the use of the cello in folk music, which, according to Jessica, "isn't exactly a traditional instrument, but it's become a lot more popular". They also bring up flutes, harps, saxophones, tubas, a scratch DJ and break dancers. Jessica Lamb added: "... and we still play folk music, but we make it more contemporary, and use contemporary instruments [...] so not exactly the most traditional, folk things in the world."<sup>21</sup> In this way, changes in instrumentation also play a significant role in the modernising of traditional forms and the "blurring of musical boundaries" (Burns, 2007, p. 198).

Significantly, when asked about instrumentation categorisation, many of my interviewees expressed uncertainty regarding particular instruments and whether they could legitimately be included within the category of "traditional instruments", having been commonly integrated only in the last few decades. Claire Mann provides the example of the Irish tin whistle, emphasising that it is actually "a very modern instrument, [which] has been around in the last twenty years" in folk music.<sup>22</sup> Another example is the Bouzouki, about which Ged Lawson explains: "People talk about the 'Irish bouzouki' even though the bouzouki is obviously a Greek instrument."<sup>23</sup> Indeed, every musician who mentioned this particular instrument referred to this intriguing paradox: despite its Greek origins, it is now on fringes of being a "traditional instrument" simply on account of its increasingly long-term prevalent usage. On the other hand, there are a number of instruments that were once employed fairly commonly in certain fields of folk music making but which have now fallen out of fashion, one

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<sup>21</sup> P. C. (Jessica Lamb and James Taylor, May 2012)

<sup>22</sup> P. C. (Claire Mann, August 2011)

<sup>23</sup> P. C. (Ged Lawson, 29 April 2012)

example being the synthesiser, which featured considerably in folk music recordings of the 1990s. This particular example underlines how the use of modern instruments, to a certain extent, follows fashions and styles borrowed from contemporary popular music.

Related to the issue of instrumentation is the issue of electrification. During the second revival, Woods questions whether experimentation with instrumentation, electrification and interpretation could be justified by the prospect of opening the folk music scene to wider audiences. He suggests: "The question remains: does electrification of folk song have any valid justification, and is it more than merely temporary gimmick?" (Woods, 1979, p. 101) The related processes of electrification and modernisation naturally have a dramatic effect upon the way folk music is perceived both by insiders and outsiders – with some considering that the new creations do not even constitute "folk music" at all. In his book *Electric Eden*, Young analyses in great detail the implications of the electrification of the folk music scene up to the early 2000s, demonstrating how divisive an issue electrification has been (Young, 2010).

The issues of electrification and diversified instrumentation are closely tied to cross-genre hybridisation with popular music – what Sweers terms "folk fusion" (2005, pp. 146-149) – and, indeed, the mixing of attributes (including instrumentation) from traditional and rock-music continue to be evident in the succession of folk musicians and bands that have found success both within and beyond the boundaries of the folk music scene (see Sweers, 2005, Figure 5.1, p. 149), the latter including popular favourites such as Seth Lakeman, or more recently Mumford and Sons. Burns extensively documents and analyses the instrumental addition of the drum-kit in contemporary folk-rock. Quoting from interviews with Martin Carthy, members of the Fairport Convention and Eliza Carthy, he suggests that, ultimately, the addition of the drum-kit "provided an extra dimension to the performance of folk music and did nothing more than accompany it", ensuring therefore that the music remained within the boundaries of the folk musical genre (Burns, 2007, p. 201).

The prevalence of experimental hybridisation renders the accurate classification and categorisation of stylistic elements of preeminent importance amongst musicians, for whom recognising musical identities, their markers and their boundaries, is key to successful communication (- ideas developed further in Chapter 4). By recognizing which particular musical elements are associated with which particular genres, locales, ideas and identities within their audiences' perceptions, musicians are able both to trigger off the desired responses and also to mould those associations and perceptions.

### **3.5. Retrospectives on globalising forces: Questioning authenticity**

Ethnomusicological studies have explored not only the progressive ways in which some traditional musicians introduce new elements into musical practice, commonly through hybridism, but also the

backward looking recreations that characterise revivals. The academic discussion and debate on "authenticity" in tradition has been extensive in the second half of the twentieth century, and represents one of the central themes in ethnomusicology. The notion of "authenticity" is also a major concern within many traditional music making circles, particularly where a nostalgia for earlier cultural expression is common (See, for example, Gelbart, 2007, pp. 271-273 on the perception of authenticity during the second folk revival).

The term "authenticity" can be used to refer either to an authentic way of life (for example, meeting all the stereotyped criteria to be conceived of as "a folkly") or to old repertoires, ways of performing and performance contexts – or, of course, the term may be used to refer to both at the same time. "Authenticity" remains a controversial concept, and many folk musicians (like academics) appear to use it only with great caution and ample qualification. In his article "style and authenticity", Paul Dromey tries to define the limits of tradition, specifically underlining "the limits to the amount of change acceptable as 'traditional'" (1999, p. 387); here, he persuasively argues that traditional music is based on "standard" tunes, "standard" forms and "standard" approaches to interpretation and, ultimately, one must be heard to remain in the limits of these standards to be perceived as, in any way, "authentic".

Recognising that traditions are liable to undergo evolutions throughout their histories presents an apparent paradox, since being "old" and "authentic" is generally taken to be a key defining criterion for the application of the label "traditional". As mentioned earlier, according to Anderson (1983), most musical traditions, and in particular those of Western Europe, originated from the creation of Nation-States. They were defined by, and took their prestige from, their old origins, transmitted amongst a population from generation to generation – "a series of interconnected stylistic lineages, traceable to different locales and master players within those locales" (1999, p. 387). However, as Vansina (1985) demonstrates in his study of chains of testimony in the oral transmission of culture, transformations in knowledge and expression are liable to occur in successive stages of the process, despite efforts to limit the extents of change and facilitate memorisation through use of predictable and stable melodic, rhythmic and structural frameworks and processes of repetition to ensure internalisation (Vansina, 1985, pp. 46-47; see also Chapter 6.1.1.). Inevitably, information is successively lost, revised or replaced in line with diverse factors including: broader socio-cultural change (including migration and the import of new ideas and culture); change evinced from within the culture (referred to as "cultural variability" by Merriam, 1964); individualism and factionalism (and the consequent co-existence of multiple variants); personal fallability; and natural filtering process, whereby musicians remember significant patterns and forget insignificant ones. Meanwhile, all culture members participate in a constant reappraisal of what elements define the tradition and

what pieces, patterns, techniques, texts, instruments, and performers are accepted as “traditional”; certain elements may be considered as enduring reference points at the heart of the tradition, others may be viewed as peripheral – perhaps on account of their conspicuous hybridity and/or newness, and others may be rejected. Accordingly, it generally becomes very difficult to establish, in the present day, where a particular piece originated, how it historically developed, which family of tunes it belongs to, who played it formerly, and whether it was previously significant within the culture; in short, it becomes very difficult to ascribe “authenticity” without entering into contention. At times, even identifying agreed-upon titles for specific tunes can be a source of confusion and disagreement.

In his book *Folk and traditional music of the Western continents*, Nettl underlines that, in fact, the pursuit of authenticity tends to be a concern only for traditionalist theorists and performers, prone to identify, preserve, and promote older versions (1973, p. 10). For most, variability, change and evolution are inherent and desirable features of oral transmission. Amselle is particularly critical of the theories developed around this oral characteristic of tradition and the academic analysis of such phenomenon, in explaining that “just as evolutionist anthropology fabricated contemporary ancestors, it also ascribes tradition, that is to say orality, to certain societies in order to better deny their own historicity” (1998, p. 35). (See also McLucas (2010) offering a comparable analysis of the oral component or traditional music in the USA)

The impulse towards identifying and promoting authentic forms generally becomes stimulated when localised traditions are perceived to be being marginalised or negatively affected by the impact of mass cultures such as the Anglo-American mainstream. As Lieber and Weisberg underline, processes of globalisation are inevitably a motivation for musicians to strive for authenticity (2002, pp. 273-296; see also Rosenberg, 1993, p. 196). Throughout their histories, musical traditions tend to experience periodic episodes of intense revival, as more and more culture members “look back” to how “things used to be” and choose to revisit those days through musical experience, demonstrating a markedly nostalgic attitude characterised by idealisation and partial re-imagining (see, for example, Boyes, 1993). In the context of such revivalist periods, the search for authenticity commonly involves attempts to identify forms that not only predate the perceived historical corruption but also accurately reflect what is perceived as having been a “better” cultural climate, and then a wilful reconstruction of those forms. For example, this is what happened during the aforementioned “first folk revival” in England in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, when collectors and folk music enthusiasts such as Cecil Sharp suddenly began to seek out apparently old and disappearing repertoire and, at the same time, take on the role of establishing what exactly constitutes “authentic” tradition. As Rosenberg remarks: “the issue of authenticity usually does not arise until a revival begins [...] Revivalists become revisionist historians when they attempt to

establish standards of authenticity" (1993, p. 196). As Boyes points out, in her book *The Imagined village* (1993), in the context of the first folk revival in England, the collectors consequently attained high-status positions, as well-recognised and widely respected establishment figures serving as arbiters of culture and educators of society – positions that were never ascribed to non-collecting musicians.

In the present day, as Winter & Keegan-Phipps show, it is still the case that a great many contemporary English folk musicians consider their tradition as marginalised, explicitly identifying their local culture in opposition to the so called "Americanised" English culture and fondly "looking back" at earlier times when past masters and their arts thrived (Winter & Keegan-Phipps, 2013, pp. 137-139). Indeed, it is arguable that the predicament in England has been following the wider trend of polarisation, identified by Holton (2000, pp. 140-152), contrasting homogenised mainstream culture against traditional music making. However, as has already been shown in the preceding sections, it is certainly not the case that this sizeable majority is, therefore, unanimously committed to authenticity – looking for and then steadfastly sticking to what are presumed to be old repertoires and approaches to interpretation. Rather, as Hield suggests (2010, p. 59), drawing from Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), it appears that contemporary folk music making can be broadly divided into the opposing camps of 'revivals' and 'living traditions', with the latter actually dominating the overall scene. Indeed, most contemporary musicians are tempted away from the largely illusory objective of authenticity; rather than seek to reconstruct past musical expression, they are committed to making past heritage relevant and appealing to current identities through adaptation, embracing the aforementioned imbeddedness of transformability within tradition referred to by multiple academics (for example, Bayard, 2005, p. 65). Thus, in line with Holton's reading of current global trends (2000, pp. 140-152), they tend to place more emphasis on the growth of opportunities – granted through easy access to diverse new sources of inspiration – rather than the disappearance of local characteristics and resources (See also Feld, 1992, p. 287, questioning the notions of "endangered music" and "endangered culture", and Nettl, 2005, pp. 431-434, questioning the notion of "cultural "grey-out" – developed further in Chapter 6.1.1.).

### **3.6. Conclusions**

This chapter has explored the prevailing definitions and theories surrounding the central themes of culture, identity, tradition and globalisation – drawing from diverse academic studies and also a small selection of interviews with musicians to consider how these concepts are manifest in folk music culture.

This chapter has re-considered the original appearance of the “folk music” concept in the nineteenth century, when bodies of cultural knowledge were selected, collected, categorised, preserved and ascribed to specific locales. Coinciding with the rise of nationalisms, these bodies of cultural knowledge were then employed by authorities as an invaluable tool to help in the demarcation, characterisation, and unification of national identities and the concurrent generation of patriotic sentiment. The collected traditional cultural items took a central place in the mythologies developed by political powers. Despite the continued existence of local traditions, selected representative works were transcribed, adapted, gathered together, and disseminated as national cultural canons.

In recent years, the process of globalization has been placed at the centre of reflections on hybridity in cultural studies as being one of the main causes for the hybridization of cultures, with the accelerated media diffusion enabled by new technology singled out as an especially potent contributing factor. The notion of "cultural hybridity" underlines the difficulties associated with analyzing and defining “culture” according to regional areas, when the boundaries are fluid and the exchanges are intense. Nonetheless, in this complex context, Nettl remarks: "traditional music retains its identity, modified by compatible (and sometimes not so compatible) elements imported from Western musical culture." (Nettl B. , 1980, p. 7)

Recognizing the prevalence of these debates, a large number of ethnomusicologists have responded by embracing the study of the evolution of traditional music and have chosen to examine musical traditions by identifying the competing ideological strains that cohabit the same cultural sphere, in particular by singling out traditionalists and innovators, revealing their contrasting attitudes and practices, and exploring how they compete for cultural dominance. Typically, ethnography and musical analysis are used to elucidate the musicians’ understandings of what defines, and is indispensable, to their tradition, to shed light on their attitudes towards hybridisation, and to clarify how their musical values correspond with their personal identities and affinities.

Held (2004) summarises the process of globalisation and its impacts by specifically pointing out the increase of communication between different cultures. Thus, he explains that communication between cultures has always taken place, but new mediums of communication have recently allowed these exchanges to happen faster and on a wider scale. Taking the example of television, he demonstrates that the “flow of culture” does not stop at political or cultural borders anymore. Developing further this inter-nationalist point of view, the most important scales of cultures are national, and, to some extent, local (Held, 2004). Thus, as Nation is the main scope used for the analysis of populations and the most commonly used in the definition of personal identities, it is therefore the most influential in the processes of transformation and exchange between cultures.

Nonetheless, this concept of the "flow of culture" can be perceived as over-simplifying the processes of globalisation and their complex links to identities and cultures. El-Ojeili and Hayden (2006) offer relatively recent critical views on the different theories developed around the concept of globalisation, notably pointing out a general overuse of this word in different and sometimes inappropriate contexts.

The purpose of this chapter has been to provide a firm theoretical base on which to develop the subsequent enquiry into the practices of the contemporary folk scene in England; as will become evident, a large part of the fieldwork undertaken has focused on interrogating current musicians' points of view regarding these very concepts and processes.

## **4. Perceptions on music classification**

Contemporary musicians working within the folk music idiom tend to draw influences from a diverse range of musical styles, genres and subgenres, both for their own new compositions and for new arrangements of traditional repertoire. This chapter analyses how people classify the musical genres and styles that they work with and explores the issues raised from categorising contemporary traditional and folk music, notably in the context of global communication, international exchanges and the blurring of cultural boundaries.

Theoretical approaches to classification and categorisation within musical genres have been developed by music theorists, collectors, and more recently by commercial enterprises. However, it is apparent that the specific terminologies developed in order to affiliate music to wider musical genres in commercial contexts do not always correspond to the individual perceptions of folk artists and performers. This chapter explores this disjunct, considering how the musicians and other actors within the folk music scene conceive of the theoretical boundaries between musical genres, sub-genres and styles in relation to geographical areas, traditions, cultures, counter-cultures and identities. Indeed, an analysis of these conceptions is fundamental if one is to understand the dynamics at play within contemporary folk music creation, performance, and consumption.

### **4.1. Difficulties in classification and categorisation**

The endeavour to discriminate clear-cut categories of musical genre, style and repertoire is by no means new. Even before the existence of the category "folk music", there were a variety of category labels in common circulation although, as Gelbart points out, these were often used interchangeably: "the words 'popular', 'national', and 'traditional' had been used interchangeably and inconsistently in Anglophone writing to designate what we now call folk music" (2007, p. 260). Thereafter, texts such as Sharp and Broadwood's study of English music (Jun. 30, 1908) became core texts, solidifying particular readings of category designations in people's minds. Naturally, however, the process of category designation always holds a real risk of promoting oversimplification, generalisation or the

creation of fictitious boundaries – and this has been an enduring theme throughout twentieth and twenty-first century folk music history.

#### 4.1.1. Historical views on classification

Identifying the study of folklore as having begun in the late eighteenth century, Bauman stresses that, from the very outset, “genres and classification have been central preoccupations” (1992, pp. 53-54). This preoccupation is hardly surprising: there is a basic human need to organise and control the surrounding environment and, as Hanks puts it, categories serve as essential “orientating frameworks, interpretive procedures and sets of expectations” (cit. Bauman, 1992, p.56). Accordingly, Bauman argues that the work of oral tradition collectors could not have been done without the concurrent processes of genre differentiation and categorisation, for example, assigning songs according to their performance context. Citing the typological works of Thompson, Sydow and O Súilleabhain, he points out that the task of categorisation has always been complicated by the existence of multiple different criteria that could potentially be salient when trying to assign a designation (Bauman, 1992, p. 55). However, the task has evidently become even more complex since the 1960s following the emergence of new schools of folklore, notably influenced by structuralism and new perspectives on performance; these have forged three contrasting approaches to categorisation: systemic, ended and practice centred (Bauman, 1992, pp. 56-57).

It appears that folk musicians tend to foster a rather different approach to classification from academics. In particular, it seems that they are less desirous to forge and scrutinise categorical boundaries. Amongst the professional folk artists who I interviewed, there was also very little uniformity or agreement about the assignation of category terms to their own creativity. Although my questions tended to elicit a profusion of words (such as “folk”, “traditional”, “dance music”, or various geographical regions), the musicians would tend to qualify their answers by saying that they personally did not feel the need to add a label to their music, perhaps not surprisingly since they seek to traverse a range of repertoires, experiences and styles rather than restrict themselves to a single “box”. They would also regularly say that they left the task of categorisation up to “the others” – the listeners, promoters and academics. Typifying this approach, Peter Tickell and Shona Mooney explicitly pointed out that they would rather avoid the “compartmentalised” view of musical genres, and that they were more interested in “blurring the edges between them.”<sup>24</sup> Anthony Robb clarifies that, for him, even musics of very different geographical origins may be conceptually grouped together:

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<sup>24</sup> P. C. (Peter Tickell, August 2011)

"Tunes will come in from all around. In Northumberland, tunes come from Canada, Shetland, Ireland, England as well as loads from Northumberland, but they all get played in a musical dialect which is just as distinctive as the speech dialect of those people."<sup>25</sup>

The license to draw material from multiple sources – eclecticism – has long been highlighted as characteristic of the folk music scene. Thus, for example, writing in 1979, Woods points out:

"The folk scene is nothing if not eclectic, just as traditional music itself was - and even the most respected revivalist singer can beat into a Presley or Beatles song as an encore - not to mention those of John Denver, James Taylor or The Eagles." (1979, p. 87)

Clearly then, much the same "mestizo logic" detailed by Amselle (1998) is evidenced within the folk music context – a pro-hybridisation attitude in which identities are forged by drawing materials from diverse origins (including different parts of England, Ireland and Scotland). At the same time, as Anthony Robb's quote above illustrates, there is a salient shared marker of musical identity – specifically, "dialect", which in this context correlates directly with "style". Indeed, the concept of "style" remains a central concern in the identification and classification of folk music, and can be read on many levels, be they individual or specific to a community.

#### 4.1.2. The significance of style

For contemporary folk musicians, the importance of recognising, developing and communicating "style" is apparent. The following statement from a folk music teacher and performer clearly expresses this concern:

"It is not about the tunes, it is about how you play them. You can play any tunes traditionally or folkily."<sup>26</sup>

This same attitude is recognised by Atkinson, who emphasises stylistic features as being the key determinant of assignation: "it appears quite legitimate to describe and define 'folk' songs on generic grounds (largely on the basis of stylistic features of text and melody, and perhaps also aspects of performance context and styles)" (2004, p. 150). Or, as Anthony Robb expresses it: "if you use dots without the knowledge, you are not playing traditional. The whole thing in traditional music is in the style and what lies behind the notes."<sup>27</sup>

Of course, the term "style" is used in many different contexts, notably in creative arts and fashion. In the context of music, "style" is sometimes used as a synonym for "genre", referring to the widest category divisions of music, such as "classical", "popular", "jazz", "folk" or "world" (see also Leyshon, Matless and Revill, 1998, p. 5). Broad categories such as these remain important means of

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<sup>25</sup> P. C. (Anthony Robb, August 2012)

<sup>26</sup> P. C. (Anonymous contributor, May 2012)

<sup>27</sup> P. C. (Anthony Robb, August 2012)

understanding, organising, and differentiating between different socio-musical scenes and their creative products, as has been exemplified by Finnegan in her study of musical scenes in and around Milton Keynes (1989). Nevertheless, most denominations tend to have very unclear, blurred and porous boundaries, with composers and musicians regularly challenging norms (see Chapter 3.3).

The word "style" can also be used to describe sub-genres within broader musical genres and this becomes particularly evident when the overarching genre comprises distinct heterogeneity – as in the case of so-called “world music”. The creation of this category in 1987, primarily for marketing reasons, marked a new approach to categorising and promoting the world’s diverse musics on the local level, notably involving the conceptual grouping together of countless different forms of music, including traditional and classical music from non-western countries, and both religious and secular types of music (Stokes, 2004, p. 52; Broughton, Ellingham, & Lusk, 2009, p. vii). Generalist categories such as “African music” and “Celtic music” have always been employed to communicate essential information about musics to less knowledgeable audiences, thereby creating the wholly inaccurate idea of stylistic homogeneity (see Skinner Sawyers, 2001; and Mathieson, 2001). However, the category of “world music” has gone a step further, grouping together even those generalist categories. At the same time, of course, “world music” has developed another, parallel meaning, referring to a particular “style” of hybridisation, with recognisable traits (following the models of pioneering projects such as those of Peter Gabriel’s Real World label). In other words, the term “world music” not only encapsulates a multiplicity of “styles” (according to one understanding) but also has its own hazily defined “style” (according to another understanding). The case of “world music” thereby illustrates a more general trend: the identification of distinct boundaried “styles” is becoming increasingly difficult in the context of the contemporary globalising world, particularly in those cases where disparate musics are brought into close proximity and then hybridised under the influence of massive mediatisation, fuelled by the enhancement and proliferation of communication technologies at the local and international levels. While the public have increasingly easier access to diverse forms of music, which may or may not help to ensure the musics’ continuance, they are faced with a major challenge in trying to make sense of this proliferation of over-lapping styles.

A proliferation of new stylistic designations has come into being as a consequence of the aforementioned processes of cross-genre and cross-cultural hybridisation (encapsulated by terms such as "fusion" and "crossover") (see Chapter 3.3). Two well-known representative examples are: "folk rock", merging elements of traditional and folk music with rhythms and instrumentation from rock music; and "rhythm and blues", gathering diverse African-American-origin musical features from blues, gospel and more recently hip-hop. There are, of course, countless more examples, especially in the age of “world music”. At the same time as new hybrid styles such as these have been coming into

existence, other older localised styles have been disappearing, again as a result of broader socio-cultural transformations (many globalisation-derived). Writing in 1979, before the advent of internet technology's impact as a key resource-sharing tool and before the new wave of hybridising folk musicians came into being, Woods referred to enduring regional differences in English folk music as follows: "Folk music, by its very nature, is very much a local and regional phenomenon. A Somerset version of a folksong can differ considerably from a Shropshire version of the same song; and, by extension, Scottish and English can be even more radically different" (Woods, 1979, p. 77). However, it seems that such stylistic differentiation must have greatly diminished in the years since, although a comprehensive survey comparing on-the-ground musical practices and repertoires across the UK would be required to reveal the subtleties of homogenisation and lingering distinctiveness.

Paul Archer is just one of many musicians who spoke to me about the disappearance of localised styles, providing the example: "There was once a style that people called the Leeds style."<sup>28</sup> This observation indicates how there were once sub-styles within styles – regional ways of playing encompassed within the broader folk music idiom. Their commonalities defined the musical genre, but their crucial divergences justified the creation of a new label for each style (as in the case of the "Leeds style"). Not only does Paul Archer's statement underline the disappearance of many sub-styles through the modernisation of transmission processes, it also underlines the local characterisation that was preeminent in defining musical styles at a time when transport was less developed and populations were less mobile. MacKinnon also highlights the way folk music has transformed from being a disparate collection of regional styles into becoming a single over-arching genre: "whereas the music of the British folk traditions was the music of specific localities, the music created by the folk scene has become a genre whose boundaries are not locally specific. The folk revival has created a genre" (1994, p. 67).

While regional musical styles or "dialects" seem to have largely disappeared in much (but not all of) England, musicians still emphasise the importance of finding and cultivating one's own discernible individual personal style or, in linguistic terms, one's "ideolect". Thus Anthony Robb states: "you've got to be aware of the traditional dialect, but everybody speaks their own way, you've got to use your own voice."<sup>29</sup> This level of style is generally conceived to be a composite of the individual's personal musical history, subjected to a succession of reappraisals over the years. Significantly, describing the early days in the development of folk music, Woods refers to singers in the local context of their village pub as "very individual stylists", notably responsible for the local character of the traditional music transmitted within their local community (1979, p. 31). While the individual's

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<sup>28</sup> P. C. (Paul Archer, 25 May 2012)

<sup>29</sup> P. C. (Anthony Robb, August 2012)

music making must, of course, emphasise shared knowledge and attitudes – musical patterns and ways of realisation – at the same time, the individual is at liberty to make a myriad of choices, hybridising influences gleaned from diverse other musicians and, in some cases, also adding more original details. Jim Moray succinctly encapsulated this interplay of collectivism and individualism within tradition by explaining to me: "traditional music is not me-music, it is us-music... but the role of a traditional singer is to put the individual back into the music"<sup>30</sup> This echoes Green's remarks about musical identities:

"Musical identities are forged from a combination of personal, individual musical experiences on one hand, and membership in various social groups - from the family to the nation-state and beyond - on the other hand. They encompass musical tastes, values, practices (including reception activities such as listening or dancing), skills, and knowledge." (Green, 2011, p. 1)

Many musicians place great importance on the individualisation of music making; for example, Alan Reid, a young Irish musician who took part in Ethno Sweden 2012, emphasised the importance of original interpretation over faithful detailed reproduction of others' renditions:

"I don't believe in playing as [the tunes] used to be played. [...] my understanding is that the player interprets the tunes and it is very subtle variations and ornamentation that actually gives the style."<sup>31</sup>

Alan's comments mirror those of a noted professional folk musician who told me: "I am not really interested in playing like other people. I spent years to try and sound like myself."<sup>32</sup> This musician is clearly expressing a need to be constantly creative in developing an individual playing style, making a mark on the current folk music scene by challenging existing rules and boundaries.

Because each individual's musical identity is forged out of a wholly distinctive personalised experience of music making, he or she is liable to have a very particular and personalised reservoir of knowledge, skills and preferences – naturally overlapping with others' (on account of multiple shared experiences) but very much feeling like his or her "own". As Nikki Williamson emphasised, this process typically involves the coupling of extensive exposure with decision making (both on the conscious and unconscious levels): "the more you listen, the more you have an idea of the style that you want to play."<sup>33</sup> A great many of my interviewees explained to me that the assimilation process was based on drawing selectively from a wide range of previous musical encounters: you take "a bit from everything", putting it in "the melting pot", as Rachel and Becky Unthank metaphorically

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<sup>30</sup> P. C. (Jim Moray, August 2012)

<sup>31</sup> P. C. (Alan Reid, 2 July 2012)

<sup>32</sup> P. C. (Anonymous contributor, August 2011)

<sup>33</sup> P. C. (Nikki Williamson, 29 April 2012)

expressed it.<sup>34</sup> Ian Carr, a British musician who now lives in Sweden, and has been involved in Ethno-World for many years, expressed a similar interpretation:

"A lot of my tunes do really sound like anything. Like, it would be very difficult to put a name to distinguish what country [...] they come from or what tradition they would come from. They are just me and the people I have met and sounds that I've heard in my life."<sup>35</sup>

The individual musician obviously develops their own complex understanding of how their musical world corresponds with others' musical worlds and, of course, the musical performance event serves to highlight and celebrate points of commonality and difference. Naturally, folk musicians are often very sensitive to the ways in which their approaches differ from others'. Thus, Nikki went on to explain to me about her personal style of composition by referring to other people's contrasting approaches: "I compose folk tunes in a traditional style. Some people write Folk tunes in a contemporary style, like using syncopations."<sup>36</sup> Ian Carr similarly demonstrates how the forging of personal style inherently involves the comparative assessment of others' creativity and then the highlighting of distinctiveness. Referring to how he interprets traditional tunes, he expresses his personal style as: "my own way of playing it, rhythmically and harmonically [...] a sound like nobody has heard before [...] fresh"<sup>37</sup>. Thus, the most distinctive musicians build their own recognisable personal cultural identities (expressed through "personal musical styles") out of their experiences and history.

Through processes akin to those of evolution, personal styles are communicated from individual to individual in a chain of transmission; pooled together with other personal styles, some aspects are adopted and preserved "as is", others are adapted to fit new contexts, and others are rejected. As mentioned earlier (in Chapter 3.4.3), a number of studies have explored these processes of transmission, often drawing analogies with languages (see, for example, Vansina, 1985; Slobin, 1993; Roberts, Byram et al., 2001). The transmission of music between individual musicians not involves continuities and ruptures but also a layering of brought-together styles, thereby further obscuring existing style boundaries. Brailoiu uses the metaphor of "stratification [...] with styles superposing one upon the other" to explain these hybridising processes (1984).

As Rachel and Becky Unthank explained to me, the transmission processes also inevitably involves the reinterpreting of learnt material; as soon as one apprehends the material, it is adapted in

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<sup>34</sup> P. C. (Rachel Unthank, August 2011)

<sup>35</sup> P. C. (Ian Carr, 1 July 2012)

<sup>36</sup> P. C. (Nikki Williamson, 29 April 2012)

<sup>37</sup> P. C. (Ian Carr, July 2012)

accordance with one's pre-existing skills and sensibilities: "We usually choose a song that we like, because [...] we like that story [...], and we keep singing it and singing it until it becomes [...] our own song, and we really try to do our own interpretation and bring out what we feel like." Claire Mann pinpointed the same processes as follows: "you learn the tune, and then you play in your own style, so it is going to sound different anyway". She emphasised that this principle even applies for recently composed music by other musicians: "when playing another musician's tunes, I learn it the way they play, but it happens naturally with time, that it falls into my style."<sup>38</sup> This reference to "natural changes" is significant: in many folk musicians' accounts, the development of personal style is represented as having been a natural process, not overly mediated by decisions on the conscious level. On the other hand, it should be acknowledged that some adoptions and adaptations certainly are self-consciously decided upon, sometimes evincing quite dramatic stylistic changes – for example, the integration of new instrumentation. Within the field of folk music making in England, borrowings have occurred both from abroad (as in the case of the bouzouki) and from other genres, most obviously from popular music (with the guitar, drum-kit and electrification) (see Chapter 3.4.2.).

To sum up, the designation of musical styles, as with musical genres and cultures, is largely based on the identification of musical norms – typical patterns in sound, technique and behaviour, which serve to unite the musical community. Amongst the musicians I interviewed, the word "style" is used most often to describe smaller-scale musical identities, most commonly on the level of the individual (akin to "ideolect").

#### **4.1.3. Networking within the tradition**

In conjunction with any discussion about the development of personal musical style, it is essential to acknowledge the social dimension – specifically, that it is through a succession of personal encounters that the individual accumulates their own particularised configuration of knowledge, skill, preferences and inter-personal relationships. Indeed, social networking, centred around folk-related social events, underpins the evolution of tradition. Of course, some people's socio-musical encounters serve to generate identities that are distinctive, conspicuous and highly respected, positioned at the heart of the scene's social network. Extracts from Anthony Robb's personal story do a good job of highlighting how, through social networking, reputations can become firmly rooted in local communities, spread to other communities, and engender collaborative relationships:

"Up in Northumberland, I had won competitions and I didn't know, but [...] people obviously knew of me, and we got a reputation for being good players, and who could find [folk music books] useful and interesting.... I left the Whittingham area in the 1990s and moved into Alnwick, and we lived in Ellingham for a while as well, and I went up last

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<sup>38</sup> P. C. (Claire Mann, August 2011)

December, so not a year ago yet, to play at Embleton and cover some of my own stumping ground, and somebody was in the pub. He said: 'oh, you play the pipes. Do you know anybody called Anthony and Carol Robb, he said, they are really well-known around here' and I said ' well, I am Anthony Robb, you know' So you get a surprise sometimes when people know who you are, or in that case, he did not, because, to be fair, I have changed a bit..."<sup>39</sup>

Not only in a teacher-learner or professional-amateur affiliation, but also amongst professional musicians, these contacts and relationships, grounded in common traditional heritage, play a key role in shaping the tradition's development. Thus, because Anthony Robb's socio-musical network is interlinked with that of Alistair Anderson (crucially, overlapping geographically, musically and socially), the two have become involved in exciting new collaborative ventures together:

"...So it is just good fortune that people are nice to you and give you music. Alistair Anderson gave us the full manuscript version of his *Steel Skies*, before the tunes were half-named, you know, so *Road to the North* is just called *March in D for pipes*, or something like that. So everybody would bring music along. [...] It's not exceptional, what I have, but I have some lovely bits."<sup>40</sup>

## 4.2. Perceptions about traditional music and cultural areas

### 4.2.1. Traditional Music

"Who is to say how it was done?"<sup>41</sup> As mentioned above, in interview, many folk musicians stressed the obligation to rearrange and reinterpret traditional music in accordance with the current needs of performer and audience; not only did they cite a desire to "put their own stamp" on the performance, but they also expressed doubt about the viability of recreating past ways of performance. This raises questions about how "tradition" is understood and where the boundaries of this category are thought to lie. Debates and dilemmas about what musics and musical processes can legitimately be deemed "traditional" and what cannot are reflected in the academic field. In Atkinson's words, "'tradition'... is a concept that has by now been reconsidered, restated, and reproblematised many times over" (2004, pp. 147-152).

While a large proportion of the interviewed folk musicians underlined "oldness" as being a common defining feature of traditional repertoire, a sizeable minority disagreed, including, for example, Kathryn Tickell who claimed that more appropriate criteria would be how well-integrated and wide-spread the music has become within the folk communities' repertoires.<sup>42</sup> In a very similar way, Jim

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<sup>39</sup> P. C. (Anthony Robb, 24 August 2012)

<sup>40</sup> P. C. (Anthony Robb, 24 August 2012)

<sup>41</sup> P. C. (Rachel Unthank, August 2011)

<sup>42</sup> P. C. (Kathryn Tickell, August 2011)

Moray explained that traditional music is defined by "the process of passing through many hands".<sup>43</sup> Various theorists, including Glassie, similarly understand oral transmission within local communities as one of the main features of traditional music (Glassie, 1970, p. 52). Ultimately, in this commonly encountered reading, it is the way in which the tune is handled by culture members that marks it out as either traditional or not. As Jim went on to explain through quoting Eliza Carthy's definition of traditional music as "us-music", it is the sense of collective ownership that truly distinguishes traditional music in the minds of folk musicians.

This understanding of "tradition" underlines the music's quality of being shared behaviour – in other words the very stuff of which "culture" is composed. As explained in Chapter 3, the concepts of "tradition" and "culture" are indeed intimately inter-linked – Mead even notably pointing out that one can effectively describe culture as being comprised of a "whole complex of traditional behaviour [...] successively learned by each generation" (Mead, 1937, p. 17). Accordingly, traditional music, like culture, may be identified by its heavy emphasis upon the experience of and perpetuation of shared norms or, as Simpson, Gerard and Goodenough label them, "standards":

"Culture consists of standards for deciding what is, standards for deciding what can be, standards for deciding how one feels about it, standards for deciding what to do about it, and standards for deciding how to go about doing it." (Simpson, Gerard, Goodenough, & Inkeles, 1961, p. 522)

Traditional music is thus identifiable not only by its perpetuated centrality within the community but also by its adherence to standard musical structures and principles of realisation. Bauman articulates this understanding, stating that "tradition" has two meanings: on one hand the process of transmission of a cultural element, and on the other the element in question (Bauman, 1992, p. 32). Accordingly, the majority of the musicians to whom I asked questions regarding the definition of "tradition" responded by describing not only the "handing down" but also the character of the tunes themselves. Thus, for example, Andrew Parr stated:

"I would say that a traditional piece of North-East music: it is melodic and rhythmic motives [that] define a piece of traditional music of that particular area"<sup>44</sup>

Similarly, most musicians pinpointed the conspicuous presence throughout the traditional repertoire of formulaic repertoire-unifying elements serving to facilitate memorisation and reproduction – for example, the use of the typical structure of two or three repeated eight-bar sections.

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<sup>43</sup> P. C. (Jim Moray, 26 August 2012)

<sup>44</sup> P. C. (Andrew Parr and David Grey, July 2012)

Many musicians also drew my attention to the way in which traditional music is typically intimately tied to specific traditional social contexts – the pub session, the dance, and so on. For example, there is a large body of “traditional music” specifically geared towards dancing. Andy Cutting notably considers himself to be a modern proponent of this particular strain of tradition, describing the music he plays as “Traditional European dance music”. This description not only underlines the varied and hybrid influences within Andy’s repertoire and interpretation of traditional music, but also his function-focused interpretation of the term “tradition”.<sup>45</sup> Many other interviewees also alluded to traditional music’s characteristic dance-connection – people of diverse levels of professionalism and differing age, including Damian Caisley, Peter Rowley-Conwy, Isabel Park, Ged Lawson, Alistair Anderson and Ian Stephenson<sup>46</sup>. Alex Cumming, a young folk accordionist, singer and caller for ceilidhs, suggests that the dance-focus in English traditional music is even more pronounced than in other neighbouring regions, typically being “steadier and much more rhythmical than [...] Irish, Scottish, Celtic music. So English music is very based around rhythms [...] and the dance moves rather than just all the notes as well.”<sup>47</sup> Joey Oliver adds that the specific styles of social dance favoured in different regions has had a considerable impact upon musical features. Writing in depth about traditional dance culture in Northumbria (at ceilidhs, social gatherings, weddings and so on), Joey Oliver notes that the “unique style of dancing in the country gives rise to unique styles of tune” (Oliver, 2004, p. 13). In consideration of English traditional music’s dance-focused identity, many other musicians have referred to Morris dancing and its relatively slow rhythms, allowing space for dancers to jump as high as possible (notably in the case of men’s teams) and encouraging synchronisation within the team. Similarly, when playing for the community at ceilidhs or dance evenings, strong rhythmical bases and clear structures are crucial to allow all the dancers to follow and take part.

The perception of traditional music as a functional part of the broader traditional heritage, notably tied to dancing culture, is therefore an enduring feature within the contemporary folk music scene – moreover, informing the programming of traditional events and folk festivals (developed further in Chapter 5).

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<sup>45</sup> P. C. (Andy Cutting, August 2011)

<sup>46</sup> P. C. (Alistair Anderson, Ian Stephenson, August 2011; Damian Caisley, Peter Rowley-Conwy, Isabel Park, Ged Lawson, April 2012)

<sup>47</sup> P. C. (Alex Cumming, 27 May 2012)

#### 4.2.2. "New Tunes"

Monaghan and Just insightfully state that, ultimately, "culture must be located in the human head" (2000, p. 47).<sup>48</sup> Following on from this, one might say that tradition is also located "in the human head" – specifically in the heads of individuals. As mentioned earlier, it is individuals (as much as communities) that guide the continuance of tradition, bringing their own personal identities to the performance event. While the act of interpretation itself offers license for personal contribution, through details of ornamentation, variation, instrumentation and inter-personal interaction, a sizeable number of culture members (both professional and amateur) choose to enhance their agency within the folk scene by creating new melodies – and, significantly, some of these are then accepted into the community's shared repertoire.

Newly composed music typically starts off being described as "in the traditional idiom" or "in the folk idiom". Regarding this labelling, most musicians think as Alex Cumming does: "traditional music is the material, folk music is what you do with it [...] folk music can be original, traditional music can't".<sup>49</sup> However, as Jim Moray explained to me: "songs from a known author can [eventually] become traditional as they get their edges smoothed off by passing through many people"<sup>50</sup> – although, of course, one can not precisely quantify how many people need to be involved in the transmission process for the music to finally qualify as "traditional". In this way, relatively newly composed music can "finish up in the tradition"<sup>51</sup>, thereby enhancing the traditional reservoir of knowledge and skill.

Amongst the musicians I have interviewed, the term "traditional" seems to suggest a certain prestige. After all, it is only attributed to tunes that were composed within the boundaries of the traditional idiom, which exemplify the aesthetic preferences of the community, and that have exhibited sufficient staying power and popularity to become recognised as representative of the tradition. Ian Carr's words on this are particularly revealing:

"I find it extremely flattering and [...] I think it is an amazing thing when my tunes [...] have been taken up by traditional musicians and become a little bit part of the tradition."<sup>52</sup>

In interview, musicians often expressed such sentiments, voicing a hope that by composing artfully-crafted tunes in accordance with the norms of tradition, they could play a part in enriching and expanding the existing repertoire. However, the number of traditional tunes in the folk idiom is vast

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<sup>48</sup> They directly quote the metaphorical Mexican proverb "Cada cabeza es un mundo" or "Every head is a world" (my translation) that might seem more insightful than its English equivalent which loses part of the metaphorical allusion.

<sup>49</sup> P. C. (Alex Cumming, May 2012)

<sup>50</sup> P. C. (Jim Moray, 26 August 2012)

<sup>51</sup> P. C. (Anthony Robb, August 2012)

<sup>52</sup> P. C. (Ian Carr, 1 July 2012)

and varied, rendering the task of creating a new tune that is both distinctive and in keeping with norms a sizeable challenge. The following exchange between two experienced musicians (Jim and Nick) after playing a tune at a pub folk music session in Durham illustrates some of the issues: "Is that a song?" "No, I made it up, but it may well be the same as something else."<sup>53</sup>

The widespread use of shared internet resources such as "*The Session*" has new implications for the identification and categorisation of "traditional" repertoire within the community. "*The Session*" in particular provides a participative forum for discussions, where any member can ask a question or answer other members' queries (see Chapter 7 for further details). The following discussion illustrates particularly well the difficulties faced in the classification and identification of tunes as either "traditional" or newly composed: The initial question asked was "Did I compose this, or is it a tune I heard somewhere?" The tune was then provided in letter notation (ABC). The answers to this query were then quite varied, the majority suggesting comparable tunes, running the notation through other database websites, or identifying small parts of the tune as coming from another. The conclusion of the conversation was, significantly, for the initiator of the conversation "to provisionally claim the tune as [his/her] own" and characterise it as a "'trad style' tune".<sup>54</sup> A last contributor added this reflection on compositions in folk music:

"After so many years of playing and composing through the generations we're bound to have similar sounding tunes spring up using well-trying sequences. I'd say to Pat if you play a tune from your own head, and it turns out to be a version of another tune - there's a fine line between composition and interpretation. Keep it, play it and be proud of it."

Such challenges of identification are naturally exacerbated in the context of oral tradition, where musicians learn large numbers of tunes by ear. In effect, the wider a musician's repertoire is, the less frequently they play the tunes they know, and thus remind themselves of the characteristics and peculiarities of each individual tune. As personal repertoires expand through participation and creativity in social music-making contexts (where the contribution of newly learnt pieces is highly valued for preventing boredom), older tunes that have fallen out of collective interest are put aside and, sometimes, forgotten. Accordingly, Joey Oliver explained to me that he has "only ever played tunes that [he] learnt from people, whether that's in a workshop or in a session, or CD or something like that", further adding: "I'm probably at a time in my life, one in one out, you know, every time I learn a tune, I forget another one"<sup>55</sup> This mode of transmission inevitably impacts the way that folk musicians approach the generation of new material – specifically, favouring the piecing together of

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<sup>53</sup> Conversation at the Elm Tree pub music session (15 October 2012)

<sup>54</sup> The session website, Discussions <<http://thesession.org/discussions/32181>> [accessed 02 September 2013]

<sup>55</sup> P. C. (Joey Oliver, 23 July 2012)

known patterns and interesting phrases (from varied sources), while "tweaking" chords and rhythms to create novelty that is both appealing and sufficiently close to the stylistic norms. The boundary between old and new, traditional and newly-composed, is often hazy.

#### 4.2.3. Folk music as counter-culture

Folk music has long been seen in opposition to the more intensively marketed and widely disseminated popular music mainstream (see for example Gelbart, 2007, p. 256 and Harvey et al., 2002, p. 10). As discussed by Storey (2003), this interpretation pre-dates the enhanced globalisation of the second half of the twentieth century, stretching back to the earliest revivals. In the nineteenth century, indeed, the "folk" were widely seen by the cultural elite and urban masses as the "others" (in the sense of Saïd's conception of otherness) (Storey, 2003, pp. 32-47). Despite substantial differences in socio-political context, this perception persists, with the musical activities of today's folk music enthusiasts (for example, at pub sessions) commonly understood as being "at odds" with globalised americanised culture. As Limon notably underlines, there is a political dimension to this dichotomy:

"[Western Marxists] intuitively view folklore as collective behaviours whose fundamental character is in some way inherently opposed to the dominant social order of state capitalism [...]" (Limon, 1983, p. 35).

Basing his analysis on the Frankfurt school of thought, Limon suggests that folk music's power lies in the fact that it has a "far more democratic distribution than 'high' art" (ibid.); traditionally, the agency for performance, reception and proliferation has lain with "the people". As Porter shows, this particular feature of folk music, along with its assumed rootedness in shared identity, has rendered it highly attractive to both of the extreme ends of the political spectrum: just as there are idealistic Marxist views of traditional music, there are many documented cases of folk music being used to further fascist ideologies (1991, pp. 116-117). Of course, moderate governments have also harnessed folk music's presumed democratic and identity-defining qualities for social-engineering purposes; thus, for example, Cecil Sharp's pioneering work has met subsequent criticism, particularly by Harker (1985).

Meanwhile, folk music culture has long been perceived as essentially sub-cultural in nature, actively contrasting with elite and mass-mediatised culture through representing distinctly different aesthetic sensibilities and being conceptually tied to different groups of society (specifically, the idealised imagined "folk"). This interpretation became particularly entrenched during the so-called "second folk revival" of the 1960s and, analysing the folk music scene of that era, Woods notably writes: "folk music has always been a sort of 'underground' music" (Woods, 1979, p. 94). Meanwhile, Gelbart underlines the particular qualities that have long been felt to distinguish folk music from its

counterparts: typically, from the perspectives of its advocates, it is seen as “real” and “natural”, contrasting with the “corrupt” qualities of popular music (2007, pp. 258-260).

Of course, this black/white pop/folk conceptualisation is greatly complicated by the existence of cross-genre hybridity – especially, those folk musicians who emerge from local tradition to pursue successful careers on the periphery of the mainstream (such as Seth Lakeman, for example). It is also complicated by the apparent commodification of folk music: folk music that was primarily performed by and for ‘insider’ culture members has become a marketable commodity, proliferated using the same means as popular culture, and reaching far beyond the original boundaries of exposure. Thus, in the context of globalisation, certain forms of folk music have become part of the global counter-culture. Inevitably, such forms are routinely denounced by traditionalists as constituting misrepresentations and misinterpretations of folk music; despite spreading awareness and appreciation of localised folk culture, they are seen as not being folk music at all, but rather folk-influenced. At the same time, the younger musicians that I interviewed often expressed a yearning to balance their cross-regional and cross-cultural inter-connectedness with a stronger rootedness in immediate local culture. Indeed, they explained that a fundamental enduring appeal of their folk music making was the fact that it remained such a community-based endeavour.

### **4.3. Trans-national musical categories**

#### **4.3.1. Celtic music**

Despite being based in England, some of the musicians that I interviewed identified having a certain degree of affinity to, or a sense of being connected to, the broader field of “Celtic music”. Although, like some other trans-national regional designations, “Celtic” has rather blurred boundaries, it is generally thought to encompass the regions of Brittany, Cornwall, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, the Isle of Man, and – in some readings (see Sawyers, 2001, pp. 4-5 and Mathieson, 2001, p.4) – the more distantly related Galicia, in Northern Spain. Of course, Celtic culture has also been transported further afield, with immigration to America (resulting in “an inextricable interlacing of influences”), Eastern Europe (where traditions “have been preserved with even greater purity than in their homelands”), Quebec and Australia (Mathieson, 2001, pp. 4-5; Baker, 2012, pp. 246-255). Furthermore, Celtic culture has commonly spread into neighbouring regions, resulting in cultural co-existence and hybridising. Thus, regarding Celtic music cultures in the UK, Middleton pinpoints a “strong presence” of Scots-origin folk tunes in North-East regional culture (1985, p.20), Winter and Keegan-Phipps identify an ongoing debate regarding the extent to which traditional Northumbrian music has been influenced by Scottish music (2013, p. 78), and Nettle identifies strong “Celtic influence” on English folk song more generally (1973, p. 69).

Of course, there are extensive conspicuous points of distinction between so-called “Celtic” cultures; for example, there is no political unity across the Celtic area and never has been. Accordingly, Stokes considers the term to encompass extraordinary cultural diversity, making it difficult to deduce a clear definition for Celtic identity, or for associated terms such as “Celtness” or “Celtdom” (Stokes, 1997, p. 6). In respect to music, Chapman is one of many who considers the category of “Celtic music” to have little basis in tradition (particularly, pre-second revival); rather “Celtic” repertoires and techniques have historically been considered distinct (1997, pp. 29-45). For Lomax, who famously attempted to map the world’s music cultures through the cross-cultural application of his Cantometrics system (involving “rating... song performance in a series of qualitative judgments”), the disparate Celtic regions were thought to be subsumed within a single large “culture area” of “perfect internal homogeneity” covering much of Europe and extending westwards into what he calls “Western Europe Overseas” (1962, pp. 426-427; 1968, p. 80; see also Lomax 1976 for his detailed study on the theory of Cantometrics). In other words, the Celtic culture areas were not regarded as unified in distinction to neighbouring culture areas. However, as Porter justifiably asserts (2001, p. 436), Lomax’s work may be criticised for the limited song sample sizes he used and the excessive generalisations that resulted.

While a small number of folk musicians that I spoke to considered the designation “Celtic music” to be useful for pinpointing their own stylistic affinities (particularly in their own compositions), most were critical of its usefulness, pointing out the lack of stylistic homogeneity across the Celtic regions. As Anthony Robb told me: “Celtic music is not just one type... You've got the Scottish, you've got Breton, you've got Irish, you've got Welsh, you've got Northumbrian and there's been loads of influences.”<sup>56</sup> In the folk music scene of the North-East of England, located close to the border with Scotland, the term “Celtic” is considered far too imprecise to target the specific identities evidenced in musical repertoire. It is also apparent that the cultures within the Celtic area are not always perceived as harmoniously balanced and integrated; McKean, for example, underlines the intrinsic tensions that exist within the cultural area of Celtic influence, highlighting the perceived dominance of Irish influences in the context of Scottish music (McKean, 1998, p. 253).

Nevertheless, “Celtic” has evidently become a meaningful designation of musical identity for many, and there is evidently a historical basis for this perception of commonality. In his study of folk music regional variation, Porter (2001) identifies the Celtic regions as having been culturally inter-linked since ancient times: archaeologists have found evidence of shared cultural traits linking diverse tribes, and testimonies from the Roman Empire have also pointed towards similarities.

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<sup>56</sup> P. C. (Anthony Robb, August 2012)

Commonalities have persisted to the present day, especially apparent in language (2001, p. 429). In their study of Celtic folktales in Ireland and Wales, for example, Rees and Rees convincingly pinpoint various shared linguistic and narrative traits that span the Celtic regions, extending beyond those regions into Scots and Breton culture (1961, p. 11, p. 31).

Various academics have pinpointed a fundamental link between language preservation and song preservation in these disparate minority cultures – both being facets of oral culture that are threatened by dominant hegemonic cultures (see, for example, Sheridan, MacDonald and Byrne, 2011, Chapman, 1997, pp. 29-45, and McKean, 1998). It is indeed apparent that oral culture preservation remains a major concern common across many of these regions, as Woods reports:

"...it is clear that the Celtic countries are actively involved in the preservation and dissemination of the folk cultures. Only in England do we fail to make the effort, relying on the work of small record labels and individual researchers." (1979, p. 84)

Similarly, Bohlman notes:

"Particularly in those areas where the pressure to assimilate into a regional or national culture is unusually strong, such as [...] the Gaelic-speaking areas of Europe's Celtic Fringe, considerable effort is invested in creating and maintaining schools and cultural institutions that support language retention." (Bohlman, 2004, p. 224)

It is generally thought to have been during the second folk revival that "Celtic music" became a commonly used term, conceptually binding together the disparate regions' musical styles for the first time. Various high-profile figures such as the harp player Alan Stivell actively set out to emphasise points of cross-regional cultural kindredness, making the designation "Celtic" an increasingly pertinent label within the discourse of the wider folk community and academia. While McKerrell convincingly argues that it was actually the exporting of Scottish bands to foreign markets that initially spurred the adoption of "Celtic music" as a commercial genre label in the 1970s (2011, p. 5), Sweers explores the subsequent development of "Celtic music" as a "fusion" genre in the US during that period (2005, pp. 255-261) (See also Baker, 2012).

"Celtic culture" has since become rather a different complex; following a manner of identity-formation closely akin to that of the New Age movement, disparate symbols and beliefs have been drawn together from diverse sources (including popular fantasy fiction and a largely imagined mythical past) to forge a super-culture that transcends national boundaries. As Bohlman points out, the genre of "Celtic folk music" serves as a crucial glue to bind and represent this new identity, located in "the Celtic fringe" within the context of "New Europeanness" (2004, p. 308). Indeed, he states:

"Music, in fact, provides a crucial form of evidence for Celticism, supplying it with a central store of common artifacts - especially bagpipes and harps - and what should be a single language with common linguistic roots [...] Celtic religion, which draws selectively from several distinctive mythologies from pagan through New Age, is undergoing a mediated revival which nonetheless finds its way increasingly into the production and dissemination of Celtic music." (Bohlman, 2004, p. 309)

Bohlman sees Celtic culture (and its music) as having benefitted greatly from the processes of globalisation, which have encouraged people spread across a large geographical area, encompassing the "Celtic Fringe" as well as the wider Diaspora, to feel and experience that they are kindred folk (2002, p. 77). Alongside various website forums, the Inter-Celtic Festival held in Lorient, France, serves as a central focus for many culture members, representing the enduring ethos of unity in diversity (see Sheridan and Byrne, 2008, p. 149). In addition to gathering a large number of different local traditions defined as "Celtic" from around the world, placing Australian and Canadian traditions next to Scottish or Breton traditions, this festival seeks to promote the central tenet of Celtic kindredness globally, through the use of mass media. Thus, the "Celtic" movement – artificially created and having an unusually broadly inclusive membership – clearly highlights a widespread desire amongst contemporary people for another level of identity that transcends national identity. Harvey et al. point towards these features in their own incisive definition:

"[The] term Celtic refers to a group of people living on the Atlantic seaboard of Europe who share common cultural and/or ethnic characteristics, but it has been reworked and appropriated in recent years to include a large number of other individuals, living beyond the Celtic territories, who feel an affinity to various aspects of Celtic culture." (Harvey, Jones, McInroy, & Milligan, 2002, p. 4)

While "Celtic music" has occupied a fairly conspicuous position in the global music market for over 40 years, the related but even more broadly-encompassing category of "world music" has a slightly shorter history. Crucially, it should be noted that both share the features of drawing from traditional musical sources and hybridising cross-culturally.

#### **4.3.2. World music**

As was previously pointed out, the massive mediatisation of music resulting from the growth of communications at an international level is often seen to promote cultural standardisation, the creation of a "global culture", and the emergence of myriad glocalised cultures – with a variety of folk and traditional musics being radically altered through hybridisation, becoming marginalised from the mainstream, or disappearing in the process. Naturally, traditionalists may mourn this predicament and call for the preservation of older forms and practices. However, others would argue that the processes of globalisation sometimes serve to promote awareness of distant cultures – even

if those are represented in an essentialised manner – and they would also argue that contemporary hybridisations actually constitute the next natural phrase of these cultures' developments. The emergence of the concept of “world music” points towards this new consideration for traditions around the world.

Weiss is one of many who have explored the history of the “World Music” category, identifying its remarkably broad reach (Weiss, 2014; see also, for example, Feld, 2000, pp. 144-164; Stokes, 2004). She summarises the term as follows:

"The term world music, likely coined in the 1960s by Robert Brown - an ethnomusicologist [...] has come primarily to mean non-western musics writ large; it is a broad-reaching-term that incorporates folk, popular, and art music genres, as well as popular music that mix western pop music idioms with local and regional genres from around the world". (Weiss, 2014, p. 508)

The same broad inclusivity is stressed by Broughton, Ellingham and Lusk, in *The Rough Guide to World Music* (2009, p. vii), who define World music as covering "music of every style – popular and classical, religious and secular, new and traditional." However, in truth, the term is seldom used to encompass, say, Beethoven's symphonies or the Beatles; rather, it a catch all term – a "meta-genre" as Shuker puts it (2001, p.6) – for the music of “other” cultures. Indeed, Weiss recognises that its usage reflects an enduring "colonial separation" between the West and the rest, wherein categorical boundaries are often "poorly defined and difficult to map" (Weiss, 2014, p. 508).

Some have considered the “World Music” category to comprise two distinct fields, namely traditional music and cross-cultural hybrid music (see, for example, Fletcher, 2001). However, as Young points out (and as is stressed elsewhere in this thesis), there is a blurring between these two fields. Using examples by the Carthy Family and the album and book sharing the name “The Imagined Village”, he points out: "the common treasury of folk music, too, is undergoing transformations, in a wider context of 'world music' in which indigenous music of individual nations has been fused with pop sensibilities and contemporary production values" (2010, pp. 600-601).

As Stokes (2004, p. 52) and Feld (2000) point out, “World Music” was originally adopted as a marketing category in 1987, specifically deriving from commercial needs as opposed to an academic need for new terminology within anthropological studies (see also Shuker, 2001). At first, the term was intended to gather a large range of traditional musics, or just locally successful recordings from around the world, to be commercialised on a wider scale, the proclaimed aim being "to celebrate and promote the study of musical diversity" (Feld, 2000, p. 146). However, in the context of the rapidly globalising world and through the pro-hybridising initiatives of various creative projects (such as

Peter Gabriel's Real World label), there followed a "proliferation" of new "world music" products in the 1990s (ibid.) characterised by cross-cultural "fusion" – typically involving "the rephrasing of traditional folk music in a dance-pop mode" (2001, pp. 6-9). As Bohlman points out, World Music, as a "genre", has taken off owing to a wide-spread demand for "newly composed folk music" that brings together multiple cultural strands (Bohlman, 2004, p. 308). To its fans in the contemporary globalising world, "World Music"'s particular appeal is that it is "at once local and global" (2004, p. 306) – tied to forms deemed "authentic" and yet relatively easy to comprehend. Consequently, the genre has ceased to depend on foreign charts and, instead, renews itself, evolving on its own, led by public demand and commercial outlets.

It is clear that "World Music" – its aesthetic and its underlying ethos – has, in turn, gone on to affect local music-making. Burns, for example, refers to how certain young folk artists have integrated "Afro-American dance rhythms" within their traditional folk song interpretations (Burns, 2007, p. 200). Significantly, the albums of the English band Blowzabella, which similarly welcome diverse influences in their creativity, have come to be commercialised under the category of "world music" (most notably for their 2002 and 2007 releases), whereas their first album (in 1990) was released as "folk music". This "World Music" label is evidently deemed both attractive and meaningful for the wider public. The "World Music" ethos is also manifest in certain folk festivals in the UK, which offer workshops in styles from beyond the boundaries of British Isles. For example, at the "Fiddles on Fire" festival, which offers opportunities for large numbers of amateur folk fiddlers to attend workshops led by professional folk musicians, the programme includes workshops such as "Swedish tunes", "Gypsy Jazz", "Hungarian tunes" or "Québécois Styles" alongside the somewhat expected "Irish ornamentation", "Highland Scottish tunes", "Shetland tunes", or simply "English tunes". As an additional illustration of this phenomenon, underlining the impact of the concept of "world music" on many aspect of the folk music scene in the UK, Burns points out the change of name for "Sidmouth Folk Festival" to "Sidmouth International Festival of Folk Arts", demonstrating a desire to link "British folk music to world music performances" (Burns, 2007, p. 200). Despite the fact that the "Sidmouth International Festival of Folk Arts" has subsequently been renamed "Sidmouth Folk Week" since Burns published his article<sup>57</sup>, it is evident that the "World Music" ethos remains pronounced. Thus, the line-up in 2013 included, for example, the "Jaipur Kawa Brass Band" and "American Style Dance" next to the more usual "English Contra Dance Band".<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Sidmouth Folk Week website <<http://www.sidmouthfolkweek.co.uk/>> [accessed 25 June 2013]

<sup>58</sup> Sidmouth Folk Week online programme 2013  
<<http://www.sidmouthfolkweek.co.uk/index.php?page=dance-programme>> [accessed 25 June 2013]

Of course, there are some festivals that specifically focus on showcasing diverse examples of “world music”, seeking to create a microcosm of world cultures via the medium of musical performance. Thus, Womex (WORld Music EXpo) is described as "an international networking platform for the world music industry"<sup>59</sup>, WOMAD (World Of Music, Arts and Dance) is presented as "an internationally established Festival bringing together artists from all over the globe"<sup>60</sup>, or Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod in Wales is "a celebration of music, dance, costume and culture from nations around the world"<sup>61</sup>. In receiving extensive media coverage notably by the BBC, these festivals contribute to raising awareness of cultural traditions. Furthermore, they promote the perception of world music as a global cultural system inclusive of all cultural traditions, and offering networking opportunities to artists towards intercultural collaborations and performances.

The world music phenomenon evidently helps to preserve certain forms of music while encouraging their existence as living, evolving art-forms to extend beyond their formerly localised boundaries. Nonetheless, at the same time, it notably raises "issues of musical universality and nationality" as Leyshon, Matless and Revill explain, supporting their argument with Adorno's theories (1998, p. 9). In effect, in the global mediatisation of traditions, the most local differences tend to be minimised to offer to a larger public a more general overview of “a” tradition, as opposed to a selection of disparate heterogeneous co-existing traditions that share some qualities but differ in other important respects (as seen from the perspective of their cultural insiders). In short, it promotes essentialised, generalised and simplified conceptualisations of what are actually complex cultural systems, typically at the expense of the minority.

Re-appropriating traditions, or reclaiming traditional heritage, is therefore an important stake in the definition of many musical genres (Middleton, 2007). Middleton notably analyses the example of Blues in relation to folk music, underlining "patterns of folklorisation" through which this genre has become increasingly accepted within communities – and it could be argued that equivalent processes can be observed in folk music in England (Middleton, 2007, p. 50).

#### 4.3.3. Folk music

Whether referring to Bohlman's "New Folk Musics", which are considered comparable to "World Music" (2004, pp. 307-309) or referring to a musical genre on its own, "folk" is the word that is most commonly used by contemporary traditional musicians to describe the music which they are

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<sup>59</sup> WOMEX website, <[http://www.womex.com/realwomex/main.php?id\\_headings=283&id\\_realwomex=16](http://www.womex.com/realwomex/main.php?id_headings=283&id_realwomex=16)> [accessed 19 January 2014]

<sup>60</sup> WOMAD website, <<http://womad.org/about/>> [accessed 19 January 2014]

<sup>61</sup> Llangollen Eisteddfod website, <<http://international-eisteddfod.co.uk/>> [accessed 19 January 2014]

composing, and to place it within the wider music scene. Titon offers the following general definition of “folk music”:

“Generally speaking, folk music comprises traditional, orally transmitted and regionally and ethnically based genres of music, often performed in small groups with a major everyday emphasis on face-to-face communication and social interaction.” (in Bauman, 1992, p. 167).

However, the term “folk” and its associated concepts of “folklore” and “folk music” is rich with associations, accrued through extensive usage in various forums over several centuries, to the extent that its borders of applicability and meaning are by no means unambiguous. Writing in 1984, Brailoiu alluded to the difficulties of definition and the unclear delimitation of “the sphere of folklore” (p. 9), asking:

“Have the intrinsic characteristics of folklore music been defined? Can they be? And by what methods?” (Brailoiu, 1984, p. 17)

Subsequent to Brailoiu’s publication, there has been extensive further enquiry into the origins of the term “folk” (and its close relatives such as “folklore”), the history of its use, and its precise meanings. Several have charted the term’s application back to eighteenth century Germany and, specifically, to its use by Herder in his enormously influential 1778-79 work (see, for example, Winter and Keegan-Phipps 2013, p. 5; Hield, 2010, p. 41, Bauman, 1992, p. 29, Gelbart, 2007). Francmanis, however, traces the Germanic etymological root of the word even further back, to a concept developed in thirteenth century Eastern Europe (2004, pp. 186-187); the notion of communities being unified and definable through having distinctive sets of shared ideas and behaviours must surely, in fact, be a recurrent theme throughout history. As Bauman points out (1992, p. 29), one of Herder’s major contributions was to stress a fundamental link between nations, languages, and “folklore” in general, including traditions and music (especially songs, thereby situating cultures firmly in specific social and geographical contexts (see Gelbart, 2007, pp. 256-268). Early definitions of “folklore” were remarkably broad for their coverage; Bauman cites Thoms’ early definition of 1787: “The manners, customs, observance, superstitions, ballads, proverbs etc. of the olden times” (1992, p. 29). Encapsulating the “art, literature, sciences and morality of the people”, such understandings forged close conceptual ties between “culture”, “identity” and “folk” (Gramsci, 1999, p. 135) – although it was not until later that the term’s compass extended, in some readings, to fathom a people’s whole “conception of the world” (ibid.).

Many commentators have subsequently emphasised the social base of the concept of “folk”. As Dundes suggested, for a group of people to be considered “folk” they simply have to have a certain level of shared understanding – or more specifically, shared tradition (Dundes, 1999, p. 35). At the

same time, it should be emphasised that the term “folk” is closely associated with various dichotomies. Historically, it has conjured up a distinction between urban and rural contexts – the “world of towns and villages” and the “countryside”. Williams’ definition of “folk” stresses the term’s historical link to the “pre-industrial, pre-urban, [...] pre-literate world” and the oral transmission that characterised life in that world (1986; see also Vansina 1985). Gramsci similarly underlines that the “traditional European” definition of “folk” was linked to “rural, uneducated peasants” and only later came to encompass the “urban proletariat” through the work of influential figures such as Gorki in the 1930s (1999, p. 132).

The term “folk” is also sometimes perceived in dichotomy with “art”. As Gelbart points out, for many people, there are distinctly hierarchical dynamics at work, with the music of the “folk” being considered lower in quality than the more highly rated “classical” or “art” music (Gelbart, 2007, pp. 256-268); accordingly, there is a long tradition of composers appropriating folk repertoire and “improving” it. This particular dichotomy naturally correlates with attitudes concerning class – the enduring perception that folk music is somehow “of the people” while art music is of the cultural elite (see, for example, Brailoiu, 1984, p. 3). Another often identified dichotomy is the “folk” versus “popular”, wherein folk culture may be regarded as somehow “purer” and more “authentic”. Bauman underlines this positive side of folklore’s image – its stabilising emphasis on social cohesion and continuity (in performance and transmission), which he considers “part of the Herderian legacy” (1992, p. 31). Indeed, folk musical practice, with its ceaseless continuity of transmission, stretches back beyond even the genesis of the notion of nationhood and, accordingly, has been labelled as “proto-national culture” by Bohlman:

“The genres of national music that preceded the nation were narrative [...] Those stories, often passed orally from singer to singer and from community to community, and often local or regional, were also part of a much larger historical complex; within which the threads of nascent national identity were woven together to form a whole that unified people in the early stages of nationhood.” (Bohlman, 2004, p. 36)

Gramsci, meanwhile, also highlights the other side of the coin: the negative perception of folklore as “backdated elements of popular culture” – distinctly backward-looking in the adherence to old models (Gramsci, 1999, p. 136-137; see also Middleton, 1985 on popular and national musics). As Bauman also points out, the apparent emphasis on reinterpreting the past and preserving tradition typically evokes certain stereotypes of conservatism (Bauman, 1992, p. 32).

In part, people’s perceptions of folklore and folk music have also been coloured by the way that traditional repertoires have previously been martialled by cultural authorities as a social-engineering tool in nation-building drives (see Harker, 1985). As Dundes points out, although many thinkers and

reformers have understood folk culture to be "material of the highest value deserving serious study" and meriting wider social integration (for example, through education), others such as Harker have been staunchly critical of those initiatives that have seemingly involved the appropriation and revision of traditional arts to serve the interests of the ruling class – a distinctly Marxist appraisal (Dundes, 1999, p. 133; Harker 1985). It should be noted, however, that there has been a backlash against Harker's rather polemical reflections; for example, following Bearman's criticism (2002), Winter and Keegan-Phipps re-evaluate Harker's work as "inflexible and selective" (2013, p. 7). Similarly, Atkinson builds upon Hobsbawm, Ranger and Boyes' views on the folk revivals, admitting that the collectors did make a major contribution by preserving non-commercial oral heritage of profound cultural significance (Atkinson, 2004, p. 147).

Regarding the perceptions of the current folk community, I have seen and heard little (if any) indication that the rural/urban distinction remains a salient consideration in their musical lives – although it should be noted that I mainly conducted interviews with people based in cities and towns – and, at the same time, any lingering class-related associations, expectations or standards were subtle and covert (my interviewees coming from a startling array of socio-economic backgrounds). However, despite an apparent penchant for inter-genre hybridisation (amongst certain parties) and the well-documented initiatives to institutionalise folk music (discussed further in Chapter 5.3.), it is clear that an "us and them" attitude persists in relation to the aforementioned folk/art and folk/popular dichotomies. In discussion, in order to highlight the perceived differences, interviewees would typically draw my attention to the distinctive socio-musical aspects of the folk scene – for example, the emphasis on sharing traditional knowledge and skills openly within the community.

The intimate link between the concepts of "folk" and "tradition" has been repeatedly discussed, building upon the early observations of pioneering collectors such as Cecil Sharp (see Winter and Keegan-Phipps, 2013, p. 5). Bauman, for example, states that the most important idea within the concept of "folklore" is indeed "tradition"; whether "tradition" is viewed favourably as a force for social cohesion and rootedness or pejoratively as an obstacle to modernism and social change, it is nevertheless invariably the vital condition that ensures folklore's continued existence (Bauman, 1992, p. 32). This same understanding is imbedded in Glassie's observation: "A song not folk at birth, we are told, must enter oral tradition to achieve the modifier 'folk'" (Glassie, 1970, p. 52). It is also clearly manifest within the International Folk Music Council's definition of "folk music" as "the product of a musical tradition that has been evolved through the process of oral transmission" (cit. Winter and Keegan-Phipps, 2013, p. 6). This latter definition highlights another characteristic feature of folk tradition – its emphasis on orality. Francmanis notably expands upon this theme, stressing the face-to-face informality that tends to typify (or even define) performance and transmission in folk

music contexts, and the fact that the activities of performing, teaching and learning are often inextricably intertwined (2004). At the same time, however, various academics have noted what Titon terms an “invasion” of classical methods of teaching and learning, professionalisation and institutionalisation into folk music, which tend “to work against oral tradition” by promoting standardisation and fixing elements that were formerly variable (Bauman, 1992, p. 169; see also Keegan-Phipps, 2008).

Despite the undeniably substantial overlap in meaning between “traditional music” and “folk music” and Winter and Keegan-Phipps’ claim that the words “folk” and “traditional” are “used interchangeably” in the English context (2013, p. 9), I actually encountered some subtle distinctions regarding the ways in which the two terms are used amongst contemporary folk musicians. Specifically, my quantitative survey revealed a strong tendency for musicians to use the word “traditional music” in a particularising manner to designate distinct repertoires and their associated styles of realisation, typically tying them to a specific region or regions (as in “traditional music from Northumberland”). Not surprisingly, musicians never described newly composed tunes that have not been widely accepted into the repertoire as “traditional”. Meanwhile, I found that the term “folk music” tended to be used in a less particularising manner, as an umbrella term encapsulating a range of different traditional forms and also newly composed music in the folk idiom. Thus, in common parlance, one can regularly encounter formulations like “a new folk tune” – contrary to Glassie’s claim above that “a song not folk at birth... must enter oral tradition to achieve the modifier ‘folk’” (Glassie, 1970, p. 52). Many young professional folk musicians treat the term “folk” as a very inclusive category. As Joe O’Connor told me: “‘folk’ tends to cover everything”<sup>62</sup>. Nikki Williamson expressed the same understanding, contrasting the broadly inclusive “folk” with the particularising “tradition”:

“I use the term ‘folk’ the first time I am talking to people, when they ask me what I am playing. I think it gives them more an idea of what it is than ‘traditional music’. Then if they say “oh, I like folk music”, then I break it down, with Irish, Northumbrian or, you know... More specific about the areas...”<sup>63</sup>

Ged Lawson enlarged upon this idea, stressing that folk music, as a field of activity, is inclusive and open in a manner that distinct traditions are not: “Folk music often absorbs tunes from other traditions if it can shape them into 32 bar tunes.”<sup>64</sup> Tom Kitching also uses the term “folk” in connection with a broadening of established boundaries telling me that his band *Interloper* “was created to explore the boundaries of English folk music”. In his words, the boundaries are often “too narrow, including only music from the South, or tunes collected in the South. The North needed to be

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<sup>62</sup> P. C. (Joe O’Connor, August 2011)

<sup>63</sup> P. C. (Nikki Williamson, 29 April 2012)

<sup>64</sup> P. C. (Ged Lawson, 29 April 2012)

something different to be recognized like borders, or Northumbrian music."<sup>65</sup> Significantly, Tom explained to me that the tunes he plays are chosen "from different places and different epochs, old and new."

At the same time, during my fieldwork, I encountered a substantial number of musicians who emphatically opposed the use of the word "folk music" to describe their music-making, instead forcibly asserting: "we play traditional music". It is clear that these particular musicians – invariably representing the traditionalist strain – are keen to distance their activities from those of the commercialised and commodified "folk music" movement, discussed in the next section.

#### **4.4. Commercialisation and commodification**

It is hard to overestimate the impact of commercialisation and commodification upon folk music culture: these processes have long served to turn locally prominent musicians into conspicuous culture-shaping figures within the broader folk scene, who perform on stage, headline at festivals, lead workshops and have their recordings widely marketed through multiple channels – thereby affecting culture-members' modes of involvement in musical events, aesthetic preferences, attitudes to performance and creativity, choices of repertoire, and approaches to interpretation. In short, folk music has become a commodity, "something that can be turned to commercial advantage, bought and sold" (Taylor, 2007, p. 281).

Writing in 1979, Woods states:

"Folk music is no longer a thing of the villages and local pubs [...] it has become a thing of concert platforms, tours and commercial recordings. The function of traditional singer is no longer to hold and transmit a core of songs in his own community, but to broadcast them at large, to strangers. Folk singers no longer represent a manifestation of village life, but a small segment of show-business." (Woods, 1979, p. 33)

This somewhat pessimistic view of the folk music scene is shared by many musicians and academics (see for example Limon, 1983, p. 43 on commercialisation's impact on the proletariat). Indeed, reference to – or even nostalgia for – an idealised past of local transmission is a recurring theme in interviews and writings. This is not to say that community and tradition-sharing contexts are no longer relevant in the current folk music scene; rather, it is the case that a sizeable strand of marketed culture has opened up within the scene, conjoined to the local music-making context (for many culture members) and yet clearly marked by different social codes of conduct and different kinds of involvement – in particular, centring upon commodified buyable and sellable goods and employing similar mechanisms as the popular music scene, albeit on a smaller scale. Interestingly, for

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<sup>65</sup> P. C. (Tom Kitching, March 2015)

“non folkies”, it is folk music’s stars and the cross-over folk rock stars that constitute the most perceivable part of the folk music-making world: for many, these figures represent what folk music is today. Thus, Woods’ observations about musical commodification hold true for the twenty-first century folk scene in England. In his book *The British Folk music Scene*, MacKinnon repeats similar sentiments:

"Music has become a commodity: for most people it has ceased to be an active medium of communication. It is something which is consumed, and through this transposition it has ceased to be part of the vernacular realm." (Mackinnon, 1994, p. 134)

Making modifications to traditional repertoire specifically with the objective of popularising it beyond its traditional confines is not a new phenomenon. Indeed, it can be traced back to the work of Cecil Sharp and his contemporary collectors; as Atkinson points out: "in certain cases they manipulated items editorially, in particular for the purpose of popular publication" (2004, p. 144; see also Burns, 2007). Many decades later, the same process has underpinned the world music movement – selecting suitable traditional musics, adapting them to make them palatable to outsiders, and commodifying them into marketable products. Feld points out the extraordinary plurality of musics that audiences have become accustomed to through these means since the commodification intensified in the 1980s: "Musics once very 'other' are now entirely familiar" (1992, p. 263). This world music is characterised by its "blurred boundaries between the exotic and the familiar, the local and the global in transnational popular culture" (1992, p. 266).

Responding to the commodification of music and the growth of the consumerist music market (notably during the second revival), many musicians and promoters have been drawn towards hybridisation by the prospects of reaching a larger audience, and thereby accruing greater profits, fame and influence. Associated with this, tourism often stimulates the adaptation of traditional repertoire to meet the tastes and expectations of foreign audiences. An example of this is the development of Irish music repertoires with modern instrumentation, which occurred in conjunction with the expanding tourist industry in the 1990s, when traditional music became an integral part of many tourist packages. Kaul notably explores the impact of tourism developments on the musical practices of pub sessions in Ireland, describing the contradictions between tourists' expectations of "authenticity" and the resulting processes of "commodification" (Kaul, 2007, pp. 705-707). McKerrell (2011) also examines the ways in which traditional musics have been moulded to conform to the desires and expectations of international audiences, mediated by the recording industry; specifically, he analyses the affiliations of Scottish bands, identifies the key factors circumstantial to the socio-political paradigms of Scotland in the 1970s, and explores the processes and decisions underlying the hybridisation of a distinctly national musical tradition (McKerrell, 2011, p. 3). While in some contexts,

hybridisation is frequently played down in the accompanying discourse in the interests of promoting perceptions of authenticity, the hybridisation of musical elements from contrasting cultural origins becomes a deliberately pronounced and defining feature in many World Music products; typically, traditional musics from different geographical regions are adapted to fit together in such a way as to promote the impression of a balanced cultural sharing.

Taylor explains that non-commodified musics can only become commodities through a complex system of interrelated processes:

“Music is never simply a commodity or, rather, it is never a commodity in a simple way. It is made into a commodity by a variety of processes that are dependent on its social uses, its industrial production, its brokering in the broadest sense including marketing, advertising, and other practices that are part of the infrastructure of consumer capitalist cultures. [...] it is not productive to speak simply of music as a commodity in general; one can only speak of particular ways and circumstances in which music becomes a commodity, and specific historical nodes in the complex history of the commodification of music in a particular culture. In short, to return to the introduction to Marx above, it is essential to view the commodity not simply as a social form that can be understood in and of itself, but a social form that must be understood historically and dialectically.”  
(Taylor, 2007, p. 302)

In the case of folk music, the above-mentioned processes of commodification have always tended to encourage (and be encouraged by) cross-genre hybridisation with popular musical forms. Indeed, as underlined by Winter and Keegan-Phipps, in the context of folk music in England, the "ambiguity and permeability of the boundaries" between commercially defined popular and folk music has remained an enduring feature for many years – most conspicuously manifested within the folk-rock movement (2013, p. 7; see also Sweers, 2004). Burns uses Sharp's descriptors of "Continuity, Variation and Authenticity" as a theoretical base to analyse the current place of folk-rock within the more general field of folk music, specifically "to describe a continuum in the contemporization of English folk music as folk-rock" (Burns, 2007, p. 196). While discerning a variety of positionings along this continuum, he recognises folk-rock's internal diversity and also its complementary relationship to the non-commodified tradition: "English folk-rock has arguably promoted awareness of English folk music among new audiences, leading to what might be regarded as a new folk revival" (Burns, 2007, p. 197). Thus, Burns represents the broader folk music world as distinctly multi-faceted and market-influenced. O'Shea similarly highlights that folk music's recent history is by no means linear and has been influenced, in all cases, by "traditions of musical production": "This is, then, a narrative, tracing cultural interactions and change through time. But trace is not a single line" (O'Shea, 1996, p. 208).

Folk-rock and other similarly commercialised folk-hybrids have been received in various ways by the folk community. Burns identifies the consistent presence of "anti-folk-rock factions" (Burns, 2007, pp. 200-201). As to be expected, traditionalist insiders have claimed that it constitutes a corrupt and corrupting representation of folk tradition, disliking its aesthetic deviation from standards and its appropriation of their own music culture. At the same time, Woods identifies another economic basis for dislike, noting that folk artists who "seek... commercial success" and make money out of their music-making are often construed as "selling out": "folk music is undeniably a minority interest [...] any folk-singer who makes money is clearly corrupt - and that is an attitude the folk world knows only too well" (1979, pp. 84-85). On the other end of the spectrum, there have always been factions within the folk community who have welcomed hybridisation (within certain limits) and disliked rigid adherence to old models. Mackinnon clearly belongs to this camp; while highlighting these opposite views, he strongly criticises the staunch traditionalists:

"The folk scene elucidates a fascinating coexistence, on the one hand as an art form building on past links and innovating in so doing, but on the other and also functioning to ossify, as a sort of song preservation society with close links to the past and the invented traditions of old pubs and so on, becoming itself a parody of the very features it is trying to emulate." (Mackinnon, 1994, p. 61)

Managing both of these standpoints, Jim Moray makes a clear distinction between the compositions which he creates "to earn money with" and which "tend to be in keeping with traditional music as a basis, even if that takes you off somewhere else", and those that he creates "because [he has] an impulse to do it".<sup>66</sup> Jim's comment emphasises that musicians (like anyone else) cannot avoid economic considerations while also highlighting that the audiences' and recording companies' expectations and perceptions of what should or shouldn't be included in a specific musical category play a significant role in the composition process. Furthermore, even though Jim points out that these two approaches to composition "do overlap", it is clear that his personal view and understanding of his own work has been moulded by commercial concerns and the commodification of folk music. Similarly, looking back at the generation of British folk artists in the 1980s, Young explains that they "had experienced some measure of commercial and popular success early on, but sought to kick their way free of expectations and create hybrid, idiosyncratic sound environments and, in a pop arena increasingly Americanised or homogenised for global consumption, maintain a distinctively British voice" (Young, 2010, p. 567).

Jessica Lamb and James Taylor mention a number of bands located towards the opposite end of Burns' continuum, that are usually associated with popular music, but which have been integrating

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<sup>66</sup> P. C. (Jim Moray, 26 August 2012)

"folky aspects" commonly linked to traditional music in their latest creations.<sup>67</sup> According to James, in this way, "they advertise folk."<sup>68</sup> Jessica notably mentions the use of internet means, and, in websites such as YouTube, the potential related links. She explains that "audiences might get carried along [...] to more traditional folk, like Kate Rusby, which is good because it means that these things get passed on."<sup>69</sup> Thus, it is clear that Burns' earlier perception about the complementary relationship between commercialised and non-commercialised folk music is still shared by folk musicians today. Like Jessica and James, Burns similarly emphasises that the current wave of interest in folk music, which he considers to constitute a "third folk revival", is not just audience-based but also festival-based – for adherents of both ends of the folk-rock continuum (Burns, 2007). Considering festivals to be a constantly changing context of folk music transmission and popularisation, he highlights the importance placed on conjuring up a suitably "folk club atmosphere both at Cambridge and Sidmouth" (Burns, 2007, p. 198). (See also Chapter 5.1.)

When asked how his music could best be categorised, Steve Knightley, member of the band *Show of Hands*, told me: "Folk music is what you are going to be called whether you want it or not."<sup>70</sup> This underlines the fact that, even though artists may have a clear opinion regarding how their music relates to other music and which category or categories it best relates to, the cultural hegemony of the music commercial market (including record labels, marketing outlets, festivals and performance venues) has served to impose a single category of designation (see also Winter and Keegan-Phipps' analysis of the commercial terminology "nu-folk", 2013, pp. 8-9).

Indeed, contemporary folk musicians are clearly very aware of the profound differences that exist between commercialised "folk music" and the "folk music" of the traditional music making context, such as the pub session. During my interview with them, Paul Archer and Martin Matthews, both regular session participants at the Elm Tree Pub in Durham, underlined the necessary "entertainment value" which some modern folk bands, such as Bellowhead, have embraced – considering this to be a major point of distinction. They notably illustrated their point by comparing Bellowhead's dynamic entertainment with a set of rapid jigs played by themselves. In the latter context, they recognised that "a normal audience" who does not know much about traditional music and does not know "what to listen for", would start clapping at the beginning because "they always do", but most probably would stop by the second tune because they would be "bored of it", "they think it's been going on for a bit long" or "they don't recognise the difference"; Bellowhead meanwhile provide

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<sup>67</sup> P. C. (Jessica Lamb, May 2012)

<sup>68</sup> P. C. (James Taylor, May 2012)

<sup>69</sup> P. C. (Jessica Lamb, May 2012)

<sup>70</sup> P. C. (Steve Knightley, August 2012)

more universally appreciable “entertainment for the masses.”<sup>71</sup> In this way, Paul and Martin recognise the pressure on the folk music scene: if it is to widen its audience, there is no choice but to adapt the repertoire, playing techniques and instrumentation in accordance with mainstream modern demands, de-prioritising adherence to traditional norms and old affiliations.

While professional musicians who perform and record tunes are under pressure to fit into established categories that are “in fashion” at the moment of diffusion, amateur musicians attending folk sessions tend to be more freely opinionated regarding what they do and how it fits in within the broader scene. As was mentioned in the previous section, even though pub sessions are commonly referred to as “folk music sessions”, a surprisingly large number of my interviewees strongly argued that the music they played in those contexts was not “folk” as such, but more accurately “traditional music”, with more recent tunes composed “in a traditional idiom”.<sup>72</sup> Typically, these musicians objected to “folk music”’s catch-all vagueness, stating the category of “folk music” is “too broad”<sup>73</sup> and formed of many different styles. At the same time, these traditionalists were keen to distance themselves from the hybridising sensibilities commonly manifest within the commercialised products marketed as “folk music” – sensibilities and approaches that they did not share. On the other side of the coin, professional folk musicians who record and perform on stage are obliged to formulate their own unique personal musical identities, deviating outside traditional norms in various ways while adhering to the commercial norms in others; accordingly, they must be careful regarding how and when they self-identify as “traditional musicians”. Therefore, it is clear that an “us and them” mentality persists, reflected in the use of the labels “folk” and “traditional”. However, it should be noted that, during my interviewing, I never encountered such unreserved animosity cast against the commercial strains of “folk music” as that expressed by Woods, who accuses modernised folk music to be “corrupted and cheapened traditional music”, and being “in the process of killing it”. (Woods, 1979, p. 101)

Overall, it has to be acknowledged that the label or description of a particular album or piece of music can be seen as playing only a small role in determining how it is perceived by the usual audience. In fact, folk musicians tend to sell a large number of their CDs at concerts, gigs and ceilidhs, as opposed to in general or specialised music stores, thus encouraging their current audience to support their band. The label of the albums would therefore not have a major impact on these sales – and, as Baker has stated, “[a]dmittedly, the terms used for the marketing of music have never been matter of scientific exactness” (2012, p. 246). Nonetheless, it is undeniable that labels such as

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<sup>71</sup> P. C. (Martin Matthews, April 2012)

<sup>72</sup> P. C. (Nicholas Till, 17 April 2012)

<sup>73</sup> P. C. (Damian Caisley, 19 April 2012)

"traditional", "folk" or "world music" will significantly colour the perceptions of potential new audiences who are just encountering the music for the first time. Meanwhile, these labels have strong implications for how musics are catalogued and disseminated by communication and marketing channels.

#### 4.5. Conclusions

This chapter has shed light on the differing perceptions and views fostered within the folk musical scene in twenty-first century England, specifically regarding styles, genres and subgenres and the various labels that are attached to them. The understanding of these categories and labels has evidently been shaped by commercial needs and by diverse ideas relating to folk music's history, its varied fields of activity, and its relationships with other musics within the broader cultural sphere. As Bauman has pointed out, in the contemporary globalising world, wide availability to a profusion of localised traditional forms and glocalised hybridised forms has engendered a huge range of musical labels – "evidence of pluralism of music and culture" (1991, p. 23). At the same time, a need has evidently arisen to develop a range of hazily-bordered super-categories that can encompass the vast range of hybrid artistic creations representing trans-national complex identities. Thus, rather than pinpoint stylistic origins at the local level, terms like "Celtic music", "World music" and "Folk music" are now used to commercialise music in the globalising world – in the process, transforming the characterisation and perception of traditional and folk musical repertoire in the community. Nonetheless, it has also been underlined that dominant perceptions harboured by and disseminated by the mainstream are regularly contested by individuals: musicians' naturally develop their own independent points of view about music, forged over the course of their lives, based on countless socio-musical encounters. It is not surprising that the majority of folk musicians, both professional and amateur, prefer to identify their music according to the specific regions, smaller cultural areas and contexts with which they have personally forged strong socio-musical relationships.

Furthermore, this chapter has also highlighted the issues raised by the processes of hybridisation, when highly personalised musical expressions are devised that do not fit perfectly within pre-existing categories. The problems surrounding the classification and categorisation of style are foregrounded on account of the fact that so many musicians are keen to challenge established socio-musical boundaries through musical experimentation – looking beyond the confines of a single region-defined musical tradition for inspiration. As has been discussed above, hybridisation can occur in diverse ways and to varying extents: there is a continuum of hybridity which ranges from the introduction of an unusual instrument, to the introduction of repertoire and ways of playing from other traditions, to the introduction of distinctly irregular features of harmony, rhythm or melody gleaned from beyond the tradition and expressed through new tunes (which may subsequently then

enter the tradition). Despite the enduring emphasis on community within the folk world, it is clear that many folk enthusiasts have complex lives that straddle multiple styles, locations, and types of musical involvement. Thus, the abiding impression is one of individualism.

## 5. Teaching and sharing traditional and folk music in the globalising world

Happening in conjunction with folk music's commodification and commercialisation, changes in the methods of teaching and sharing folk music are arguably the most visible and largest scale manifestation of globalising tendencies. Already in 1979, Woods observed: "Folk music has been wrenched into a false context and will never be quite the same again" (Woods, 1979, p. 33). Whilst the changes that the folk music scene has been undergoing throughout the twentieth century and still today are undeniable, many musicians and academics are not so pessimistic about them as Woods was. Adrian McNally summarises recent changes in folk music transmission, focusing specifically on the scene in England, by underlining two identifiable tendencies:

"Folk music as a performance art has never been healthier, there have never been more performers and more people going to see concerts of folk music [...] but there have also never been fewer people [...] actually playing or actually take part [...] so it is just the function of folk music that has changed."<sup>74</sup>

The roles played by formal education in the transmission of folk music and the reverse effect of the inclusion of folk music in the school curriculum have been widely studied since Cecil Sharp's research. The work of Ramnarine (1996), for example, specifically explores folk musical education in Finland, notably attempting to draw a comparison with the current state of folk music education in England, looking at the impact of different initiatives on both scenes. Ramnarine's work is illustrative of the type of folkloristic and educational research being undertaken across borders on the topic of traditional music and education-centred initiatives for its preservation. More recent studies include the work of Keegan-Phipps, notably looking at the formalisation and institutionalisation of folk music education in England (Keegan-Phipps, 2007; Keegan-Phipps, 2008). As well as a proliferation of folk festivals created during the second half of the twentieth century, adding a new dimension to the

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<sup>74</sup> P. C. (Adrian McNally, August 2011)

ways in which culture is experienced, transmitted and transformed, recent years have also seen the creation of new formal environments for learning and teaching folk music and folk cultures, such as the Folk Degree (offered by Newcastle University), a variety of summer schools, and the Ethno-World project – an “International program for folk, world and traditional music... aimed at young musicians aged 13-30 with a mission to revive and keep alive global cultural heritage amongst youth.”<sup>75</sup> Outside the informal pub session, these are the types of institution that are relied upon the most by enthusiasts for learning, teaching, playing and being members of the larger folk community.

### 5.1. Festivals

Folk festivals play a fundamental part in the folklife of the UK – the term “folklife” being well-suited to indicating dominant cultural affiliations, an enduring strong sense of community, and the fact that being a culture member impacts upon one’s whole lifestyle. This is confirmed by the website *UK Folk Festivals*, listing 350 in 2013, over 220 of them in England.<sup>76</sup> As *UK Folk Festivals* records, these festivals vary greatly in size, with attendance ranging from a few hundred to several thousand.<sup>77</sup> They also vary regarding the ways in which attendees can become involved: some focus much more on the observation of headlining acts, while others offer participation at ceilidhs and other dances, music sessions, instrumental and dance workshops, as well as activities for children and family.

For a large proportion of folk enthusiasts, these festivals constitute focal features in their cultural lives – valuable opportunities to experience first-hand the scene’s internal diversity, to observe and appreciate the artistic skills of leading cultural figures, and to enjoy feeling a part of a larger affinity community that extends far beyond the local. As such, festivals serve to complement the smaller-scale local community activities that are organised more regularly, such as pub music sessions or, more occasionally, ceilidhs, concerts, or one-off workshops. Beyond the boundaries of England, Merran Nugent and Kirsten Hendry, participants of Ethno Sweden 2012 from the Shetland Islands, mentioned that, for them, folk festivals are first-and-foremost ideal places to find “new ideas”, drawing from different regional techniques, repertoires and styles to develop one’s own personal style (see Chapter 4.1.2.). At the same time, Merran and Kirsten emphasised that festivals serve the crucial function of aiding preservation – for them, “keep the heritage of Shetland fiddle alive”.<sup>78</sup> Sheridan, MacDonald and Byrne similarly emphasise the importance of festivals in the preservation of traditional music (2011). Based on the Scottish Gaelic example of “fèisean” (festivals) and interviews of traditional singers, their comparison of “Ceilidh” and “Feis” cultures demonstrates the fundamental role played by festivals as social gatherings. Fundamentally, they serve two purposes:

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<sup>75</sup> <<http://www.ethno-world.org/info/>> [accessed 17 January 2016]

<sup>76</sup> UK Folk Festivals, The Big List <<http://www.ukfolkfestivals.co.uk/viewall.php>> [accessed 16 November 2013]

<sup>77</sup> UK Folk Festivals <<http://www.ukfolkfestivals.co.uk/index.php>> [accessed 16 November 2013]

<sup>78</sup> P. C. (Kirsten Hendry, July 2012)

the construction, definition and solidification of communities and the continued performance and transmission of identity-defining cultural heritage. Leyshon, Matless and Revill further emphasise festivals' importance as foci for what they term "an imagined community" (1998, p. 17), although it should be noted that for participants the community is certainly experienced as "real", albeit a rather fragmented and temporary community. They conclude that "such sociospatial specificities help produce a form of self-consciously crafted regional identity".

Many short studies, reports and reviews of music festivals were published, relatively sporadically, prior to the folk music "boom" of the second revival in the 1950s (For a report on the creation of a local music festival, see Corder, 1883). A profusion of such documentation has followed during the second half of the twentieth century, relating to festivals in the British Isles and abroad. Most often published in newspapers or performance journals, as one would expect, they are almost always limited to commenting on the concerts' performers and their performances, rather than exploring the audiences' reception, the dynamics between performers and audience, or the dynamics of cultural transmission occurring within participative events – these areas of enquiry naturally requiring a more sociological and ethnographical approach.

The study of folk festivals has been particularly well developed in the context of Scandinavian folk music, with a specific emphasis on international folk festivals (See Ramnarine, 1996; Clark, 1999; Ronström, Malm and Lundberg, 2001; Thedens, 2001; Vail, 2003). Studies of folk festivals have also been undertaken in reference to other European localities, for example by Bröcker (1996) and Hanneken (2001), writing about festivals in Germany, and Elschek (2001), discussing festivals in Slovakia. The latter offers a particularly worthwhile typology of festivals, comparing their various defining elements and assessing their impact upon the wider understanding and experience of "folklore" in modern society. Meanwhile, evaluating the cultural impact of festivals in the United States, there are further studies by Eyerman and Barretta (1996), Genter (1996) and Satterwhite (2005).

Despite this profusion of studies acknowledging the importance of festivals as a cultural force outside of the UK, very little has been written to address folk festivals in England or in the United Kingdom – even though it is apparent that they constitute focal features in many enthusiasts' lives. The aim of this section is to apply an ethnographical approach to the comparative study of various regular folk festivals in the UK, assessing the impact of these multi-faceted cultural contexts on the folk music audience, on approaches to repertoire and style, and on the broader folk music scene in general.

### 5.1.1. Non-residential Festivals

Non-residential folk festivals represent the majority of music festivals in England and their impact upon attendees' learning and teaching is substantial. For obvious practical and financial reasons, the attendees of such festivals tend to be more locally based, in contrast with the residential festivals. Nevertheless, the short term nature of these events, as well as their reputation and promotion beyond the local community, ensures that they attract a much wider audience than the usual regular attendees of local folk music concerts and classes – the most committed and active music-making “folkies”. Furthermore, as well-recognised special events, some of these festivals manage to invite tutors and performers not only from far afield in the UK but also from abroad, the latter often participating as part of a tour. The invited performers typically offer performances (often of a collaborative nature in which hybridism is explicitly celebrated) and workshops focusing on their particular styles.

As has been discussed earlier, folk song within the UK has been subjected to processes of standardisation and institutionalisation, both during the first revival and in current times, for example through the Folk Degree (see also Keegan-Phipps, 2007, 2008). However, it is evident that such approaches have tended to be complemented by other rather contrasting initiatives, particularly to tackle the issue of dwindling interest amongst the young. Referring to Celtic musical tradition, Bohlman quotes Chapman to pinpoint how music transmission is enhanced through being connected with complementary activities (in this case language-learning) within the context of larger events:

"Festivals and competitions of Celtic choral groups from Europe's Atlantic littoral – one would say "Gaelic-singing", not "Gaelic-speaking" groups – combine their insistence on Gaelic repertoires with special workshops, or schools attached to festivals, in which language is taught." (Bohlman, 2004, p. 224)

Similarly, in festivals and summer schools held the UK (and elsewhere), although the focus may be explicitly on music and dance, the transmission of the musical facet of folk culture is both enforced and rendered meaningful through being presented within a variety of different forums (including ceilidhs, sessions, workshops, storytelling events and so on) and through being tied to broader “lore” – details about cultural traditions, influential historical figures, social history, dialects and languages, and so on. Hence, one might say that music festivals are not just about music.

The development of new ways of teaching and exchanging folk music across cultures (inter-regionally and inter-nationally) represents a considerable expansion of culture members' horizons beyond the previous focus upon localised involvement. Naturally, it correlates with contemporary visions of folk music as open to different influence and exchanges, and as a means of expression for a multicultural

youth. Many folk events celebrate this ethos of openness, offering forums to engage with diverse folk traditions from both near and far – both the “familiar” and the “exotic”. In contrast to the local pub session, these events are not geared towards consolidating localised socio-musical relationships but rather towards forging connections between local and global folk cultures – notably, conceived of in opposition to mainstream global pop cultures. A festival that illustrates this approach very well is “Fiddles on Fire”, held in London and Gateshead in April 2009 and every other year since. Gathering together people of different origins and with different musical identities, these festivals run practical workshops led by a large number of international visitors, exploring regional traditional musics such as Danish folk music, Northumbrian folk music and Old Time American tunes, and also addressing Diasporic forms such as Klezmer. Following the model mentioned above, the onus is not simply upon learning musical patterns: with extensive contextualisation provided regarding language, aesthetics, history and the socio-musical contexts of music-making, the music appears to function as a vehicle for accessing cultures more generally – and vice versa. At the same time, however, the scope of representation can never be truly all-inclusive and balanced: it is apparent that fashions in hybridisation exist and, accordingly, certain cultures are always better-represented than others. At the 2013 Fiddles on Fire Festival, for instance, while the Far East was not represented at all (unsurprisingly), a large proportion of workshops and performances were devoted to Scandinavian, Swedish and Norwegian music, alongside the more expected events in English, Irish and Scottish music. In this way, Nina Fjeldet and Maja Graverermoen Toresen, two young Norwegian fiddlers, played prominent roles in performing and teaching. Significantly, the Festival always closes with the workshop tutors leading their groups in a one-off performance – a ritual celebrating cultural diversity and hybridism, with duets and other small ensembles demonstrating how they have successfully shared repertoires, techniques and traditions.

Although deviating from traditional modes of transmission and going against tradition’s central preoccupation with upholding stylistic boundaries, such exercises in cross-cultural fusion are evidently highly popular, engaging new audiences in a manner that meets contemporary outlooks and complex identities and thereby helping to ensure that knowledge and skills are perpetuated.

At Fiddles on Fire, the workshops are organised in sets that are evidently geared towards meet the needs and requirements of diverse enthusiasts. As well as day long workshops for “total beginners”, there are sessions aimed at beginners (“First steps”, “Next steps” and “Up for a challenge”), and sessions for intermediate and advanced participants. The most remarkable category of workshop, called “New2Folk”, is explicitly directed at amateurs (mainly adults) who have some experience of playing the violin but not of playing in the folk idiom. Hence, the focus is upon developing a “folk style” of playing, and getting a “folk sound” out of their instrument. Crucially, the focus is upon

highlighting the differences between folk playing and classical playing, especially detailing the former's different bowing techniques, rhythmic accentuation and oral/aural-reliance (as opposed to text-reliance). In this way, participants are not only introduced to the basics of folk fiddling but also enculturated to the enduring folk/art dichotomy that still contributes to identity-definition within the scene, along with the folk/pop dichotomy (see Chapter 4.1).

At Fiddles on Fire, the workshops offer opportunities not only to develop skills but also to interact with and form a relationship with the workshop leaders – influential figures within the folk scene who are generally willing to share their personal experiences. At times during the workshops, the focus turns away from the transmission of musical patterns and onto the workshop leader's personal story of involvement. This happened, for example, at Kevin Burke's "Irish Tunes" workshop at Fiddles on Fire 2011. This workshop was one of the most popular of the festival, and the classroom was full of about 20 amateur fiddle players. Kevin spent a large part of the workshop talking about his musical life, his youth and the way he learnt to play, so much so that after half an hour, the participants had still not started playing. Someone asked whether they could "start learning a tune instead of hearing stories", prompting others to disagree, stating that they would rather hear this remarkable musician's stories than add an extra tune to their repertoire. Significantly, Kevin's own response was to explain that this was actually his way of teaching music. This turn of events thus highlighted how, for Kevin (like for most others in the folk scene), music is indeed inextricably linked with personal relationships and, indeed, with all other facets of culture and folklore (see Chapter 4.2): folk music's oral transmission occurs in conjunction with a whole package of accompanying lore. For the festival participants, this was an opportunity to enter the broader sphere of folk life, enjoying a kind of intimacy that has effectively been transposed from the local community session into the classroom. Even though the majority of Kevin Burke's personal account is actually duplicated and extended on his website, most participants nevertheless relished the opportunity to interact, ask questions, elicit advice and find commonalities with their own musical histories – thereby becoming personally invested in the learning endeavour.

Despite demonstrating broad-reaching cross-cultural coverage looking far beyond the local, it should be noted that Fiddles on Fire is nevertheless a local event. Like other folk music events such as the Hexham Gathering and Durham Gathering, it is organised by Folkworks, a multifaceted organisation that aims to promote folk music around the North-East of England, through "develop[ing] interest and practical involvement in traditional music, song and dance".<sup>79</sup> Indeed, because like these festivals are non-residential, the vast majority of participants live locally. However, while the potential

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<sup>79</sup> The Sage Gateshead, Folkworks, About us, <<http://www.sagegateshead.com/about-us/folkworks/about-folkworks/>> [Last accessed 10 October 2013]

audience for this type of festival is relatively small, the impact of the events on the local communities where they take place is correspondingly greater: outside of the festival timeframe, the participants can pursue their involvement further by joining other events in the locality – sessions and clubs that promoted and advertised during the festival.

### 5.1.2. Campsite Festivals

A large number of residential folk festivals are organised around Britain, mainly during the summer, centring on concerts, workshops and merchandise stalls and mainly attracting younger generation enthusiasts. These festivals, which are generally held over a long weekend or a week, are usually organised around a set of marquees where the various events are held, with most of the festival-goers camping on the periphery of the site. The programmes of these festivals are generally centred around performances, with several headlining concerts and ceilidh dances spread throughout each day. Some music or dance workshops are organised in the mornings, and broadly inclusive music making sessions are held all day, enabling folk music enthusiasts of all different levels to join in, hone their skills, experiment with unfamiliar styles, and enjoy developing socio-musical relationships with others. These festivals also provide forums for more experienced musicians, dancers or callers to learn new material for their personal repertoires, through workshops, sessions, performance, or informal interaction. Moreover, besides the stages for the headlining acts, such festivals provide other venues (typically tents) for less famous folk musicians to perform in and test their material on receptive audiences. In addition, many festivals organise "open mic" events and competitions, generally offering the winner a spot on one of the main stages at the festival or an invitation to perform at the festival the following year. Winning an open mic competition can have a very significant impact upon the performers' careers. In Towersey Village Festival, for example, the competition involves several rounds with the competitors performing on increasingly prestigious and focal stages – jettisoning the winner to a position of considerable prominence and influence.

In more recent years, initiatives have been taken to encourage the involvement of children and teenagers in folk music. Towersey, for example, is renowned for being a "family friendly" festival and, in August 2011, it notably integrated a "children's festival", provided by Shooting Roots (see Keegan-Phipps 2008, pp. 273-292) – an organisation that offers music workshops and activities for children, held by qualified members of staff. It is remarkable that these events, organised for the youngest participants in the festivals, are often the most multi-cultural in ethos. For example, at Shrewsbury folk festival in August 2012, workshops of African dance were offered to the young people, who performed on a festival stage at the end of the week. Evidently, operations such as Shooting Roots work not only to initiate the young into the symbols, behaviours and aesthetics of British folk culture (as documented by Keegan-Phipps, 2008); at the same time, they promote an ethos of openness and

hybridism. Amongst the professional folk musicians that I interviewed, when asked why they started to play folk music, the vast majority of them replied that they inherited their passions from their parents and from having been to folk festivals during their childhood. Festivals can therefore be regarded as vitally influential identity-shaping events within people's lives – and, within such contexts, it is not unreasonable to assert that small initiatives such as teaching African dance may well exert considerable influence over participants' future creative developments, setting up an enduring penchant for hybridism.

Most festivals can rely on a large proportion of participants coming regularly every year, especially as families; the festival is a recurrent feature within the family's calendar that, while prolonging strong ties to the broader affinity community, serves as a stabilising force in their lives. Meanwhile, it is apparent that many of the participants actually attend several festivals each summer, thereby establishing a larger and richer network of relationships and involvements. Indeed, emphasising the features of recurrence, social interaction and community, as Woods underlines, "Festivals are more like reunions than anything else". (1979, p. 91) Although some major festivals are scheduled on the same weekend (Shrewsbury Folk Festival and Towersey Village Festival, for instance), it is not uncommon that festival goers attend several festivals in a row – for example, attending Whitby Folk Week but leaving a day early to travel down to either Towersey or Shrewsbury. These overlaps also have an impact on programming, with headlining artists sometimes travelling (or declining to travel) from one festival in one region to another quite far away. In this way, for example, in Summer 2012, the band Blowzabella performed both at Towersey and Shrewsbury; after settling in Towersey village, they drove north to Shrewsbury to play at a day-time ceilidh before driving back to Towersey to play there. The fact that musicians and participants alike travel regularly and routinely across different regions to engage in the folk scene has naturally influenced the ways that people develop personal style – notably, encouraging drawing from diverse sources. At the same time, it has eroded the maintenance of regional styles; a song originally from Suffolk can be heard anywhere across the UK and one may not ever know of its older regional-affiliations (see also Chapter 4.1.2 about style).

### **5.1.3. Whitby Folk week**

Each festival has its own distinct identity and Whitby folk week is widely regarded to be one of the most distinctive. It is one of the most popular folk festivals in Northern England and draws large crowds of enthusiasts despite not providing extensive accommodation and not being centred around headline concerts. Rather, the week is oriented towards participation at workshops and sessions, as underlined by Chris Stephenson, who has been on the board of directors for Whitby Folk Week for

seven years.<sup>80</sup> During the week, over 600 events take place around the town of Whitby, which make it "the biggest traditional festival in England". Several thousand season tickets are sold every year, as well as single event tickets sold on the day. Evaluating the total number of attendees is thus made extremely difficult, but it seems to reach 10,000 to 12,000 people. Nonetheless, these numbers do not reflect the greater impact of Whitby Folk Week. Chris explains that the setting of the festival in a holiday location greatly affects both the participants' experience and the local community, as does the fact that the event takes place in August, the peak of the holiday season. The festival's campsites only accommodate a very small proportion of the ticket holders, the others staying with friends, in B&Bs or hotels. Overall, including non-ticket holders, the festival sees over a hundred thousand people swarming around the streets of Whitby and filling the many venues. Indeed, what Chris calls "the free side" of the festival consists of many free events taking place across town during the week.<sup>81</sup>

Hosting such a large programme of events across a week obviously requires the involvement of a very large number of contributors. Chris Stephenson explains that, as well as a large number of volunteering staff to help organise and run the festival, about 450 artists take part and run workshops during the week, including the Morris dancing team members.<sup>82</sup> In this way, Whitby Folk Week is very different from the majority of other festivals, where the programmes are based on headline concerts given by touring professionals. However, it is clear that an enormous number of influential folk musicians and dancers do attend Whitby, contributing at concerts, ceilidhs, workshops or interviews. As in other folk festivals, a good proportion of events are oriented towards families, children and a younger public who tend to come back year after year. In my discussion with Chris, he particularly highlighted a desire to "encourage the involvement of younger people" and, through emphasis on participation and diversity (with workshops on traditional crafts, storytelling, and other areas included), to "bring the tradition to life".<sup>83</sup>

Many of the events at Whitby seek to recreate traditional local community contexts of musical sharing of the type that are scattered across the UK. For example, traditional folk sessions are held in pubs all day, every day. However, the Whitby pub sessions reveal markedly different dynamics of interaction to those encountered in local sessions. Whereas in local music sessions in England, the rules of conduct (regarding who can do what, when and how) are not explicitly stated and the hierarchy of status amongst participants is only implied, this cannot be achieved in Whitby – simply because the participants do not know one another well enough to have developed the crucial shared

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<sup>80</sup> P. C. (Chris Stephenson, 31 December 2013)

<sup>81</sup> P. C. (Chris Stephenson, 31 December 2013)

<sup>82</sup> P. C. (Chris Stephenson, 31 December 2013)

<sup>83</sup> P. C. (Chris Stephenson, 31 December 2013)

knowledge. Rather, a very different dynamic prevails during the Whitby Folk Week, with pub sessions being actively led by prescribed professionals or a band who provide advice and guide the choice of repertoire. Some leaders give opportunities to participants to start a tune or set of their choice, either picking particular people to contribute or allowing the responsibility to be passed freely around between participants (which is particularly reassuring for less skilled people). In other sessions, the leaders dictate what will be played, generally focusing on their own specialism or compositions). Occupying the middle ground between these extremes are those sessions in which the leaders encourage participants to request tunes to be started by them (the leaders) or by the band. In the latter case, the band usually creates a set out of the requests, typically communicating across the room which piece is about to begin and explaining chord sequences before beginning to play and setting the tempo for all the participants to join in. In contrast with the traditional local pub session where participants typically arrive one by one as the music-making is in progress, at the Whitby sessions, the majority of attendees arrive up to an hour early, trying to grab optimally-positioned seats (generally in the heart of the music-making space) before the music-making promptly begins on the direction of the session-leader. Indeed, in Whitby, it is often a challenge to find a seat, which is the cause of much disappointment and puzzlement for those who are thoroughly accustomed to the dynamics of the local sessions. Yet another point of distinction between the typical local session and the Whitby sessions concerns the nature of the repertoire played. As discussed earlier, at the local session, it is commonplace to encounter a diverse array of tunes, originating from various parts of the UK and Ireland, much of unknown authorship but also some tunes with known composers. However, each Whitby session has a clear focus upon a specific tradition, style or body of repertoire. From looking at the programme it is usually possible to deduce what a session will be like, by considering the session leader's personal musical identity and the size and character of the venue and, in some cases, further indication is provided. For example, the programme for Whitby Folk Week 2013 promoted a session for "fast and furious tunes" led by young semi-professional folk musicians who have notably been playing within the context of Folkworks for a few years. Unsurprisingly, this session was aimed at, and successfully attracted, a large number of young and experienced folk musicians and very few beginners.

As Chris explained to me, Whitby Folk Week is particularly distinctive for offering such a dense programme of events – packed within a small space of time and within a small geographical space.<sup>84</sup> The fact that season ticket holders are free to go from one event to another at any time, with the event's settings being in different places across town, greatly affects the festival-goers' approaches to the programme: in particular, it encourages a highly eclectic approach to cultural involvement, where

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<sup>84</sup> P. C. (Chris Stephenson, 31 December 2013)

participants eagerly pursue a wide selection of cultural offerings in rapid succession.<sup>85</sup> Concerts at Whitby Folk Week usually feature several successive artists and bands, and it is not unusual for ticket holders to switch venues before the end of a concert in order to head off for another event. On the other hand, some workshops take place over several days or even the whole week, allowing more than a brief exposure to a selected tradition, and, in these cases, most participants adopt a more committed and focused approach. The clogging workshops offered by "Camden Clog", a Lancashire Stepdancing team based in London, and "Green Ginger", a team founded in the 1970s in the Hull area, constitute examples of lengthy series spread across the whole week. In the case of the "Camden Clog" sessions, each participant gets examined at the end of the week and, if successful, receives a printed certificate stating the achieved level of accomplishment.

The Whitby Folk Week also offers numerous talks by collectors such as Doc Rowe. Doc has been a collector for several decades, going to folk sessions and recording and filming them as often as possible, using the technology available at the time. His extensive personal archives have contributed to the creation of documentaries, notably for the BBC, and to several commercially available DVDs. Even though these publications are available to any member of the public, Whitby Folk Week offers enthusiasts an opportunity to connect in person with this important leading figure within the scene, usually in the context of the Coliseum Theatre. The centrality and size of the venue correlates with the widely perceived cultural importance of the man (Doc Rowe), his extensive activities as collector, archivist and disseminator, and his public presentation. Indeed, Doc's presentation is one of the lynchpin events during Whitby Folk Week, serving to provide historical contextualisation for the other events, to highlight the artistry of folk heroes of the past and present, and to illustrate the importance of preservation. In his presentation, Doc shows diverse extracts from his extensive personal archives, explaining how the key figures shown in his films relate to their contemporaries and successors, clarifying in what ways music-making practices and contexts have changed, and identifying areas of continuity. He also, crucially, explains why it is important to document and make sense of folk culture, as he himself has done over many decades.

Whitby Folk Week also offers a series of public interviews with folk artists and these events tend to attract large audiences even though they are held early in the morning, with the most enthusiastic attendees queuing up early in order to secure good seats. The interviews are usually held in the conservative club, in the "big room upstairs", which is rarely big enough to accommodate the audience. As detailed earlier, events such as these tend to be deemed very important amongst folk culture members, where it is recognised that music and its transmission is tied up inextricably with a

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<sup>85</sup> P. C. (Chris Stephenson, 31 December 2013)

complex of personal relationships, attitudes and, in fact, all facets of culture and folklore. Accordingly, many enthusiasts are keen to know the rich wealth of accompanying lore that surrounds and gives added layers of meaning to the musical patterns. Meanwhile, of course, the experts often provide helpful advice and models of effective behaviour to the attendees while, in the process, strengthening the community.

## 5.2. "Ethno-World"

### 5.2.1. The organisation and ethos

Following the same trend as Folkworks Summer School (see chapter 5.3.1), Ethno-World is another initiative to create new environments for young people to share traditional musics of varied origins. Participants refer to individual Ethno-World events interchangeably as "Ethno event", "Ethno camp", "Ethno summer school", "Ethno exchange", or simply "Ethno" as a countable noun. Ethno is specifically organised for folk music enthusiasts between the ages of 16 and 30 to meet in different countries around the world and share their musical cultures. With these events being held in many different countries, to encourage a suitably diverse body of participants, the organisers arrange their pricing to make it substantially less expensive for people coming from abroad. In this way, young musicians are more likely to attend an Ethno event in another country than in their own. The organisers state that Ethno's main aim is to provide a conducive forum in which "young folk musicians [can] meet to teach each other, by ear, traditional folk songs from their cultures"<sup>86</sup>. Perhaps the most significant formulation here is "by ear" since it indicates the primacy of oral tradition and therefore an overriding focus upon folk and traditional musics.

The first Ethno was held in Sweden in 1990, and the now-regular Ethno Sweden remains the most attended of all of these events. In 2012, it gathered 96 participants from over 20 different countries. Ethno Flanders is the second oldest and second most popular. Even though the various Ethno events are formally supported by the Ethno World committee, the organisers for each event take primary responsibility for recruiting participants and organising the programme in accordance with their specific logistical considerations. Ethno Flanders, for example, is limited to 60 participants, this relatively small intake being fixed by the organisers with the aim of ensuring a close-knit dynamic within the group. Other Ethno events have been held less regularly in countries as varied as France, England, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Jordan, Uganda and, more recently, India. The attendance at these events is lower than for the oldest Ethno events (Ethno Sweden and Ethno Flanders), which is partly on account of the fact that most of them came into being when an attendee from an earlier Ethno event expressed a desire to hold a similar event in their own country. Interestingly, most of the

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<sup>86</sup> Ethno World <<http://www.ethno-world.org>> [accessed 20 April 2012]

current organisers and so-called “artistic leaders” did indeed first experience Ethno as participants, having attended several Ethnos in different countries, including both the well established and newer events. This is a clear indication of just how close-knit the Ethno organisation, artistic leaders and participants are as a social unit – bound together by a shared ethos of multi-culturalism and hybridism. In 2012, Allan Skrobe was the “head leader” for Ethno Sweden, a position which he describes as “the spokesman for the leaders [...] in charge of just taking the decisions [...] and the contact with the main organiser.”<sup>87</sup> Long before that, he first became involved in Ethno in 1999. He explained to me: “from that point, I’ve been working on the Swedish Ethno almost every year [...] and then [...] went around to almost every Ethno.”<sup>88</sup> He specifically mentions having taken part in 25 Ethno events, and identifies himself as an “Ethno veteran”.<sup>89</sup> Allan’s comments to me highlighted how, over the years, he has forged a complex socio-musical network spanning multiple locations and nationalities and a diverse array of musical cultures.

Myriam De Bonte, a member of the Ethno committee, explained to me that the organisation’s objectives are far-reaching, particularly geared towards expansion. The Ethno organisers meet regularly in various parts of the world, “to work on some common projects [...] pedagogical, workshops, website, publicity, documentation, and archives... We support new Ethnos who want to start, new countries who want to organise Ethno. We support them and we try to guide them in this process. That is the most important thing.”<sup>90</sup> In our conversation, she also mentioned having taken the initiative of organising a workshop, not dissimilar to Ethno, in Bulgaria, “spreading the idea of exchanging and making people meet.”<sup>91</sup>

### 5.2.2. Programme, events and happenings

Ethno events are typically a week long in duration and, throughout this whole period, the participants are divided into a number of smaller groups composed of mixed instruments. Each day, several representatives from different countries lead a series of workshops in which they alternate in teaching a couple of tunes or songs from their tradition to all the groups of musicians. Participants are commonly faced with diverse challenges, including: difficulties in trying to explain nuances of realisation using a foreign language; difficulties in trying to adapt traditional material from one region for execution on an instrument from another region; and difficulties in trying to remember and reproduce complex new musical ideas (and entirely aurally/orally, in keeping with Ethno’s ethos). Nonetheless, these challenges and the unique sounds that result are some of the most rewarding

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<sup>87</sup> P. C. (Allan Skrobe, 06 July 2012)

<sup>88</sup> P. C. (Allan Skrobe, 06 July 2012)

<sup>89</sup> P. C. (Allan Skrobe, 06 July 2012)

<sup>90</sup> P. C. (Myriam De Bonte, 31 July 2013)

<sup>91</sup> P. C. (Myriam De Bonte, 31 July 2013)

features of the Ethno experience: this is a powerful experience of trans-national, trans-cultural interpersonal fusion. Throughout the week, the workshops are guided by the artistic leaders, who intervene to help in the communication processes when necessary, suggesting suitable arrangements that meet the needs and skills of the participants and their particular instruments. The leaders also organise performances. At the end of each day, the various groups assemble in a large space and merge what they have learnt – thereby adding another layer of sharing and enabling the whole throng to experience and celebrate their commonness of purpose. With four or five workshops per day, as well as the general rehearsal, after half a week, the unusual orchestra has learnt a substantial programme, which they then perform at folk festivals and concert venues in the country where the event is being held, for example on Skansen's main stage in Stockholm and at Dranouter Folk Festival in Belgium. Related to this, another notable initiative emerging from Ethno is "Ethno on the Road". As several Ethnos are organised during the summer, and it is not uncommon for musicians to attend more than one, some participants are elected to create a representative orchestra and tour at the end of the summer in different folk festivals around Europe, representing and advertising the overall Ethno project.

In conversation with me, a large number of Ethno participants have expressed a desire to pursue careers as professional folk musicians in their own countries. Although they recognise that they may well not learn many more tunes from some of the cultures they encounter through Ethno, they strongly praise the experience of exchange that Ethno offers and express a keen desire to integrate aspects of what they have learnt in their future creativity. One of the participants of Ethno Sweden 2012 underlined that Ethno offers "not just a chance to hear different types of music but also [...] to make connections" – and, crucially, connections of an enduring nature that will be manifest in future socio-musical interactions and productions.<sup>92</sup> As in the other festival contexts detailed above, measures are taken during Ethno events to transmit more than just musical patterns. To add another complementary dimension to the experience of other traditions, a couple of dance evenings are organised, in which the participants teach each other some of the traditional dances of their country (See photo below, Figure 9).

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<sup>92</sup> P. C. (Anonymous contributor, 30 June 2012)



**Figure 5: A dance evening on the playground at Ethno Flanders 2013. An Estonian dance with bagpipes**

As mentioned earlier, Ethno events centre upon participants teaching folk tunes of their own nationality to other participants. Participants' choices of tune tend to reveal a great deal about how they wish to represent themselves and their culture to 'outsiders'. At Ethno Flanders 2013 for example, Ian Stevenson chose a tune that was important to him personally, being particularly representative of the region he grew up in. The tune was *The Morpeth Rant*, one of the most famous tunes in the rant rhythm typical of North-East England – an archetypal Northumbrian tune "designed to accompany the dance of the same name" (Oliver, 2004, p. 14). Presumably, Ian chose this tune not only because it had a connection to his identity but also because it is recognised to be "authentic" – with an uncontested status as an old melody at the heart of the repertoire. Again, a key feature of the workshops is that they provide a forum not just for the transmission of musical patterns but for the clarification of musical meaning: as a précis to the musical learning process, the allocated "teacher" generally devotes much care and attention to explaining the broader significance of the chosen tune – who performed it, where, when and in what contexts – essentially, highlighting ties between music and identity. Many participants choose songs with lyrics that evocatively detail traditional ways of life, highlight meaningful symbols, or demonstrate deeply felt emotions – and in such cases, the "teacher" typically not only translates the lyrics' meaning but provides further cultural contextualisation. The workshops also tend to involve a good deal of discussion, with participants asking questions not only about the technical aspects of the music (structures, rhythms, scales or instrumentation), but also about the socio-cultural background. In this way, the participants do their best to construct a convincing vision of culture in microcosm around the focus of a tune. This desire to share and thoroughly understand foreign traditions is fundamental to the ethos of Ethno: to develop genuine insights into diverse cultures, as opposed to superficial and limited understandings

that could be gained from recordings or notation books. Accordingly, it is essential that the participants live together, eat together, talk together and dance together within the context of a residential context – because otherwise sufficient intercultural immersion would not be achievable. To provide a varied experience, the informal workshops are complemented by more formal, yet still distinctly casual, occasions created by the team, such as a "speed-dating dinner", encouraging participants to meet, talk and get to know as many other participants as possible before the dancing begins later in the evening, and a "busking competition" in which each team has to be constituted of members from at least four different countries.

The variety of venues in which rehearsals and other events take place, both formal and informal, also play a role in determining how people interact with one another – some spaces, for example, encouraging focus upon the “teacher” and others encouraging a less hierarchical arrangement. However, crucially, no organised seating plans are imposed, until the very last rehearsal when the set-up for staged concerts is established.



**Figure 6: A classroom workshop for "melody" instruments**

In many cases, the simultaneously-held workshops are organised according to broadly-defined categories (such as “melodies” and “chords”) but in other cases a mixture is deemed preferable – depending largely on what configuration of instruments the participants bring and what tunes they choose to impart to one another. On the aforementioned occasions when all the groups assemble to demonstrate what they have learnt and “put it all together”, the sudden exposure to the full range of sonorities and skills is often a powerful experience. Furthermore, other semi-informal rehearsals in

more "interesting" locations are also designed both to alleviate the monotony of the school setting and actively encourage exchange between participants.



Figure 7: The boat excursion

Thus, for example, the surprise excursion to the maritime museum on a boat (see picture above) also had the purpose of promoting new kinds of music making interaction and exchange between participants - in this case, the entire group moving back and forth from one end of the boat to other while playing.



Figure 8: The parade in Ghent

These highly varied contexts of music making serve not only to provide participants with excitement; they also enhance the networking experience – linking people and their repertoires to one another and to a large array of places and spaces, adding new layers of significance to the music. In the case of the musical parade in Ghent (see photo above), the performance also served to promote that evening's scheduled public concert. Ethno Flanders' final performance usually takes place in the Dranouter Folk Festival, one of the most important folk festivals in Belgium. In the case of Ethno Sweden, the main performance takes place on the main stage of Skansen, in Stockholm – one of the biggest stages in the capital city. All of these performances aim to disseminate and celebrate the Ethno ethos of multi-cultural diversity to a wider audience: in many ways, the group may be regarded as the ultimate “world music band”.

### 5.2.3. Personal and musical impacts

Much can be said about the impact of Ethno both on the individuals taking part and on the musical cultures that they belong to. Wim Clayes, who was one of the artistic leaders for Ethno Flanders in 2013, recollected attending Ethno for the first time in 1994, as a member of the Belgian delegation at Ethno Sweden. He explained to me: "it changed my life, and when I came back, I realised that it had been a key moment in my life".<sup>93</sup> Ethno Flanders started in 1999, and Wim then took part as one of the artistic leaders for several years. After taking a break for a couple of years, he then returned in 2010 to take over charge of the entire event when the previous directing team decided to bow out of the project after several years in charge. At this point, Myriam De Bonte joined the organisation, mainly focusing on logistical management while Wim has continued to focus on artistic concerns, notably choosing the artistic leaders and leading the team through to the final performances. In interview, Wim stressed that, through providing young musicians with rare and valuable opportunities to meet others from around the world and experience profound togetherness through music making, Ethno has immense transformative power. He explained to me: "Ethno can be [...] a life changing experience. Some people [...] leave Ethno and [...] become different people – all because of Ethno".<sup>94</sup> The experience celebrates the rich diversity of human expression while highlighting the vital similarities that function as threads of inter-connection. While discovering that "there is a lot more than they imagined there would be"<sup>95</sup>, participants gain fresh insights into their own musical traditions and the different ways in which they can effectively be represented and hybridised.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> P. C. (Wim Clayes, 01 August 2013)

<sup>94</sup> P. C. (Wim Clayes, 01 August 2013)

<sup>95</sup> P. C. (Myriam De Bonte, 31 July 2013)

<sup>96</sup> P. C. (Wim Clayes, 01 August 2013)

In my interview with her, Myriam suggested that because Belgian music has been influenced by many other cultures, it is particularly easy for the young Belgian participants to learn new musical traditions and adapt their playing. Although this is an arguable point, it is certainly true that some Ethno participants are readily predisposed to assimilating foreign culture on account of their possessing complex multi-cultural identities bridging across national boundaries. At the same time, however, as Myriam further pointed out, other young musicians have had less exposure to cultural diversity: although they may even be professionals in their own countries, Ethno can provide their first contact with other musics and new influences – sharing unfamiliar musics, experiencing new food, language, dance and so on. She explained: "In living together for a week [...] there is time to exchange much more than the music".<sup>97</sup> Myriam elaborated further upon this theme, particularly emphasising how egalitarian ethos of Ethno encourages mutual sharing and the generation of deeper personal insights:

"...Exchange between peers, with no teacher and no student, and the teaching and learning by ear – music with dances, songs and language: [These are] very important for people to develop, to get some skills that are not only musical skills, and I do think that it is important for young people to have opportunities, not only through Ethno [...] where they can experiment with these things [...] in a context where they are all equal, [...] There are no good or bad musicians. I have seen the best musicians in their country struggling with some rhythms that they are not used to. So it makes you think also about your identity. 'Who am I and what can I give them? What can I received from them?' as a person and as a musician."<sup>98</sup>

Allan Skrobe, another Ethno organiser, similarly emphasises that, "for many people, it is the first time that they actually get together and that they hear live music from different countries".<sup>99</sup> He takes the example of Palestinian music, which was represented at Ethno Sweden 2012 by a delegation of two young musicians:

"If you're not into Palestinian music, you wouldn't listen to it properly. Here, you meet two girls from Palestine, and suddenly, a new world is open to you, and then you ask them 'Oh, can't you play more music? Can you teach me one more tune?' So you get the possibility of actually meeting [that] different tradition live. And that, you can't get it on the record.[...]Talking to them [...] you learn about politics, different situations, funny or bad, or sad or how it is to live in Palestine, how it is to live as a musician there, what they think about music, so you get so much more [than just the music]".<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> P. C. (Myriam De Bonte, 31 July 2013)

<sup>98</sup> P. C. (Myriam De Bonte, 31 July 2013)

<sup>99</sup> P. C. (Allan Skrobe, 06 July 2012)

<sup>100</sup> P. C. (Allan Skrobe, 06 July 2012)

Allan also pointed out to me that many influential bands have developed out of its operations, notably giving the example of the band Auvo, comprising British and Finnish members who performed together between 2005 and 2011.<sup>101</sup> He added that some bands have actually returned to their own countries and achieved great success through recording foreign tunes that they have learnt while attending Ethno, giving the examples of a band from Ecuador and the band 422, notably with Sam Pirt who also went on to initiate Ethno England.<sup>102</sup>

Furthermore, it has to be underlined that it is not only connections between cultures that are made at Ethno, but a surprising number of connections are made within the same culture, despite the geographical displacement. Two examples from my personal experience in different Ethno camps illustrate this: Firstly, demonstrating the close-knit nature of the folk music community in England and also its wide geographic reach, it was a surprise to meet a musician from Newcastle in Ethno Flanders and a different English musician and dance-caller in Ethno Australia. In both cases, after attempting to figure out which other Ethno camp we could have met at (- indeed, it is not uncommon to attend several Ethno camps in different places), we realised that we had never been formally introduced, but we had seen each other at different folk festivals in England, had many friends in common, knew similar tunes and dances, and simply happened to take part in Ethno for similar reasons.

A second example of Ethno inter-cultural exchange occurred during Ethno Finland 2015, specifically during a free jam session on the first evening. Starting to play some tunes from our respective personal repertoires, a Swede, a Canadian and I soon realised that we had substantial repertoire in common. The Swedish participant had attended an Irish music course in her country a few years earlier, the Canadian was used to joining Irish music sessions abroad, and I had learnt many Irish tunes in pub sessions in England. Despite slight differences in the versions of the tunes we played (which made for interesting discussions, and exchanges about fiddle technique and ornamentation), we carried on playing for well over an hour accompanied by Antti Järvelä, a renowned guitar player used to international musical collaboration, a member of the band Baltic Crossing, and one of the artistic leaders at that Ethno. This characteristic of the Irish folk music repertoire of having crossed multiple borders is also perceived by Kearney in his study of pub sessions in Ireland. He notably states: "We are part of a global community of Irish traditional musicians that share tunes and stories" – although the Ethno case illustrates that the knowledge and skills within the global community actually extend far beyond merely the "Irish traditional musicians" (Kearney, 2013, p. 177) Indeed, at

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<sup>101</sup> P. C. (Allan Skrobe, 06 July 2012), Suvi Osakala Website, <<http://www.oskala.net/suvi/eng.php?cmd=10>> [accessed 4 November 2013]

<sup>102</sup> P. C. (Allan Skrobe, 06 July 2012)

Ethno, our individual knowledge of the Irish repertoire, which was technically a "foreign tradition" for all of us, yet transmitted abroad in relatively similar settings, was a remarkable point of commonality, noted by Kearney: "[one] aspect of change has been the performance of Irish traditional music around the world" (Kearney, 2013). Furthermore, not only did we have an extensive repertoire in common, but each of us was used to the same session format of participation, which, to some extent, we were able to re-create in an as improbable place as the back of a Sauna house in the Finnish countryside later that same evening, having only become acquainted a few hours earlier. The usual implied rules of a traditional pub session were easily transferable to that unfamiliar setting (see Chapter 6.1. for further details on pub sessions), so, like in a pub session, the few tunes which not all of us knew were of no great difficulty for the others to join in with. We went on to perform a set of tunes together at the sharing concert in front of other Ethno participants, and surely left Ethno Finland with a few new Irish tunes in our respective repertoires.

### **5.3. Formal tuition: Proliferation and changes**

#### **5.3.1. Summer schools**

Folk music summer schools are a relatively recent invention in the United Kingdom. Several of them run regularly, each with their own particularities, including the Burwell Bash (a residential school held in Burwell, Cambridgeshire) and Folkworks Summer School, which I received funding to attend and research. It should be underlined that many tutors contribute to several different summer schools, Sam Pirt, for example, tutors at both Burwell and Folkworks.

Folkworks was set up in 1988 by Alistair Anderson and Ros Rigby as an initiative to create a new environment for young people to learn and enjoy folk music. The first Summer School took place the following year and, since its beginnings, it has grown substantially, attracting an increasing number of participants and involving a larger number of professional folk artists and tutors – thereby providing a vibrant scene in which musicians can present, test, and transmit their skills. It is remarkable to note that a large number of the current tutors at Folkworks Summer School actually attended the Summer School as participants a few years earlier. This demonstrates the success of this type of transmission of folk music.

While introducing folk music to novices, Folkworks Summer School has also become a principal forum for young aspiring musicians to play together at professional levels and to make contact with other folk artists, either already well-known or aiming for prominence. It is therefore not surprising that duets, trios and bands created at Folkworks Summer School have gone on to record well-distributed and well-received CDs, perform at major festivals, perform well-attended gigs, and became accomplished musicians in the folk scene. While many folk musicians belong to multiple

bands and form and dissolve collaborative projects with surprising regularity, it is ventures like Folkways Summer School that serve as a central networking hub.

After the creation of the Folkworks Summer School, the organisers realised that this type of residential tuition formula appealed to a wider range of musicians than just the young people (16 to 25 years old) it was initially created for. They therefore diversified the Summer School by creating an "Adult Summer School" running during the same week (in Durham) and a "Junior Summer School" for children aged 10 to 13 years old for a shorter period of 4 days. To facilitate communication and sharing between these three simultaneous summer schools, the Durham Gathering is designed to reunite all three Summer Schools, to share their week's work and promote the participation of the members of the public around Durham.

A notable point of difference between Summer Schools and the other types of transmission context detailed above is their emphasis on transmitting a more global understanding of folk traditions. For instance, several ceilidhs and dancing events are arranged for all the participants throughout the week. Not only focusing on teaching dance moves, formal tutorials and workshops are put in place to educate young people on how to lead a ceilidh band and ceilidh dancers. This knowledge is then put into practice at the ceilidhs both for the participants and members of the public at the Durham Gathering. Moreover, the obligatory accompanying knowledge regarding tune origins and historical development, related tunes, previous masters' interpretations, contexts of transmission and performance, and so on is conveyed in a relatively concentrated and formalised manner (in comparison with the other contexts detailed above). Despite the structured learning approach that prevails in Folkworks Summer Schools, it is clear that, in certain contexts of music making, cross-regional hybridisation is encouraged and tutors are invited from Scotland, Ireland, and from further overseas to lead sessions about other folk traditions.. Examples of this tendency are the presence of Esko Jarvela, one of the fiddle tutors at the Youth Summer School in 2010, mainly teaching Polskas and other Swedish folk tunes, Doghan Mehmet from Cyprus as a tutor at the Junior Summer School of 2011, and Laura Cortese from the United-States in 2012. As Claire Mann, playing the fiddle and the whistle and tutoring at Folkworks Youth Summer School, explained to me:

Things like the Summer School are fantastic because you get such a variety of tutors, and different tutors every year, and you get an influence from everyone of those people that you are having lessons with. [...] You [as a young folk musician taking part into the event] pick up every different ways of playing, and over time, you develop your own style.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> P. C. (Claire Mann, August 2011)

In this way, Claire underlines how events such as Folkworks play a vital role in the folk scene by exposing aspiring younger generation musicians to a wide variety of musical genres and styles, which they then integrate within their compositions and their interpretations of traditional tunes.

Regarding the impact of the Folkworks Summer School, Rachel and Becky Unthank, who are now professional singers, unequivocally told me: "We are products of Folkworks. We came to the Summer School, [...] and so that transmission happened to us, and through our parents and the folk festivals we went to."<sup>104</sup> In the same way, Ian Stephenson, also having become a professional folk musician and playing in numerous bands, simply stated: "I don't think I would be a professional musician if I hadn't come to Folkworks", underlining the importance of the Folkworks Youth Summer School in particular, which he attended in his teenage years. He then went on to identify the influences of specific tutors at the Summer School, pinpointing how they had influenced his repertoire and style of playing.<sup>105</sup>

Ever since initiatives like the Folkways Summer School came into being, there has been continuous debate about their impact on cultural transmission and upon the scene in general. Whereas some musicians who are used to playing locally would rather see the transmission of folk music happen within closer communities, others perceive these recent changes as "just a logical development that needed to happen"<sup>106</sup> – suggesting that traditional modes of transmission necessarily have to adapt to the needs, desires, expectations and values of modern society.

### 5.3.2. The Folk Degree

The "Folk Degree", or BMus Honours in Folk and Traditional music at Newcastle University<sup>107</sup>, was probably one of the most controversial projects introduced by Folkworks as an organisation (See also Winter and Keegan-Phipps (2013, p. 30) on the curriculum and aims of the degree). It is not the only music degree in the British Isles specifically focusing on the study of traditional music. Indeed, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland offers bachelor's degrees in Scottish music and Piping notably including "historical and analytical studies",<sup>108</sup> and the University of the Highlands and Islands offers a BA in Gaelic and Traditional Music including topics in "history and traditions of this region within the broader contexts of Gaelic and related studies."<sup>109</sup> Another example is the National Centre for Gaelic

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<sup>104</sup> P. C. (Rachel Unthank, August 2011)

<sup>105</sup> P. C. (Ian Stephenson, August 2011)

<sup>106</sup> P. C. (Anonymous contributor, August 2011)

<sup>107</sup> To be changed to BA Honours in September 2014, Newcastle University website, <<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/undergraduate/degrees/w340/courseoverview/>> [accessed 19 January 2014]

<sup>108</sup> Royal Conservatoire of Scotland website, <<http://www.rcs.ac.uk/undergraduate/sm/introduction.html>> [accessed 19 January 2014]

<sup>109</sup> University of the Highlands and Islands website, <<http://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/courses/ba-hons-gaelic-and-traditional-music>> [accessed 19 January 2014]

Language and Culture (Sabhal Mòr Ostaig) in the Isle of Skye, which offers specialisation "[allowing] traditional musicians to study in depth the music, history and traditions of the Gàidhealtachd."<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, some Irish universities, such as Limerick, offer specialisation in Irish traditional music amongst their other more generalist music degree programmes. Nonetheless, distinguishing features of Newcastle University's Folk Degree are its broader cross-cultural approach to folk music and its international outreach. Catriona MacDonald notably told me that the students are encouraged to research and develop their knowledge in traditions of their own interest.<sup>111</sup> This ethos is in stark contrast with the kinds of courses offered by the other aforementioned institutions; for example, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland states:

"We produce highly educated professional performers of traditional Scottish music; no other degree programme offers the same level of specialism."<sup>112</sup>

Pointing towards the Newcastle Folk Degree's proclaimed granting of stylistic freedom, Andrew Parr, a young folk musician who took part in the Folk Degree, describes the music he composes as follows, demonstrating that he for one was not pressured into playing the styles of the North-East:

"If I compose tunes, [...] they tend to sound more Irish than North-East because I have been playing Irish music for longer probably."<sup>113</sup>

In the same interview, another student from the Folk Degree used the expression "contemporary folk music" to describe his particular musical leanings, adding that he is mainly "influenced by contemporary folk bands" but composes "European dance music".<sup>114</sup>

Meanwhile, the international outreach of the Folk Degree is well-illustrated by the European exchanges that the degree takes part in. Maja Graverermoen Toresen, who plays the fiddle and Norwegian Hardanger fiddle, was a student at the Folk Music Academy in Oslo but was given the opportunity to spend one year of her degree at Newcastle University. She explained to me that, in Oslo, the student classes were very small and featured very little variety of instrumentation, mainly fiddles, accordions and vocals, and that she "wanted to play in bigger band with different instruments."<sup>115</sup> She had been exposed to Scottish and Irish music through her parents' repertoire, and had developed an interest in it. She explains:

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<sup>110</sup> Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, <[http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/en/cursaichean/ba\\_hons\\_gaelic\\_and\\_traditional\\_music](http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/en/cursaichean/ba_hons_gaelic_and_traditional_music)> [accessed 23 March 2013]

<sup>111</sup> P. C. (Catriona MacDonald, August 2012)

<sup>112</sup> Royal Conservatoire of Scotland website, <<http://www.rcs.ac.uk/undergraduate/sm/>> [accessed 23 March 2013]

<sup>113</sup> P. C. (Andrew Parr, 3 July 2012)

<sup>114</sup> P. C. (anonymous, 3 July 2012)

<sup>115</sup> P. C. (Maja Graverermoen Toresen, 5 April 2013)

“It is always good to have something to compare your own music to, to be able to understand your own music more and to learn.”<sup>116</sup>

She found in Newcastle a substantially more varied environment to study and exchange tunes and knowledge, with a larger number of students and instruments where she could "expand" her repertoire. Subsequently, she has remained in good contact and kept working with folk musicians in England and, consequently, she was invited to perform at the 2013 Fiddles on Fire Festival at the Sage Gateshead. Moreover, as is often the case for performers at this festival, she was invited to offer a workshop on Norwegian tunes.

This Folk Degree initiative has not always been well received by the folk community. In discussion and interview, many of those whose musical lives have are firmly rooted in local sessions expressed profound scepticism regarding the feasibility of communicating folk musical culture effectively within the context of a formalised higher educational programme that is characterised by the standard models of lectures and tutorials, graded learning, examination and assessment. Some claimed that it might work for other kinds of music that have already been thoroughly institutionalised, such as Western Classical music, but it surely doesn't "fit" with the folk ethos. Here, their sentiments clearly echoed Green's comments about formal music education:

“Teaching strategies, curriculum content and values associated with Western-style formal music education derive from the conventions of Western-classical music pedagogy.” (Green, 2002, p. 4)

A significant number of my interviewees thought that it would be a major challenge – or even an impossibility – to adapt the deeply-ingrained “classical” higher education teaching methods to accommodate the traditional orality of transmission and the traditional favouring of multiple versions. In essence, their main worry is encapsulated in the often mentioned word “standardisation” – and it is apparent from existing research that there are indeed many documented cases around the world of institutionalisation engendering standardisation. As Feichas has demonstrated in her study of folk music institutionalisation in Brazil, the application of classical-derived methods often does result in musicians placing greater focus on texts and fostering a more pronounced sense of there being teacher-sanctioned definitive versions that should serve thereafter as models (Feichas, 2010, p. 53). As she further explains, many teachers are ill-prepared to devise classroom and exam dynamics of learning that contravene higher education standards while others even aspire to the integration of higher-status elements within folk musical culture (Feichas, 2010). Even further afield, in Japan, Hughes has observed even more dramatic consequences emerge from the institutionalisation of folk music (2008). In that context, institutional teaching and learning

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<sup>116</sup> P. C. (Maja Graverermoen Toresen, 5 April 2013)

methods have led to what Hughes calls the “classicization” of repertoire: certain songs have been selected as representative, the most “authentic” versions have been meticulously transcribed, and those rigidly fixed versions have now become the sole models for transmission, with much emphasis placed on use of the transcriptions (Hughes, 2008, p.174). However, despite the evidence provided by such studies, other academics argue that the notion that there is a fundamental incompatibility between conventional institutional teaching methods and traditional modes of folk music transmission is unfounded. For example, challenging enduring oppositional conceptions, Morton et al.’s in-depth qualitative and quantitative study demonstrates that classical and non-classical musicians actually have more similarities in their learning processes than people and teaching curriculums tend to recognise (2008).

Nevertheless, many of those who I spoke to claimed that they could actually plainly see the standardisation of repertoire and style taking place in the current younger generations of folk artists. Amongst the regular attendees of pub folk music sessions in the North East, this criticism was widespread, even being voiced by local traditional musicians who have occasionally been invited to provide tutorials in the Folk Degree. In effect, the mixed receptions towards organisational activities are summarised in Martin Matthews's remarks:

"The influences of organisations have been great to advance the playing through younger people, and make it more widespread, and increase sometimes the technical ability of a player. The downside is a lot of the regional styles that would have been apparent 40-50 years ago have been lost because they outscale it a bit."<sup>117</sup>

Martin’s point about how newly developed folk music institutions tend to “outscale” regional practices, producing a string of highly accomplished young musicians who dominate the scene and inevitably promote the marginalisation of localised styles, is not only applicable to Folkworks: in fact, the same might be said of many of the aforementioned initiatives at festivals and summer camps. It also has to be underlined that these reservations about processes of institutionalisation and fears regarding standardisation are not specific to traditional music in England. Kearney notably offers an insightful study of a similar phenomenon in the development of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éirann in Ireland (Kearney, 2013). The essence of the criticism has also been captured in Keegan-Phipps’ article (2008) in which he compares the process of standardisation to political propaganda and the creation of tradition in Fascist Italy in the 1940s. For Keegan-Phipps, there are distinct ideological and political motivations underlying the Folk Degree – and it could be argued that they reveal a continuous thread stretching back over a hundred years to Cecil Sharp’s pioneering ideas to integrate traditional music and dance within school education in England (see Gammon, 2008, pp. 79-84).

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<sup>117</sup> P. C. (Martin Matthews, 25 April 2012)

## 5.4. Conclusions

This chapter has shed light on various key initiatives that the folk community has instigated to ensure that folk musical culture remains personally fulfilling in contemporary England – contexts of experience that highlight a complex of identity-rooting links to past people, places and practices while also meeting the needs and desires of contemporary lifestyles and outlooks. In the twenty-first century, a diverse array of festivals, summer schools, workshops and classes are scattered across the country, each having a distinct identity and offering a distinct configuration of stylistic foci and ways to engage with other enthusiasts. All of their activities are underpinned by abiding preoccupations with sharing, preservation and development – which are, crucially, seldom conceived as being entirely contradictory. As has been demonstrated in reference to all the contexts discussed, people remain eager to engage not only with the musical patterns but also with the stories that surround them and make them meaningful. This is a clear illustration of what Perkins says: cultural practices are defined not only by “what people do” but also by “how they talk about what they do” (Perkins, 2013, p. 198).

Nowadays, there are countless ways of belonging to the hazily-defined multi-faceted folk scene. A great many people are avid folk festival-goers, attending one or more festival each year with family or friends and following the headline figures in their everyday listening habits. Some of those people are also musicians themselves, actively engaging with the living folk music culture through participation at local sessions, workshops, summer schools or other forms of institutionalised sharing. For many of these people, being a “folky” is a way of life, and learning is “a practical and social process that occurs in and through daily life both inside and outside of institutions” (Perkins, 2013, p. 198). While some people are evidently content to concentrate their folk music involvement on one type of music-making context, the overriding impression is that culture members actively seek diversity. This is not surprising: For each individual, each episode of engagement serves to enhance their socio-musical world, forging new interpersonal and intermusical relationships while at the same time as stimulating repertoire expansion, skill development, and the honing of a distinctive personal style. While the Ethno project perhaps epitomises this preoccupation with creating an expansive socio-musical network that traverses multiple cultures, the very same ethos can be seen to pervade a great many other initiatives too. But, at the same time, it is apparent that folk music transmission and experience is still celebrated as being distinctly community-focused – even if, nowadays, that community is often fragmented and dispersed across large geographical areas.

Nonetheless, tendencies can be identified in the changes in the priorities of most folk event organisations, such as a broader approach to the folk culture, opening to more participative events, and an emphasis put on children’s and young people’s involvement in the tradition. This is illustrated

in folk festivals taking place in England, as well as in newer initiatives specifically created for young musicians, to insure more efficient tuition and offer different perspectives on traditional music, such as Summer School and Ethno-World.

Nonetheless, despite these tendencies common to most events, each festival has unique features that give it a particular character, helping to build up regular audiences as well as attracting new participants. Even though some of these contexts replicate the pre-existing dynamics of transmission, such as oral transmission of the music, traditional pub sessions at organised at festivals, and general approach to the folk culture beyond musical tuition, many features of newly created events are profoundly impacting the folk music repertoire and its perception by musicians and audiences.

## **6. Folk music in the local community**

As discussed in Chapter 5, nowadays, many folk music enthusiasts travel widely beyond the home place in order to connect with other enthusiasts and cultivate their musical knowledge, skills and relationships. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 7, many now use the internet to engage with and draw from a large affinity community that transcends regional boundaries. However, it is still the case that local community music making occupies a centrally important role in the maintenance and development of folk music culture in the contemporary folk scene in England.

This chapter focuses on the various musical practices that currently take place within local communities in England, analysing the contexts and environments of music making, conventions of social and music interaction, and the dynamics of transmission that operate on various levels, within family circles, the immediate socio-musical network, and informal musical gatherings such as the pub session. Before addressing these various forms of local music making, however, it is essential first to consider the key concept of “community”, specifically aiming to understand how it is understood by the musicians themselves in reference to the local context.

The concept of “community” is central to modern reflections on social interaction and networking (see, for example, Williams, 1986; Yudice, 2005; Shelemay, 2011) and, in the context of music studies, as Shelemay points out, it has often been related to terms such as “subculture” (see Slobin 1993) or “music scene” – the latter favoured by a number of academics including MacKinnon (1994) and Cohen (2006, 2011). As Beaudry puts it: “no expressive behaviour exists in isolation from its cultural context” (1997, p. 68) – and terms such as “community”, “scene”, and “subculture” all importantly imply the importance of the social dimension, encouraging one to look beyond the boundaries of the folk music itself to consider the broader sociological contexts and social dynamics involved. However, in reference to current folk music practice, I consider it appropriate to differentiate between “scene” and “community” – the former term referring to the broader field of

music-related activity (encompassing festivals, concerts, workshops, local activities, online activity, and so on) and the latter referring to a more clearly-boundaried group of people.

For the musicians themselves, it is apparent that music making is indeed inextricably wed to notions of both "community" and "tradition" (see also Chapter 4.2.1). The folksinger and researcher Fay Hield, for example, emphasises that the central community-binding element in the folk music scene is the common adherence to traditional knowledge and history, which grants the community members "a feeling of connection" (Hield, 2010, p. 60). Meanwhile, Ian Carr drew the key themes of "community" and "tradition" together in yet another way:

"By a 'traditional musician', I mean [...] somebody who has had the tradition passed down to them in a unbroken way, that have been brought up with it and [...] had tunes handed to them by a traditional music community, be it family or a session that they go to and their friends go to."<sup>118</sup>

The concepts of community and tradition are also tightly bound together in Monaghan and Just's definition of "community". They quote Ferdinand Tönnies' distinction between "society" and "community"<sup>119</sup>, explaining that, in most people's understandings, a community is a "traditional type of society" following "traditional rules [to] create a sense of universal solidarity among people", opposed to a modern society which is "constituted by a deliberately formulated social contract which reflects national self-interest" (2000, p. 67). This is a helpful and highly applicable definition, since traditional music making is, of course, permeated by innumerable "traditional rules" regarding social and musical behaviour – although, in reality, many of these "rules" are actually more like "norms" in that they serve as guidelines rather than regulations that must be strictly adhered to. Meanwhile, it is clear that these "rules" do indeed ultimately serve to "create a sense of universal solidarity": while experienced most profoundly during the music making event itself, the feeling of belonging typically extends far beyond that to the extent that the individual self-identifies and is identified as a "traditional musician", "folk musician", "folky", or so on. Many of my interviewees alluded to the strong sense of "universal solidarity" engendered by belonging to the community. For example Karine Polwart told me:

"Not just the music itself, but the approach that you take to it. You're not trying to set yourself apart from people [...] it's designed to be inclusive and participative. [...] you're not trying to create a barrier between yourself and the people who are not playing, you are trying to break that down, and that's a major part, I think, of why I get called a folk

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<sup>118</sup> P. C. (Ian Carr, 01 July 2012)

<sup>119</sup> In German in the text, respectively "Gesellschaft" and "Gemeinschaft"

musician even though loads of my songs, if you want to be musically scrupulous, probably don't bear much resemblance with folk stuff"<sup>120</sup>

Sophy Ball added: "It's part of your entire life, your whole social life. The fact that you can do it socially [...]" Karine Polwart agreed: "Totally. That's the reason I got into this kind of music is as much to do with the people and the social scene as it was to do with the actual music."<sup>121</sup>

As Monaghan and Just explain, community get-togethers enable people "to gather, share, interact and share a consciousness of kind based on more or less autonomous personal choices" (Monaghan & Just, 2000, p. 102). Accordingly, while the folk music community is bound together and defined by its common adherence to tradition, it is clear that the boundaries of that tradition are fluid and negotiable and that the aforementioned "rules" and "norms" are, in reality, not overly restrictive but rather allow a considerable degree of freedom of interpretation and individualism of expression. As will be discussed in the ensuing sections, folk music making in the community often seems so thoroughly permeated by "autonomous personal choices" as to appear somewhat chaotic from the outsider's perspective. Indeed, the folk music community celebrates an ethos of informality in its socio-musical interactions.

Within the traditional music community, a substantial amount of autonomy is in-built within the music making activity itself, not only to enable community members to develop and express their own distinctive musical identity and style (see Chapter 4.1.2) but also to facilitate broad participation. The folk community's ethos of informality tends to be paired with the spirit of inclusivity. Musical gatherings such as the pub session (discussed in detail below) are often highly accommodating, welcoming participants of varied skill levels, knowledge (concerning repertoire), style (approaches to realisation), and instrumental or vocal specialism. Accordingly, the music making is built around sets of relatively simple tunes, characterised by formulaic transferable patterns and a limited variety of forms, which can be internalised over the course of successive repetitions and successive encounters. By contributing one's interpretation and thereby demonstrating one's shared knowledge, one joins the community (see, for example, Brailoiu 1984, pp.21-26). In interview, many leading figures in the folk scene emphasised to me how the music was itself ideally suited to fostering community in this way, including Nikki Williamson, Peter Tickell, Claire Mann and Andy Cutting<sup>122</sup>.

Meanwhile, it should also be emphasised that the musical community is not static in its membership, and that therefore its shared knowledge is likewise not static; despite the fact that some enthusiasts

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<sup>120</sup> P.C. (Karine Polwart, August 2012)

<sup>121</sup> P. C. (Sophy Ball and Karine Polwart, August 2012)

<sup>122</sup> P. C. (Peter Tickell, Claire Mann August 2012, Nicki Williamson, April 2012; Andy Cutting)

privately collect and consult notations (see Chapter 7), the overriding preference is for oral transmission. Accordingly, as community members come and go, the body of shared (and shareable) knowledge changes and, with the passing of time, tunes can naturally be transformed, forgotten, or partly re-invented in community members' memories (see Blacking 1976, p.10). In this way the traditional musical repertoire is experienced as "living" and "changing" in accordance with the life of the community (Vallelly 1999, p.402).

For some, the term "local folk music community" may conjure up visions of a rural past – the terms "folk" and "community" perhaps suggesting the type of small rural community where, for example, the folk musician Will Atkinson was raised, in which many community members were bound together through extended family relations (see Oliver 2004, p.12). As Oliver explains: "[music] always remained alive in the communities from which it originated" (Oliver, 2004, p. 8) – and in many communities, the localised lives naturally became reflected in localised styles. This notion that folk music communities were once far more varied and distinctive in their practices and repertoires than they are today is frequently referred to by contemporary folk musicians. Claire Mann, for example, told me:

"The really old recordings were before people travelled, so they were very localised styles of playing, and that is being lost because of how widespread music is now, so if you are not aware of it, it will get lost."<sup>123</sup>

Woods, meanwhile, offers a particularly idealised and romantic vision of the old folk music community:

"In earlier generations, the singer was an essential part of a limited community, usually a village. His main auditorium was the village pub and his audience his friends and fellow-villagers; a static virtually unchanging audience which already knew the singer's repertoire, but which nonetheless continued to draw entertainment from it. They also respected a singer's repertoire as a possession; no one would sing old Charlie's song while Charlie was still capable of singing himself - a primitive, but effective, form of copyright." (Woods, 1979, p. 30)

Of course, while "static virtually unchanging" musical communities were probably a historical reality, it is important not to generalise; many other communities spread across England have experienced dynamic socio-cultural transformations, which have, of course, been registered in their music. Thus, for example, Tom McConville, a professional fiddle player and singer, explained to me: "I was brought up in Newcastle. There was loads of Irish people around, and they brought their music with

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<sup>123</sup> P. C. (Claire Mann, August 2011)

them."<sup>124</sup> He went on to tell me that they came to Newcastle in several waves to escape the potato famine, thereafter exerting an enduring impact on the folk culture in the area.

### 6.1. Local pub folk music sessions

Mackinnon defines a folk music session as a "distinct form of musical event" consisting of "a gathering of musicians who meet informally to play tunes" (1994, p. 99), but it is apparent that in many musicians' conceptions and experience, the session is also intimately tied to the social experience and environment of the local pub. The majority of folk musicians in England recognise the local pub music session as being a crucial context for the enjoyment of music making and the sharing of repertoire and knowledge – ranging from Nick Till (a more traditionalist senior musician who rarely plays in any other context), to Becky Harrison (a young folk musician who has been learning and performing with Folkworks and around the North East of England), to professional folk musicians like the Unthanks.<sup>125</sup> Indeed, Rachel and Becky Unthank mention "the pub" as a crucial venue in their musical lives, notably mentioning the Wilson family from Teesside, whom they meet regularly and with whom they sing in the music session.

"Just getting in a pub and singing with them, in a way, [...] they are not directly teaching us but you learn from just being [there] and then you think 'I like that song, I'll find it in a book or a friend, or your dad, or on the internet'. So going to things like singarounds or singing sessions, or [...] festivals like Whitby and making a point in going to hear old singers."<sup>126</sup>

In this way, the Unthanks express the typical folk musician's point of view, stressing the importance of the immediate community in their learning and appreciation of folk and traditional music while also highlighting the desired ethos of informality that typically surrounds such events. The Unthanks went on to tell me that, for them, the local pub session is also a venue for them to perform repertoire that they would not typically perform on the festival stage or in some other more public forum: in the pub it is possible to test out newly acquired repertoire, unusual or challenging repertoire, special repertoire (of significance only to those present) or repertoire that is only partially known (in order to receive feedback and input from other knowledgeable culture members). In this way, they emphasised the relatively easy-going free-exchange of knowledge and skills that tends to characterise the pub session.<sup>127</sup> Karine Polwart also alludes to the informal nature of the pub session, in which the dynamic of performance is distinctly relaxed, unpressured and inclusive:

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<sup>124</sup> P. C. (Tom McConville, August 2011)

<sup>125</sup> P. C. (Becky Harrison, July 2012)

<sup>126</sup> P. C. (Becky Unthank, August 2011)

<sup>127</sup> P. C. (Rachel and Becky Unthank, August 2011)

"That is the reason why I kept with it. It is because I was absolutely astonished just to find that sessions seemed where regular people just turned up at night and sang songs and played tunes. And it was brilliant."<sup>128</sup>

Indeed, it should be underlined that it is rare to encounter a folk musician who does not regularly attend a pub session, and this seems to be a constant regardless of the age or generation of the individual. Many musicians are actually regulars of quite a few different sessions. Alex Cumming, for example, told me: "I got to hell of a lot of sessions. It's my life, pretty much".

According to the popular participative website *thesession.org* (see Chapter 7 for further analysis of this resource), there are currently around 2,600 regular pub sessions, notably over 400 in England, 350 in Ireland, 100 in Scotland, 50 in Wales, but also many located around the world: 600 in the USA, 80 in Australia, 80 in Canada, and 70 in France for example. In his highly evocative book *Last Night's Fun*, the noted poet Ciaran Carson (1996) shares his experiences of pub folk music sessions in Ireland, employing an expressive and colourful narrative style of writing to describe the dynamics of such events – which come across as being very similar to those in England. Meanwhile, there are a number of academic studies that have also explored the significance of the local pub folk music session, although it should be noted that these mainly focus on sessions outside of the UK. Key studies in this area are those by Lederman (1993), examining a particular song and its popularisation in folk music gatherings from North America to Britain, Kaul (2009), researching changes within session music making in Ireland, and Waldron and Veblen (2009), focusing on the learning processes and outcomes for amateur folk musicians specifically within the context of the session. Interestingly, however, all of these studies pay either very little or no attention to the musicians' own analyses of what happens during session music making: the musicians' own perspective remains under-represented in favour of a purely observation-based analysis.

### 6.1.1. The pub session: norms and rules

"Are they making it up as they go along?" is a question that I have regularly encountered from non-musicians, which highlights how difficult it is for the non-initiated to apprehend and comprehend the largely hidden norms and rules that underlie the session's socio-musical behaviour – and also to realise that the music making endeavour relies on having a wealth of existing musical knowledge. The last time I heard this question was when a British friend of mine came along to the session at "Ye Olde Elm tree" pub in Durham. Despite being British, he had never attended such an event before and asked this question after listening to several sets of tunes. The question was reportedly inspired by the absence of sheet music, the lengthy interludes of chatting about tunings, chords and melodies (which sometimes turn into full conversations), and the apparent discrepancies between melodic

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<sup>128</sup> P. C. (Karine Polwart, August 2012)

lines (resulting from each musician interpreting the focal melody in their own way and idiomatically according to their instrument). It is not only locals unfamiliar with session folk music-making who are puzzled by the conventions of session behaviour but, as Kearney underlines, drawing from his experience of Irish music session, tourists are also mystified by the interpersonal dynamics: "[they] wonder at the informality and apparent chaos as the session grows from three musicians to eight or more" (Kearney, 2013, p. 180). Similarly having observed outsiders' responses at sessions, Mackinnon concludes: "because folk music celebrates a 'front' of informality masking a complex rule-governed behaviour, those unfamiliar with sessions can easily misread this type of musical event as an 'anything goes' happening, and cause the session to be disrupted and breakdown" (1994, p. 104).



**Figure 9: A Thursday session at the Dun Cow pub, Durham (January 2013), with players in the foreground and audience in the background**

To an external observer then, it may seem that traditional folk music sessions in pubs are somewhat chaotic, governed by only relatively few established organising rules or norms, with anyone seeming to be allowed to sit anywhere, pick up and switch between any musical instrument of their choosing, and join in with playing the tune that is being repeated. However, of course, it is actually the case that there are innumerable codes of behaviour that characterise and mould the progress of the session, and the participants have become sensitised to these through prolonged exposure. Crucially, these codes are seldom articulated verbally by those present and neither are they written down; as Mackinnon puts it: "the rules underlying a session are not spelt out in any overt fashion" (1994, p.

101). Furthermore, while the norms affect every aspect of musical realisation, they actually extend outwards to every facet of human behaviour in the pub environment. Thus, for example, they even affect the simple matter of seating positions: after attending the same session a number of times, one eventually discovers that hierarchies of status and skill are reflected in people's positionings while, at the same time, certain participants habitually favour particular places in the room that grant them particular kinds of socio-musical interaction. Thus, for example, in the Monday night sessions at the Elm Tree pub in Durham, the fiddler and guitarist Paul Archer is universally acknowledged to be the leader within the socio-musical inter-personal dynamic and, in this particular case, that is reflected by him sitting in the most central seat within the room – positioned spatially at the heart of the music making. It is often the case that Paul leaves before the end of the sessions, sometimes prompting the remaining musicians to joke about who will take over his empty seat. In the same way, at the joint ICTM-BFE conference, when Adrian Scahill was talking about his experience of playing at an unfamiliar Irish folk session with a flute, he said "I was outside of my comfort zone. I don't play the flute very much, so I sat at the back of the session".<sup>129</sup> This example shows, once more, how session musicians develop a shared understanding of the socio-musical hierarchies within their groups, and act in accordance with them. Of course, the experience of sharing that understanding is the source of both social and musical cohesion within the pub environment.



Figure 10: A Monday session at the Elm Tree pub, Durham (October 2011)

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<sup>129</sup> "Around the House Again for Old-Time's Sake: The Reissuing of Irish, Traditional Music in the Digital Age", Adrian Scahill (Paper presented at the Joint BFE-ICTM Ireland Annual conference, Queen's University Belfast, 5 April 2013)

However, the seating placement of musicians does not only depend on an implicit hierarchy amongst the musicians; there are also more practical reasons. Pub sessions often start at around eight or nine o'clock at night (although some weekend sessions start in the afternoon). These "starting times" tend to be very flexible. As the session participants gradually arrive, one by one or in small groups, the evening's interactions typically begin with getting drinks and indulging in small-talk. Typically, the first participants to arrive choose to sit reasonably close to one another so they can begin playing together, while the others continue coming to join (often long after the music first starts), taking their seats as close as possible to the already-assembled group. This markedly informal (but nonetheless codified) approach to setting-the-scene, establishing one's place, and initiating socio-musical exchange is evidently not peculiar to sessions in England, but common to other cultures in the British Isles. O'Shea notably recounts her experience of attending folk music sessions in Ireland, in which she found it difficult to join in as a newcomer musician (O'Shea H. , 2006). She details a session in which the rules for seating were particularly strictly defined according to the perceived hierarchy between the musicians, establishing a sense of "earning" one's place within the group (O'Shea H. , 2006, p. 4). While the situation recounted by O'Shea is strikingly reminiscent of the situation I have encountered in the Elm Tree pub, words such as "strict" perhaps falsely imply a degree of seriousness that is actually avoided at all costs in the session context; rather the rules serve as a source of humour.

Another implied rule that is integral to the dynamic of the session is that of not playing a tune that has been played before. This may seem likely a wholly unremarkable rule that would surely be maintained in any other type of musical gathering also, including those where the programme is fixed. However, in the context of the pub session, where the programme of tunes is neither fixed nor anticipated and any participant is granted freedom to start a tune or set of tunes, the chances that a late-arriving musician could play a tune that has been played before is much higher. In fact, this does occasionally happen, and rarely goes unnoticed. If the repeated tune is near the start of the set, most often, the musicians promptly respond by mentioning it and starting another tune instead. However, it becomes more problematic if a fixed set of tunes moves on to a tune that has been played before. In this case, many musicians would not hesitate to simply stop playing, and go on to have a conversation with the person sitting next to them instead, most often mentioning that the tune has been heard – and if enough musicians stop playing then the set is abandoned. Pub session music making is marked by a distinctly inward-facing 'closed' group performance dynamic, in which the participants' attentions are focused exclusively on the group's internal socio-musical relationships rather than acknowledging, catering to, and responding to the presence of observers; the musicians are essentially their own audience and others in the room hardly exist in their field of social

interactivity. Consequently, applause is not expected and not typically responded to if it happens (typically, coming from outside observers who are not accustomed to session etiquette). In some contexts, applause can even be perceived as representing a kind of intrusion into the socio-musical space. As applause is unusual and unwelcomed, playing a set that lacks a clearly defined ending is not uncommon; in many cases, there is disagreement about whether the music should flow into another tune and musicians stop playing one by one. Furthermore, the group of musicians playing and not playing can vary during the set and, even though the prevailing understanding is that the musician who initiated the set will choose the next tune, in practice, this responsibility is often passed on during a set. In fact, in those cases where a single-tune set is finishing or a multi-tune set is coming to an end, if there is a player present who can think of a tune that would fit effectively on the end, that player may well take over responsibility. It is also interesting to mention that, in the case of a regular folk session featuring a core number of resident musicians, some sequences of tunes become predictable (through subsequent repetitions), in which case the role of leader ceases to be functionally useful, as the majority of players confidently move onto the usual following tunes. In this way, new sets come into being, becoming a new source of shared understanding for the regular members – and, at the same time, a new barrier to the inclusion of a newcomer.

Furthermore, it may seem to the outsider that there are no regulating norms at all regarding the spatial positioning of different instruments; the situation is undeniably far more permissive than that, say, for a classical music ensemble, with musicians being able to sit where they please, albeit with a degree of consideration regarding hierarchical positioning (as mentioned above). However, there are still various regulating norms in action in this regard. For example, it is common for musicians to avoid an overly sectional layout with, for example, all the wind instruments seated together in a corner; rather, a certain degree of mixing is preferred, presumably because that affords each individual a more richly varied acoustic environment. Also, there are various practical considerations to bear in mind. For example, a fiddler will typically avoid sitting on the right hand side of a flutist, to prevent inadvertent clashes between bow and flute. Inevitably, some participants choose to sit next to friends to be able to have conversations when not playing and some people choose to sit near those particular musicians whose playing will most effectively complement their own; naturally, these musicians are highly sensitive to the subtle dynamics of interaction that pervade the session, and they are well-aware of how their positioning will affect their own acoustic and interactive experience, as well as the experiences of their fellow music-makers. Hence, although it may not be consciously rationalised, for many musicians, it is not a matter of “just sitting anywhere”.

The conversations that take place during the pub session are also revealing of the musicians’ expectations and priorities, adding another dimension to the way in which each individual moulds

the socio-musical dynamic of the moment. While some participants focus on the tunes, and take great care in following and joining in as often as possible, whether they already know the tunes or are just learning them, other participants prefer to continue their conversations while the music is happening, if the conversation's conclusion is deemed more valuable than the participatory musical experience at that moment in time. These conversations often cover a wide variety of topics, from musical instruments, their maintenance and manufacture, to current affairs and politics (both of a personal and more general nature). Nonetheless, it has to be underlined that music-related topics predominate in this context, often starting in admiring someone else's instrument or asking about a tune – its name, where it was learnt, where it originally comes from. Many anecdotes, old stories and histories of tunes are told and spread in this way amongst folk musicians, some of which are then publicly recounted on stage by young professional folk musicians who wish to forge a stronger link between the public audience-focused event and the inward-looking, distinctly intimate traditional session. Furthermore, other information can be shared during the folk session about the musical community and its members, for example missing participants due to travel, other commitments or health issues, or talking about musicians who used to come and play but no longer do. For example, the regulars at the Elm Tree pub in Durham often recall (and sometimes show photos to prove) that the now-professional and well-known folk fiddler Jon Boden used to attend their session when he was studying at Durham University. This example concerns a relatively recent transformation in a session member's fortunes. However, much is also spoken about traditional musicians of past, as well as traditional habits, sets of tunes, or the dances associated with tunes. Accordingly, the presence of several generations of musicians in the local pub session appears vital to the transmission of the full knowledge and understanding of the tradition – its tunes, their histories, and their relations to places, people and social contexts. It is not uncommon for musicians to come with other members of their family, whether they also play music or not, maintaining a variety of age ranges amongst the participants.



**Figure 11: A Wednesday session at the Shakespeare pub, Durham (January 2013) with Andy McLaughlin on the pipes and his son James playing the wooden flute**

Local pub sessions differ quite dramatically from one another, in accordance with the personal characters, musical knowledge and skills of the participants (and the relationships between the participants), the character of the venue (size, décor, location, clientele, refreshments and so on), and various other changeable factors. Sessions also differ according to the types of music played – especially the balance between tunes of different regions (Irish, Scottish, North-East, and so on) and between tunes and songs.

Tunes and songs involve very different types of interaction. In the case of tunes, the whole range of melody-, harmony- and rhythm- focused instruments are at liberty to identify patterns and join in and, crucially, the shared ideal (both aesthetically and in terms of interaction) is distinctly egalitarian in nature – inclusive and with no clear sense of leaders and followers. However, a degree of on-the-spot negotiation is often required since, for any tune, a number of variants are likely to exist and the musicians must accommodate to each others' knowledge and skills to create a harmonious whole. To give an example, this is often case for the well-known hornpipe "Off to California", which is widely played in sessions across the UK. On the website *thesession.org*, five different versions of this particular tune are provided,<sup>130</sup> although, in reality, there are endless ways in which one can interpret each of those five versions and even the structure itself may be rendered in several different ways, with the two halves of the tune playable as ABB ABB or AABB AABB. While the 17 comments

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<sup>130</sup> *The Session* <<https://thesession.org/tunes/30>> [accessed 20 May 2016]

attached to “Off to California” on *thesession.org* testify to the diverse ways in which people realise this particular tune,<sup>131</sup> crucially, there is no attempt within the folk scene to force the establishment of a standardised version. Rather, this tune constitutes a wholly typical piece in the folk repertory in that the reaching of consensus regarding its form and content is achieved during the music-making experience itself; each session community establishes its own take on the tune through egalitarian collaboration. At the same time, however, a small minority of tunes do become tied to particular conventions of performance, which thereafter go on to become commonplace expected practice right across the folk scene. A good example of this is “John Ryan’s Polka”, which is also known by various other titles and in many different versions.<sup>132</sup> The A-part of this melody is particularly effective when rendered with alternating instrumentation and, as demonstrated by the accompanying comments on *thesession.org*, this practice has now become commonplace in the context of pub sessions across the UK, offering entertaining variety to the usual communal sound of the group, as well as opportunities for individual musicians to demonstrate skills and creativity in their solo interpretations.

With songs, however, the importance of the lyrics and the nuance attributed to them by the human voice results in a concentration of focus from the points-of-view of all present: the singer is perceived as a soloist and, accordingly, if there are any accompanying instruments at all, they should be suitably quiet. This is especially the case when the song text is particularly emotive, addressing the most profound human experiences (as in songs such as “Old Maui” for example) or when the text is telling a lengthy, rather involved, narrative (as in ballads such as “Bold Sir Rylas”, for example). It is only during episodes of communal singing, typically during choruses, that this leader-followers dynamic shifts more towards egalitarianism, with participation sometimes even spreading beyond the musicians’ group for the choruses of more well-known, catchy and uplifting songs (such as the sea shanty “A drop of Nelson’s blood” or the slow song “Wild Mountain Thyme” for example). Because there is a more obvious sense of performance within this context, with the singer directing their display to a receptive group of focused listeners (who are either non-participating or only contributing a supporting role), songs are sometimes followed by applause – even by other session members. Thus, although songs are welcomed to the majority of folk sessions, the participants’ experience and response is significantly different. Inevitably, the prevailing atmosphere in the room is also guided through a variety of different moods by the participants, not only through their conversations but also through their choices of melody and rhythm type – with ballads, jigs, waltzes, hornpipes, slip-jigs and so on being available in diverse keys and tempi, and each having its own

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<sup>131</sup> *The Session* discussion: “Two discussions for the price of one. Off to California, and Pubs” <<https://thesession.org/discussions/17550>> [accessed 20 May 2016]

<sup>132</sup> *The Session* <<https://thesession.org/tunes/441>> [accessed 20 May 2016]

associated sentiments. Over the course of the evening, the participants take themselves through a range of emotional states and types of interactivity.



**Figure 12:** A Wednesday session at the Shakespeare pub, Durham (February 2013), including singers as well as players.

### 6.1.2. Joining the pub session

While folk musicians tend to have preferences for particular types of session, it is not uncommon for them to be regulars of multiple sessions (of similar type) and, of course, musicians sometimes have to join new sessions, for example, if they travel between locations a lot or move house to a new place. The experience of integrating into a folk session as an outsider can vary considerably, particularly depending on the correspondence between the habits of the newcomer and those of the regular participants. Attending several folk sessions during a stay in Ireland in 2013, I personally experienced this while at a Sunday session in the traditional Belfast pub McHugh's, during which the four attending musicians were very keen to hear some of the folk tunes I knew, and repeatedly asked me to start tunes, with no preference for Irish or non-Irish repertoire. In the same pub on a Wednesday, I met four different young musicians, who were used to playing together and had their own repertoires of tune; in contrast, while they were happy for me to join in, they did not openly encourage me to start some of my own tunes. After showing my interest in their tunes, I asked for the titles of those I wished to learn, and more than once, they could not recall the titles of the tune. At one point, I joined with a tune that I already knew, prompting one of them to exclaim, "Oh, she knows it!", before directly asking me "Do you know the name for it?" While this situation has a distinctly comic side, paralleling similar anecdotes of tune name-related confusion described by

Ciaran Carson (1996), it also demonstrates the extent to which repertoire is shared across the UK (crossing other regional and cultural boundaries) and highlights the importance for musicians of knowing that shared repertoire – which essentially constitutes a valuable passport to musical interactivity in diverse places. Crucially, another point illustrated by the story (and also by Carson's account) is that knowing the tunes is vastly more important than knowing about the tunes; the former is sufficient to be recognised as a contributor (Carson, 1996).

Pub music sessions are informal settings that welcome any musician, provided they comply to the gathering's norms and rules as expressed above. Little is asked in terms of musical experience, technique or specific instrument played. When integrating into a session, a new attendee is very often asked whether they wish to start a tune or a set of their choice and this is received as a welcoming invitation to share their own experience of folk music. The usual answer to such a request is a set of well-known traditional tunes which most of the regular attendees might know and could join in with, or a set of typical tunes from the region or area the new attendee is from, offering the regular attendees the chance to learn new tunes and expand their repertoire.

After having become a regular participant in a folk music session and having shared a number of traditional tunes, some musicians also start playing tunes of their own composition, provided they are composed "in a traditional idiom", as Nick expresses.<sup>133</sup> Many of the others in the group then learn these unknown tunes in the usual manner – by listening, identifying the component patterns (facilitated through comparison with already-known pieces), remembering, and joining in. At the end of the set, it is usual for other musicians to ask for titles of tunes they have not heard before; the composer then has an opportunity to mention that they composed it and they may also wish to contribute more details, for example explaining the choice of title or the inspiration and influences behind the composition. If the tune is deemed worthy of transmission, then these anecdotal details are typically then passed along with the musical patterns themselves and, in some cases, it may spread beyond the original recipients to enter the wider body of traditional repertoire – being perceived as "traditional" despite its newness and known authorship (as discussed in Chapter 4.2.1). Writing in 1979, Woods addresses this process as follows:

"There will also be a time (hopefully) when some at least of the songs written today will have been absorbed into the tradition; whether the writers remain known or not. Indeed, the process of being absorbed and continuous improvisatory processes are already making their mark. It is arbitrary, to say the least, to state now that a song is or is not a folksong. Only time and the song itself will eventually decide." (Woods, 1979, p. 123)

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<sup>133</sup> P. C. (Nicholas Till, 17 April 2012)

Here, Woods not only emphasises the unreliability of authorship within the folk tradition but also underlines the changeability of tunes within the context of traditional transmission.

### 6.1.3. The pub as a context for transmission

As Joey Oliver explains: “[by] preserving the context, the tradition will transmit itself...”. In this way, he is expressing that the preservation and transmission of traditional folk musical culture is dependent on maintaining the types of social interaction and codes of conduct detailed above, and that those codes are inextricably tied to particular social contexts and their environments. Kearney similarly underlines how preserving the music making environment is a key concern for many: “The notion of ‘authentic tradition’ is replaced by a concern for context and setting.” (Kearney, 2013)

The pub tends to be singled out by folk musicians as the ideal context and environment in which to exchange tunes and enjoy the communal music making experience. However, as Kearney notes in reference to Ireland, the pub has not always occupied such a central position in the transmission and enjoyment of folk musical culture: “[as] a living tradition, Irish traditional music is constantly undergoing change. [...] The very existence of a pub session, probably the most common setting for the performance Irish traditional music in the present, is itself a reflection of change in the tradition” (Kearney, 2013; see also Benford and Tolmie 2010). Anthony Robb, an experienced professional folk musician, meanwhile, underlines that pub sessions in England are also not necessarily conducive to the preservation of “traditional identity”:

“Sessions are good for getting a bigger repertoire, but they are not very good for learning tradition, because usually with sessions, you get people from different places, and people play very fast, and some people drink too much, and the music might be fun, but the traditional identity quite often goes down.”<sup>134</sup>

Many session participants, however, are drawn to the very features that Anthony objects to, considering them to contribute to the overall experience. Woods also refers to the “backrooms of pubs” as being ideally suited to the traditional musical music making, with the “immediate source of beer” being an essential element of the setting, serving to enhance the all-pervasive social element of the experience (Woods, 1979, p. 86). He indicates:

“Traditional song [is] centred on the village pub, and it is no coincidence that the Folk Revival does likewise; the interdependence of beer and song has always been strong and will doubtless continue so.”. (Woods, 1979, p. 86)

The typical pub environment (which surely does not need detailed description here), by its very nature, exerts a profound influence on all aspects of traditional music making. Because the pub gathering allows musicians to play only when they wish, leave the performance at any point, drink

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<sup>134</sup> P. C. (Anthony Robb, August 2013)

beer (often in quite large quantities), and converse freely with others (either in the performance area or elsewhere), the processes surrounding transmission and learning are frequently interrupted and distorted. The pub context, with its myriad distractions, has a profound influence upon processes of memorisation and remembering, with "accidents of circulation" and "failure of memory" resulting in significant changes within the music (Brailoiu, 1984, p. 8); as Vansina (1985, p. 39) points out, "frequency of repetition... does not itself guarantee fidelity of reproduction" (1985, pp. 41-42). The following anecdote provides a good illustration of this. At a particular session held in April 2013 in the Elm Tree pub in Durham, a tune was played that Gerry Kaley, one of the participants, recognised. At the end of the tune, Gerry remarked in a very insightful way: "Isn't it wonderful, how tunes enter into the tradition?" before explaining the tune's singular journey of transmission. Apparently, a musician named Charlie Fleming, often referred to as "Chuck", first heard the tune at a pub session in the late 1970s or early 1980s:

"The tune was composed by John Mason in the 1970s or early 1980s. When Charlie heard it in the pub, he learnt the first part, but then he must have gone to get a pint at the bar, because he only got the idea of the B-part, so when he taught it to us later on, he kind of made it up. By the time we recorded it in 1985, we were all playing his version, and it is still the one that we are playing, but it is only loosely based on the original 'Wild Roses of the Mountains'."<sup>135</sup>

This anecdote demonstrates very well how the pub context and the codes of behaviour associated with it can influence tradition's evolution, while also highlighting how the folk musician's typically eclectic approach enables diverse melodies to enter the "traditional" category – here a tune composed in the 1970s or 80s.

As joining a pub session does not require any particular musical training, use of particular standardised techniques of playing or specific level of ability, each participant comes with their own personal way of playing, which must then be adapted to suit the pub environment and the behaviour of the other musicians in the room and also the other customers in the pub. In this way, the pub context often encourages the musician to hold their instrument in a different way; the musician must be flexible enough to adapt since it is often not possible to rearrange the set-up as might be attempted in a classical music rehearsal setting, for example. Indeed, the pub environment enforces various limitations regarding what kinds of music can be played effectively. For example, in the small enclosed spaces offered by most pubs, the loud sounds produced by certain types of bagpipe would be inappropriate. Accordingly, many pipers bring smaller, relatively quiet, sets of pipes or revert to playing another instrument such as a tin whistle, sometimes grudgingly explaining that they have a

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<sup>135</sup> P. C. (Gerry Kaley, 22 April 2013)

better set of pipes at home, which they can only play on certain relatively rare occasions (for example at outdoor performances or on larger stages). In a similar way, the environment naturally encourages the adoption of certain playing techniques. Thus, it can be observed that many folk fiddlers playing in pub sessions tend to hold their bow relatively high, and their fiddle relatively low on their shoulders, in comparison to classical violinists. This can be related to personal preferences relating to ease of playing, but can also be affected by the way the musicians are sitting in the pub. When the session is particularly popular, musicians are often compelled to sit in close proximity with one another, and many pub seats are, in fact, benches that require a rather different sitting posture.

Nonetheless, although the pub environment fosters various distractions and elements of unpredictability that contribute towards the transformation of repertoire (see also Carson 1996), there are a number of standardising factors that essentially counteract that trend. Several of these factors derive from newly-introduced institutional approaches to teaching and learning (discussed in Chapter 5) but Paul Archer specifically pinpoints the fixing influence of modern recording technology as being a more fundamental influence:

“Before the [advent of] recordings, people would just go to a village, to a session, or a ceilidh or something, they would go with the tune in their head, and by the time they got home, it would have been changed. Tunes would evolve, all because people couldn't remember, but now, with technology the way it is, things become more definitive. You find people in sessions who play tunes exactly the way they are played on records. Not only do they play the melody, if there's 3 or 4 of them, they tend to play the same arrangement that they've heard on the CD.”<sup>136</sup>

As with many pub session musicians, Paul's reservations about the fixing influences within contemporary folk culture extend to the current widespread use of notation. Anthony Robb echoes Paul's reservations by suggesting that it is really only through the process of playing that a tune can be internalised as a living, flexible entity:

“If I try to get [a tune] from the dots, I will never get it. I have to get it in my head.”<sup>137</sup>

However, this topic remains much debated as notations have not only encouraged the fixing of repertoire but, in doing so, have ensured its preservation. In this way, Martin Matthews states:

“This music was dying out. It was only kept alive by notation, so people were reading tunes. [...] The very nature of notation [...] is really quite alien to what the music should be in the first place, because it is oral, it is traditional, and if you change that, if you govern it with sort of neo-classical boundaries, collectors try to do that. The downside is there that people get a definitive version that people then say it can't be anything other

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<sup>136</sup> P. C. (Paul Archer, 25 April 2012)

<sup>137</sup> P. C. (Anthony Robb, August 2012)

than that version, and if you play anything other than that version, it's not different, it's wrong, and that's for me just wrong."<sup>138</sup>

In this paradigm, it is important to analyse the transmission of tunes in line with the perceptions of the folk music community itself, while also bearing in mind their motivations for using particular resources in particular ways. While the pub remains a key context for traditional music making and, one could say, a stabilising force within the tradition, beyond the pub session, the folk enthusiasts' musical lives interconnect with a variety of other contexts (see Chapter 5) and diverse approaches to acquiring and consolidating repertoire.

## 6.2. Beyond the pub session

### 6.2.1. Family

In the construction of identity, education and family are crucial factors. The academic field of folk music studies has reflected this significance notably in the form of biographical accounts of central figures within folk music scenes, depicting aspects of their youth and personal lives alongside their works and influences (see, for example, Glassie, Ives and Szwed's *Folk Songs and their Makers*, 1970; McDonald, 1996). Indeed, Ives states:

"The functional study of folksong has taken many different approaches to arrive at some understanding of what part songs play in the lives of the people who sing and listen to them. One very valuable approach has been through biography [...]" (Ives, 1970, p. 71)

Complementing the accounts of influential folk musicians is a body of literature addressing the lives and accomplishments of influential collectors, notable examples being Karpeles' *Cecil Sharp, His Life and Work* (1933) and Clissold's *Alfred Williams, Song Collector* (1969).

Glassie's biography-based study of Dorrance Weir notably reflects the impact of family on the folk music scene, highlighting how Weir's father Pop Weir exerted a far-reaching influence upon the lives (and musical lives) of his children (1970, pp. 3-4). Similarly, more recently, the importance of community and family have been recognised in the study of Will Atkinson's career and work. In Will's obituary, Alistair Anderson significantly stated: "Three of his uncles played the fiddle, his grandmother played the melodeon and, in his childhood, his mother and aunts would dance him round the kitchen whenever there was music on the go."<sup>139</sup> After extensively describing and explaining the significance of Will's early exposure to traditional music within the family context, Joey Oliver goes on to explore Will's experience of music at school, and his "more serious introduction to actual playing" (Oliver, 2004, p. 11). Even though lifestyles have changed dramatically since the

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<sup>138</sup> P. C. (Martin Matthews, 25 April 2012)

<sup>139</sup> The Guardian obituaries <[www.guardian.co.uk/news/2003/aug/06/guardianobituaries.artsobituaries](http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2003/aug/06/guardianobituaries.artsobituaries)> [Last accessed 8 September 2013]

beginning of the twentieth century, it is still the case that many folk musicians experience their first exposure to folk music within the context of the family circle and close community at a young age, prior to having music lessons at school.

In the same way as Will Atkinson grew up "surrounded by music"<sup>140</sup>, the enduring importance of family- and community-level networks in the perpetuation of folk culture today is apparent, reflected in the questionnaire answers that I received from folk musicians. When asked why they decided to play folk music, the vast majority of interviewees, whether professional musicians or amateurs, found themselves puzzled by the question, and answered that they did not in fact choose to play this type of music at all; rather they were exposed to it and surrounded by it from an early age, through the musical activities of their parents and their families. Shona Mooney, a professional folk musician, simply said, "I kind of didn't have a choice, [...] you know, both my parents are musical [...] My mum was a music teacher and my dad plays the pipes, so, it was kind of natural [...] We had a fiddle in the family and it's the fiddle that I play. [...] It happened before I even had a chance to think about it."<sup>141</sup>

Similarly, Sophy Ball was undecided about whether she actually chose or not to play folk music. Interestingly, when describing her own early experiences of folk music, she uses the same phrases used to describe Will Atkinson and Shona Mooney's experiences; she too was "surrounded by" music:

"I learnt classical at school, but my parents are [...] very strong traditional players and they played at home, took me to ceilidhs... I was surrounded by it, I heard it everywhere, and then, I tried to work out one of the tunes and found out I could, and then I suddenly thought "I know hundreds of tunes in my head that my parents play, and I can do that, that's fun" and socially you could go to the pub, play in the session, you could come to a summer school, not being a horrible outcast like you were in school for being a folky"<sup>142</sup>

In a similar way, Damian Caisley, a musician who regularly plays at local folk music sessions around Durham, refers to his childhood exposure to folk music within his familial circle as follows: "When I was little, I heard the music coming up from downstairs. I sort of grew up with it, I must have liked it because I was never pushed into it."<sup>143</sup> In this way, his first experiences of folk music could be described as passive and unforced; his understanding and appreciation grew naturally from hearing his parents playing, in a manner somewhat akin to learning a mother tongue, rather than from being given an instrument and made to start formal or informal tuition. Steve Knightley, a professional musician and member of the band Show of Hands, confirms that the young generation of

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<sup>140</sup> As Alistair Anderson underlines in Will Atkinson's obituary

<sup>141</sup> P. C. (Shona Mooney, August 2011)

<sup>142</sup> P. C. (Sophy Ball, August 2012)

<sup>143</sup> P. C. (Damian Caisley, 19 April 2012)

professional folk musicians mainly entered the folk musical culture in that way: "they were born into folk families [...] they were brought to festivals when they were kids [...] for them, it is in their DNA and in their wiring."<sup>144</sup>

This inter-generational hereditary aspect to the transmission of tradition is neither new nor unique to folk music. Rather it is a near-inevitable result in any situation where musical involvement permeates the enthusiast's life: as the child instinctively learns the complex of norms and rules that govern musical patterns, he or she also appreciates how they serve to bind participants together in a powerful experience of shared behaviour, knowledge and aesthetics. Meanwhile, the child will naturally inherit both repertoire and aspects of style from the parents. As underlined by a folk musician regularly attending pub sessions, "if you learn with your family, you will learn the tradition of your family, you will learn in a particular style."<sup>145</sup> In this way, the immediate family unit remains fundamental to the young learner's development of musical skills and appreciation and also to the formation of their singular musical sensibilities and style.

Musical cohesion within the family unit is explicitly emphasised by the Unthinks, who are currently prominent figures in the folk music scene. They are a family of singers who perform most often together. When I interviewed them, Rachel and Becky explained: "We grew up singing with our family [...] It is the cornerstone of our relationship, really, our family"<sup>146</sup>. Rachel added: "Adrian, my husband, who plays in our band [...] is from different musical influences, so it all slips into what we end up with."<sup>147</sup> This way of playing within the family and integrating new influences as new individuals enter through marriage can be seen as a straight forward continuation of age-old tradition, extending out from the practices found in small rural communities such as Will Atkinson's in Northumberland.

Furthermore, it has to be underlined that most of the interviewees who did not mention their family as their first contact with folk musical culture did mention being stimulated through the interests of childhood friends or a particular school teacher. Here again, it is evidently through close personal relationships within the immediate local community that these musicians gained access to traditional music making. In these cases, however, the social and musical bonds linking the person to the scene initially tend to be less strong, requiring conscious decision on the part of the individual to commit and engage. Not surprisingly, my interviewees tended to point out that one of the main reasons to

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<sup>144</sup> P. C. (Steve Knightley, 26 August 2013)

<sup>145</sup> P. C. (Anonymous Contributor, 17 April 2012)

<sup>146</sup> P. C. (Rachel and Becky Unthank, August 2011)

<sup>147</sup> P. C. (Rachel Unthank, August 2011)

persist was the fulfilment gained from playing and developing skills alongside friends. As Karine Polwart expressively put it: "So it's all about feeling like you belong somewhere."<sup>148</sup>

### 6.2.1. Learning from musical mentors

Will Atkinson's concrete contribution to the folk music repertoire is eleven tunes. They are considered excellent and very lively and, despite this small number, his work still has a major influence within the folk music scene. Amongst the folk musicians' community, he is remembered as one of the "Three Shepherds from Northumberland", along with Will Taylor and Joe Hutton. Even though the Northumbrian musical style is very hard to define, Will Atkinson's music is thought to embody the cross-border aesthetic of Northumberland and its culture. Oliver concludes that "the music he played is a symptom both of the way he was brought up and the place he lived in" (2004, p. 26). The impact of musical environment and education is significantly echoed in the experiences of contemporary folk musicians, both professional and amateur, and shows how there is some continuity through transmitted heritage, linking the transitional times in which Will Atkinson lived and played with the experiences of younger generations of folk musicians in England. His extensive collaborations with contemporary folk musicians until the very end of his life, such as Alistair Anderson, and the high respect and regard that the folk musicians' community had for him, notably in the North of England, also secure the transmission of his music to younger generations. Alistair Anderson testifies of Will Atkinson's significance within the contemporary folk music scene in England by stating, "having the opportunity to play and travel with Will had a profound effect on me, and was an inspiration to many others - among them Kathryn Tickell, Nancy Kerr, Chris Wood and young performers like Peter Tickell and the band 422."<sup>149</sup>

The importance of teaching within the folk music community is particularly emphasised by the specificity of folk music's repertoire and instruments. Indeed, Jessica Lamb, a young folk Northumbrian piper and singer mentions her teacher and mentor Kathryn Tickell as her main influence in her playing, and professional singers such as Cara Dillon, Kate Rusby and Kat Davidson in her singing.<sup>150</sup> Likewise, James Taylor, a young guitarist, mentions his teacher Ian Stephenson and the context of Folkworks as having the most influence on his playing and interpretation of folk repertoires.<sup>151</sup> These and many other examples underline how important it still is within folk music communities to have mentors to look up to and learn from. Further reflecting this, Andrew Parr stated that, when looking for new tunes, he would firstly ask his teacher Alistair Anderson. He adds:

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<sup>148</sup> P. C. (Karine Polwart, August 2012)

<sup>149</sup> The Guardian Obituaries

<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2003/aug/06/guardianobituaries.artsobituaries>> [Last accessed 08 September 2013]

<sup>150</sup> P. C. (Jessica Lamb, May 2012)

<sup>151</sup> P. C. (James Taylor, May 2012)

"For North-East traditional music, generally I would ask older musicians, whereas Irish music, contemporary Irish musicians, so my friend at the pub or at my house."<sup>152</sup>

With this statement, Andrew shows that the local community remains extremely important in the transmission of tunes and that musicians can be divided up according to generation, specifically into knowledgeable elders (the holders of tradition) and younger learners (the future holders of tradition). He also emphasises the importance of receiving knowledge from beyond the immediately circles of family and teacher – broader personal social networks and private gatherings. The older-generation musician Martin Matthews shed more light on the crucial issue of inter-generational transmission:

"Transmission is a problem of generation, it is an age thing. [...] You often will find that people of the same age want to play together[...]because of the social interaction, although it can be very good, [...] We tend to not have barrier like other people would, they tend to do exactly what we do."<sup>153</sup>

In this way, Martin pinpoints a key problem: although the tradition obviously relies on transmission from older to younger generations, this process is complicated by the existence of individual interests and socio-cultural needs and desires that differ from one generation to the next. Indeed, Martin goes on to compare his generation's experience of learning within the community with those of the younger generation, evidencing a commonly perceived generational divide that is thought to be reflected both socially and aesthetically:

"In the old days, [...] in Durham, [...] we would let people come in, [...] sit, watch, listen and ask questions. They may be quite good players themselves, like Jon Boden, and things were transmitted that way. Nowadays, younger people tend to listen to different music, [...] recordings and have notations, even in the sessions in Durham... you, Joey [Oliver], Martin [Clarke], Alex [Wade]... They have a repertoire that is their own, [...] that is completely separated from ours. [...] The pushes and the syncopations of those tunes: I can see why they are attractive but they are very modern innovations [heard in] tunes that have been written recently, and recently recorded..."<sup>154</sup>

### 6.2.2. Tune swaps

Pub music sessions often promote a vibrant sharing of musical knowledge but, at the same time, the coming and going of group members over the short- and longer-term and the need to foster musical inclusivity can promote perceived disadvantages: certain obscure and challenging tunes become less often played until they may even be forgotten entirely by the group. As Paul Archer explained to me: "It would be worth resurrecting all these tunes. It takes three times through to remember them, but

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<sup>152</sup> P. C. (Andrew Parr, July 2012)

<sup>153</sup> P. C. (Martin Matthews, 25 April 2012)

<sup>154</sup> P. C. (Martin Matthews, 25 April 2012)

they are great tunes"<sup>155</sup>. He went on to explain that he has a sizeable collection of recordings of semi-forgotten tunes, many of which were once part of a session's repertoire. Reintroducing them is not always practically feasible in the pub context.

To address this issue, various other kinds of tune-exchange musical gathering have existed within the folk scene besides the pub session, specifically focusing on the resurrection of less well-known material and the sharing of newly composed material, rather than on the repeated consolidation of already-known shared repertoire. As Woods (1979, p. 87) and Kaul detail (2007, p.705), writing in reference to practices in England and Ireland respectively, prior to the latter part of the second folk revival (in the 1960s and 70s), the pub did not actually constitute the primary venue for folk music making at all in both regions; rather, it was folk clubs that dominated the scene, typically held within a village hall, private house or another community space. While the pub lends its inherent ethos of informality to the music making dynamics, Woods claims that folk clubs tended to foster more "rigidity" in the structuring of events and a different approach to sharing knowledge (Woods, 1979, p. 87). Folk clubs play a markedly less important role in the scene than they once did. However, other kinds of organised events still play an influential role in the tradition

Ian Stephenson, for example, mentions taking part in regular scheduled events that he describes as "tune swap[s][...] meeting[s] just organised for people to sit and exchange tunes".<sup>156</sup> These meetings described by Ian are most often privately organised between musicians who already have a history of playing together, with the main purpose being to enrich each others' repertoires. They seem to be most popular amongst professional musicians who might occasionally invite musicians from other traditions while touring abroad, thereby diversifying their personal knowledge and style while expanding their professional musical networks and the scope of their multicultural collaborations. When explaining the history and context of the tunes he performs on stage, Tom Kitching, for example, often refers to the composers and dates of composition – and he adds that he has learnt them "second or third hand", thereby pointing to the chain of transmission that has occurred within the tune-swap context.<sup>157</sup>

Even though this practice might seem to have a limited impact at the level of the broader folk music scene, and the frequency of these gatherings is relatively difficult to evaluate, personal gatherings are not uncommon practices in other northern European countries, such as Finland and Sweden. Indeed, Olli Saukko, a young Finnish musician describes similar "private gatherings" organised

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<sup>155</sup> Open conversation at the Elm Tree pub in Durham (13 March 2013)

<sup>156</sup> P. C. (Ian Stephenson, August 2011)

<sup>157</sup> P. C. (Tom Kitching, March 2015)

amongst his families and friends.<sup>158</sup> The idea to hold such gatherings came from the realisation at the end of a festival that the band members had spent very little time playing together, having been distracted by all the happenings of the festival. According to Olli, the decision to create their own private gatherings soon became a yearly tradition, and was expanded to friends and family members who also play folk music. Ian Stephenson is one of many who have been influenced by this type of private gathering and the repertoire they address, notably citing a principal influence in his compositions to be "newly composed Scandinavian tunes", including those by Timo Alakotila.<sup>159</sup> Having come into contact with these influences while on a university Erasmus exchange in Sweden, and taken advantage of these opportunities to enhance his knowledge of Scandinavian music, he explains that this has expanded his professional network and incorporated new and original influences in his playing and interpretations. Ian Stephenson is now a member of the openly multicultural folk music band Baltic Crossing, alongside English, Danish and Finnish members.

### 6.3. Conclusions

This chapter has explored the various ways in which folk and traditional musicians typically engage in music making on the local level, within their immediate musical communities of friends and, in some cases, family. It has been shown how shared adherence to (and appreciation of) the rules and norms of tradition lies at the heart of the community, serving to bind the individual participants together both socially and musically.

Despite enormous socio-cultural and technological transformations generating a profusion of different ways in which individuals can choose to engage in the broader folk music scene, local community music making – and especially the pub session – clearly retains a central position in most folk musicians' lives, across all different age groups. At the same time as pinpointing the fixing aspects of tradition, this chapter has also highlighted the general ethos of informality and permissiveness that typically pervades the session and which stimulates its popularity, granting individuals the freedom to elaborate around the tunes in their own ways, develop and express their own personal takes on tradition (in accordance with their own skill levels and specialisms), chat, joke and drink. In this way, folk music becomes a vehicle for building and sustaining local community. As Kearney points out: "[the] session may be a local portal to a global industry [...] but it also remains a space for all those present to realise and to negotiate their own identities." (Kearney, 2013)

This chapter has also highlighted the enduring prevalence of inter-generational folk music transmission within families – a surprisingly seldom-acknowledged fact in the academic literature. It

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<sup>158</sup> P. C. (Olli Saukko, August 2015)

<sup>159</sup> P. C. (Ian Stephenson, August 2011)

has also pinpointed another often-overlooked yet vitally influential form of local community music making – what Ian Stephenson calls the “tune swap”. Here, folk musicians get together to share their compositions, unusual repertoire and interpretations, exchanging and hybridising their artistry and developing their networks.

## **7. Enhancing Repertoires: Personal Collections and Online Resources**

This chapter explores the varied ways in which folk musicians in the twenty-first century England cultivate their own highly individualised and wholly unique repertoires, particularly focusing on their approaches to collecting and their use of online resources. Even though the face-to-face musical encounter remains a highly valued centrepiece in the transmission of folk music culture, those episodes typically only employ a relatively small portion of the musician's time. Outside of those special encounters, it is apparent that musicians typically devote much time, skill, imagination and resourcefulness to the furthering of their personal musicianships in other ways besides actual music making – exploiting a remarkably broad range of methods and approaches in their search for new and exciting material, in the aim of forging their own distinctive personal musical identity.

Turning first to consider the folk musician's collecting practices, it is crucial to acknowledge at the outset that enthusiasts tend to be well aware of the existing published collections of folk tunes, songs and dances. A great many such publications are readily available and musicians often devote substantial time and thought to discussing, exchanging and drawing from their contents, thereby stimulating the flow of culture and playing a key role in the forging of personal repertoires. Many of these published collections present tunes that have already been offered in earlier collections – tunes that were, for the most part, collected in the first half of the twentieth century by folklore collectors (rather than folk musicians) who purposefully sought out musicians and noted down their intangible artistry to secure the folk arts for future generations, typically thinking that dramatic socio-cultural changes posed a threat to their continued transmission. Because there is already an extensive body of scholarship about the activities of the pioneering collectors (see, for example, Karpeles, 1933), the collections I will mainly focus on in the following sections are those acquired by the musicians and callers themselves. In the twenty-first century, most enthusiasts participate in a variety of workshops, summer schools, sessions, clubs and online resource-sharing communities and they have easy access to diverse published materials. Consequently, their personal collections are varied in nature, typically composed of assorted books, pieces of sheet music, various electronic-

format files and documents, and paraphernalia of sentimental value – all of which serve as points-of-reference for their own creativity. These assemblages constitute distinctly personal and unique configurations of material and represent the life of the tradition amongst the actors of that tradition. Rather than being constructed through processes of prolonged research, they tend to be gradually built up over the musician's lifetime with the enduring concern being that the contents should be both usable and in accordance with personal taste preferences and, as in other parts of the folk musician's life, they tend to illustrate an eclectic approach, demonstrating exposure to a variety of genres and styles. Although these collections are important from the musicians' own points-of-view and reveal much about how individuals gain their repertoires, very little (or no) study has been conducted into their nature and significance.

### 7.1. Motivations for collecting

According to Rua MacMillan, a Scottish professional fiddler, every musician has their own collection of tunes. There are some core tunes that everyone knows and plays regularly, but

"every single person that plays has amassed their own collection of tunes [...] there is this phenomenal common repertoire going around, you hear in sessions and gatherings but everyone has got their own tune that they play from somewhere but nobody else plays [...] you can go anywhere, to absolutely anything, I guarantee, they will probably have always one tune that you have never heard before."<sup>160</sup>

Nowadays, a large number of published folk music collections are easily findable, representing songs from the different areas of the British Isles and mainly dating from the second revival in the 1950s, and 1960s (see, for example, Wolfram, 1956; Shuldham-Shaw, 1966; Purslow, 1967; Purslow, 1969; Clissold, 1969). The majority of these collections only provide the lyrics from songs heard in rural sessions. Some of them also include basic chord specifications alongside the words and a much smaller number also offer a musical transcription of the melodies. Instances of variation and ornamentation – though crucial in realisation to personalise the music – never seem to have been taken into account in this process. In other words, these collections tend to be marked by extreme selectivity and simplification.

More recently, there have been some efforts to create exhaustive anthologies, with Pilkington's work of collecting English traditional music exemplifying the collection processes typically involved (Pilkington, 1998). In the foreword, Luxon perceives this work of collection as a "book of reference" and "an inspiration" (Luxon, 1998, pp. iii-iv). He notably underlines:

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<sup>160</sup> P. C. (Rua MacMillan, 26 August 2012)

"After World War II, and particularly since the 1970s, the interest in our song tradition has fallen away. This is not altogether surprising. With the developments in sound recording, television and the pop-music industry, the populace in general has gradually and inexorably shifted from an active to a passive role as regards their music." (Luxon, 1998, p. iii)

Importantly, this comment also underlines how it is, specifically, a fear of disappearance that motivates people to undertake collecting missions. As Brailoiu points out, the need to undertake such tasks only becomes apparent when "decline begins" (Brailoiu, 1984, p. 16). While it is "pointless" to notate music that everyone knows, the predicament rapidly changes when what was once popular is seen to be disappearing. At that point, an "impartial inventory" and the study of "content [becomes]... generally insufficient"; to truly capture a transforming musical culture and develop a "faithful picture of the real musical situation", one must collect "everything" (1984, pp. 13-14). Here, a keen desire to preserve intangible cultural heritage in the face of dramatic change can be seen to lie at the heart of the collecting endeavour – and, interestingly, one might argue that such a fear of forgetting (and desire to remember) similarly underlies all initiatives to collect and preserve orally-transmitted folk music, including the personal initiatives of individual folk music enthusiasts.

As the comments above demonstrate, collecting is motivated by deep-seated psychological needs and desires. In fact, it is actually a fundamental and ubiquitous process in the human psyche: every human mind is constantly involved in acquiring an ever-increasing reservoir of memories and information, which require ordering, classifying and cataloguing. Internal cognitive collecting processes are paralleled by external physical collecting processes; each human individual acquires tangible items that also require ordering, classifying and cataloguing. The co-existence of internal and external interrelated collecting processes is highlighted in the ways in which folk musicians cultivate and perform their art. Over time, through extended periods of oral transmission and successive interpersonal musical encounters, the individual musician collects a vast internal repertoire of musical patterns (alongside processes for their manipulation), which are constantly being re-organised and re-catalogued in accordance with their transferable usability. As McLucas shows through her cross-cultural study of repertoire acquisition in oral cultures (2009), the processes of remembering and recalling are inextricably linked with analytical processes of selection, cross-pattern comparison, and cataloguing. Specifically, she shows how musicians use a variety of judging and sorting criteria in order to "make sense" of their knowledge, frequently cross-evaluating patterns according to their rhythmic configuration and their shape or contour (conceived of in sonic and visual terms, as well as physical movement) (2009, p. 318). While efforts are made to remember efficiently and effectively, at the same time, on account of memory's inherent fluidity, the internal collection of patterns inevitably morphs, influenced by a myriad of memory-influencing cognition: "creativity

enters into the process since whatever is not remembered accurately will be filled in to fit the demands of the musical template being used" (2009, p. 323) Thus, each folk musician's highly personalised repertoire (maintained primarily in the mind) may itself be regarded as a kind of internal collection, which is only ever partially revealed to the outside world in the moment of performance, but which is forever being reconsidered and reorganised.

In order to assist the tasks of remembering and ordering this wealth of knowledge (- the internal collection) and thereby keep the aforementioned fear of loss at bay, many folk musicians nowadays choose to foster a parallel external collection – fragments of written notation, books of tunes, electronic files of sounds and representations and so on. These serve as a fixing and stabilising force in the musician's musical life. A story recounted to me by Alistair Anderson illustrates well how the internal and external collections can effectively complement and reinforce one another. Pointing out that the use of staff notation is relatively recent in the transmission of traditional music in England, Alistair recalled how Willy Taylor, one of the most influential Northumbrian musicians of the twentieth century, taught himself how to read notation towards the end of his life.<sup>161</sup> Alistair explained that, one day, Willy was ill and in bed, unable to go to work. He asked his wife to go to the music shop and buy one of the few publications of traditional music available. According to Alistair, Willy started with the tunes he knew, sang them whilst looking at the notation, and "decoded" the patterns and made sense of the symbols. He then moved on to tunes he didn't know from the same book, compared the patterns and phrases, and learnt new tunes from written notation in this way. In this way, the external collection contributed new material to Willy's internal collection and helped to consolidate tunes he already knew; meanwhile, Willy's internal collection informed how he interpreted and interacted with the external materials.

In his incisive article called "A Rationale of Collecting", Tanselle (1998) identifies the various defining characteristics of collecting and pinpoints the motivations that underlie it. His observations shed much light on both the internal and external dimensions of the folk musician's personal collecting of musical repertoire and knowledge (although Tanselle himself recognises that the relationship between thoughts and things is elusively profound) (1998, p. 4). Like other forms of collecting, the musician's acquisition of repertoire is fuelled by a powerful desire to accumulate an ever-greater abundance of entities (in this case patterns) that are related yet distinct (1998, p.3). Meanwhile, like other collectors, the musician understands these entities not as wholly abstracted from their previous environment; rather, he or she seeks to understand them in the light of their histories and the succession of events they went through to reach the present-day (1998, p. 18) – remembering

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<sup>161</sup> P. C. (Alistair Anderson, August 2015)

who played them before, who inspired them, where they were encountered, and so on. This accumulation of items (and accompanying knowledge) naturally goes hand-in-hand with analytical processes of comparison and classification, recognised as constants within human cognition (see also Monaghan and Just, 2000, p.40). Tanselle convincingly argues that, amongst collectors, this desire to establish order amongst the collected items is typically a powerful force – a “rage for order” underpinned by “emotional necessity” – the individual intensely feeling an urgent compulsion to impose order (1998, p. 25), although the perception and generation of order and coherence can be very personal in nature, with each individual applying their own criteria of judgment (1998, p. 3).

Tanselle goes on to recognise the distinctly other-worldly quality of collections in general, pointing out how the assemblage of items (or patterns in the musician’s case), in spite of being tied to real people, places and relationship in the past, typically transforms into one’s “own created environment” (1998, p. 12). Here, too, the musician’s collector identity is very much apparent: musicians experience a very real compulsion to draw upon their collected knowledge and skills to create (and share) an alternative world that is both more ordered than the rather chaotic lived-in world and more individually-realised. Crucially, as Tanselle points out, the experience of being in a state of “dominance over” this newly-created environment generates profound pleasure (1998, p. 18) – as skilled musicians and their audiences know only too well. A final defining characteristic of the collector (or, in this case, the musician) is a marked preoccupation with ensuring “perseveration from... the destructive stream of time” (1998, p. 20); not only is the musician concerned with establishing order within a chaotic world but he or she is also keen to preserve the collected items (patterns) in the face of ceaseless change. In many ways then, each and every folk musician is, at heart, a collector – constantly exercising collecting processes as an integral (or even defining) part of their creative endeavours.

Nevertheless, most of the musicians I interviewed did not self-identify as “collectors”. Perhaps this is partly because the condition of collecting is so inextricably intertwined with music making and partly also because the label of “collector” does not seem to encompass the artistic part of the music making experience. Also, many musicians see their acquisition of repertoire as merely the “behind story” – and this is evidently even the case for those individuals who have amassed large collections of books, transcriptions, videos, CDs and more. Many of the latter musician-collectors do not realise the value of their collection for the community or for anyone other than themselves. As Tanselle explains:

"For some people, the pleasure of amassing objects is increased by knowing that the activity supports scholarship, science, and art; for others, the satisfactions are entirely

personal, but the results are nevertheless of public benefit." (Thomas Tanselle, 1998, p. 25)

## 7.2. Eclecticism in personal collections

### 7.2.1. Personal collections of notations

It is not usual, and sometimes not accepted, to bring musical notation to a traditional pub session. Nonetheless, in the same way as ceilidh callers have notations of their dances, many regular attendees to these sessions and folk clubs in England mention having their own collection of notated music at home. Generally, they hear tunes, look for them in other sources, copy them out or otherwise preserve them, and classify them – or simply keep them separate in some other way. Whether they just consist of a list of titles or full transcriptions of all the tunes, these personal collections are mainly used by the musicians as reminders in the manner outlined above – to complement and consolidate their internal repertoires. The combinations of tunes they contain are therefore principally based on the musician's personal tastes and individual experiences. If the individual's own compositions are included, then the uniqueness is further augmented.

In this way, as pointed out by Sweers, "performers sometimes... [become] field researchers in their own right, as is often the case with revival musicians from other countries" (Sweers, 2004). David Hughes, who regularly attends folk sessions both in Durham and London, exemplifies this phenomenon well, mentioning having collected about 700 song lyrics over the years, both from sessions and printed from online sources, all on A4 sheets. Rua MacMillan, who regularly performs at festivals, also refers to his own personal collection accumulated over the years in the never ending search for new repertoire. Paul and Liz Davenport, who attend sessions and regularly perform as singers in festivals around England, also mentioned their own personal collection that seems to be relatively extensive (see Figure below). Liz notably describes Paul's own collection of tunes:

"He has lots of stuff on dance, some of which is his own collecting from the 60's onwards."<sup>162</sup>

Paul and Liz notably created a website where they make accessible a large number of tunes and a variety of other folk items that they have collected and transcribed.<sup>163</sup> Most of the tunes are conventionally transcribed and available as PDF documents to any person visiting the website. The documents are just identified by the name of the tune that they contain, but most of them also include a small introduction about where it comes from, the author, or any other pertinent

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<sup>162</sup> P. C. (Paul and Liz Davenport, Whitby, 27 August 2012)

<sup>163</sup> Hallamshire Traditions <<http://www.hallamtrads.co.uk>> [accessed 3 August 2012]

information.<sup>164</sup> They also claimed to have a large number of books, and regularly to buy more, including duplicates of those they already have, "if the price is right". Their aim is then to offer their duplicates to young musicians for them to improve and find inspiration.



**Figure 13: Part of the Davenport's extensive personal collection**

Remarkably, amongst their personal collection, Liz and Paul have a large number of manuscripts, some of which date from as early as the nineteenth century (see Figure below).

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<sup>164</sup> "Projects" in Hallamshire Traditions <<http://www.hallamtrads.co.uk/projects>> [accessed 3 August 2012]



Figure 14: One of Paul and Liz Davenport's manuscripts, from the nineteenth century

Moreover, within their collection, they also have a jumper that belonged to Cecil Sharp and that he is wearing in one of the photographs of him – this jumper being yet another historical artefact that adds meaning to the other items in the collection.<sup>165</sup> In this way, the variety and purpose of Paul and Liz's collection seems very similar to that of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library. Their knowledge of the different areas of folk and their good reputation as performers may explain why they were chosen to work in conjunction with the latter library to organise and make the best use of Anne Cockburn's collection (discussed later in the Chapter).

### 7.2.2. "Old collections of obscure tunes"

Nikki Williamson and Ged Lawson, musicians playing regularly in pub sessions in Durham and in ceilidh bands, talk about "old collections" as their first resource when looking for new repertoire – "looking either back at old collection of obscure tunes or just what you wrote yourself" as Ged puts it. In this way, Ged has a collection of tunes written down in different systems for his own use, which he uses to serve as a memory aid, and to insure that his personal repertoire transcends the standard of tunes readily available in published books. As he explains:

"Just part of the problem is that the very popular tunes that you hear in the sessions, they are often the tunes from your father or your grand-father, but not necessarily great-grand-father. They are tunes that were popular in the fifties and sixties, and luckily, there are some old collections that people wrote down."<sup>166</sup> Ged Lawson

<sup>165</sup> P. C. (Paul and Liz Davenport, Whitby, 27 August 2012)

<sup>166</sup> P. C. (Nikki Williamson and Ged Lawson, 29 April 2012)

Nonetheless these collections, even though they are very personal in the way that they are gathered, are known amongst a circle of musicians. Nikki also explains that, as his friend, she frequently has access to Anthony Robb's extensive collections. According to her, Anthony Robb knew "some very old names", such as Will Atkinson. She points out that some of these tunes, which "are not mainstream: they really only exist in these collections".<sup>167</sup>

Nikki also indicates that she was given a collection of manuscripts by a concertina player called Tom Prince after he died. Over many years, Prince had transcribed the tunes he played so the collection comprised "every tune in his repertoire..., handwritten and stacked in a box, [...] whether it was from a musical, or very traditional pure source. A complete mix, but it is one person's entire repertoire".<sup>168</sup> She also mentioned that Anthony had another collection of the same type that would hopefully be printed in the near future.

Like many other folk musicians, Anthony Robb has accumulated a large number of folk tunes on different media such as a wide variety of books, manuscripts, digitalised notations and recordings. He describes his personal "organised collection" as a teaching means, classified by the level of difficulty of the tunes themselves. He himself has created a great many digitalised notations using computer notation software "writing down [his] own versions". He admits that "sometimes there are mistakes, but people get the idea", stating:

"I've got nothing against tunes written down, as long as people don't think that's what the tune is. [...] That's the essence of our music: you are not reading it off the page."<sup>169</sup>  
Anthony Robb

In this way, his view corresponds to Ged and Nikki's approach on music notation – that is a very basic reminder of a melody's essential outline more than an exact "fixed" representation. Anthony also mentions having received a few manuscripts of some of Willy Taylor's tunes, and having looked at manuscripts from the Emmerson manuscript which he describes as "a manuscript put together over year by different people around in the Hexham area". He mentions that the collection on the whole has not been published, but one or two of these tunes have been printed within other books. He also has tapes of not-yet transcribed tunes that "people have recorded", and also regularly sends out "PDFs" of tunes in one of his albums, for people to learn them.

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<sup>167</sup> P. C. (Nikki Williamson and Ged Lawson, 29 April 2012)

<sup>168</sup> P. C. (Nikki Williamson and Ged Lawson, 29 April 2012)

<sup>169</sup> P. C. (Anthony Robb, 24 August 2012)

Nikki and Ged agree that, while the notations serve crucial roles in the preservation and dissemination of valuable intangible heritage, it is only in rendition that the music's nuances become realised:

"The way the tunes are written on a page is really simple, and you can play something on the page and it sounds rubbish. Somebody else can play and they get a completely different feel for it, so often, we'll learn loads of tunes from other people, that we've seen in books before, and never thought sounded any good when we just marked through, because so much is in the ornamentation and the articulation, the tempo."<sup>170</sup>

Nikki Williamson

They take the example of hearing tunes from their friend Paul Martin, who goes through the tunes, finds an effective and different way to play them, and makes them sound more interesting. According to Anthony, the reputation of good players, and being known as someone "who could find... [a tune] interesting" or "who could do something useful with it" is key in choosing a suitable recipient for a collection. He therefore considers it "good fortune" to receive tunes from other people before they have even been named.

After stating "If I try to learn it from the dots, I'll never get it", Anthony mentions cassettes from Willy Taylor and Will Atkinson, that were "just for learning"; after learning the tunes, he then recorded over them. That "suited my way of learning and their way of teaching, because they didn't do dots either". He specifically mentions that his favourite books have "quite a lot about the people themselves, as much about the tunes [...] their life, their lifestyle, where they learnt from", and gives the example of *The Northern Fiddler*.<sup>171</sup> In this way, these various leading folk musicians within the North-East – Anthony Robb, Nikki Williamson, Ged Lawson, and Paul and Liz Davenport – clearly demonstrate approaches and methods typical of the collector, even though they themselves (like most other folk musicians) would never label themselves as "collectors" and would be likely to refer to their collections as "a few tunes I have at home". Indeed, these musicians clearly devote a great deal of time and energy to collecting tunes, indulging in the collector's key concerns of accumulation, organisation, preservation and, crucially, the meaning-giving contextualisation (through gathering details about history and performance) (see Tanselle, 1998).

### 7.2.3. The box of dances

As mentioned earlier, although the pub session context precludes the inclusion of dance, within much of the folk scene, traditional instrumental music is still conceived of as being very much interlinked with dance, and at ceilidhs, folk festivals and folk dance workshops, this enduring link

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<sup>170</sup> P. C. (Nikki Williamson, 29 April 2012)

<sup>171</sup> P. C. (Anthony Robb, 24 August 2012)

comes to the fore. It is evident that some folk enthusiasts also accumulate collections detailing specific dance moves, serving to preserve another crucial facet within the overall folk tradition. According to Joey Oliver, most dance callers and a large number of folk musicians in general possess records of dances, in various formats including card reminders, folders or just lists of dances:

"Every caller I know has the dances that they do [...] usually on some kind of A6 cards [...] I sort of have a similar one of my own, it's just the dances that I happen to know, most of which I learnt from my mum or my dad or by going to other ceilidhs. [...] Most active band would have a collection of tunes that they play, people would have tunes that they know. Some people write them down, some people don't. This is all very much active stuff."<sup>172</sup>

As with the music-related documents, these records also tend to be very personal in nature, both regarding the processes by which they were made and the ways they are used. Similarly, most of these collections are created with the aim of being regularly used as a distinctly "active" resource.

Nonetheless, it is apparent that these records are sometimes passed on to other folk musicians after the death of a caller. This is the case with a "box of dances" that Joey Oliver received from a friend of his father, Dave Cave.

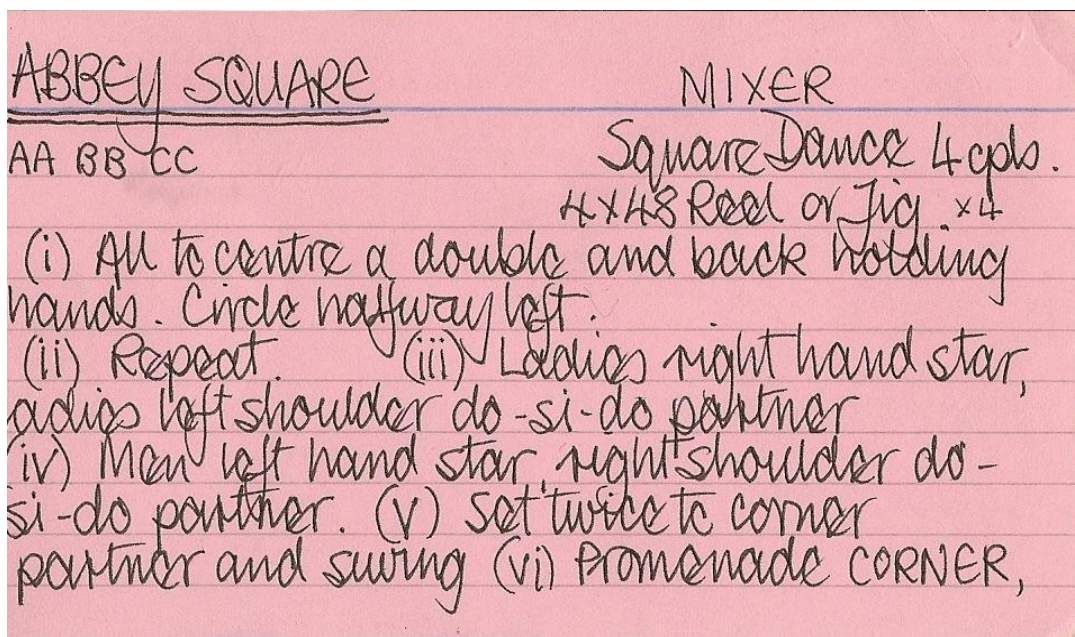


Figure 15: Example of a dance card in the box, showing the title of the dance, information about the structure of the tune needed and the succession of figures

The contents of this box are methodically arranged with each recorded dance being precisely detailed through description, and sometimes including details about origins and contexts of use. Joey explained to me that, when he received this box, he started using these resources for inspiration for

<sup>172</sup> P. C. (Joey Oliver, 23 July 2012)

his calling at his own ceilidhs. Joey pointed out that this box essentially contains all the dances that Dave Cave knew, constituting an embodiment of the complete dance knowledge that he had accumulated over the years. Accordingly, he expressed reluctance to break it up:

"He left them to me, I never really really looked though them, and [digitalising them] was a good way of working my way through them. [...] I felt that [...] it was a significant thing, this box of dances. [...] he had taken a lot of time to [...] keep a note on his dances and things, so I thought that it was right that it should stay together as a collection."

After realising the significance of the box, both in the number of dances (about 170) and in their varied origins, including Northumbrian dances, Scottish country dances, English Ceilidh dances and a few Ballroom style – demonstrating a typically eclectic approach to regional styles –, he decided to digitalise the entire collection. He created a programme that would allow him to classify the dances logically, and allow both him and his father to have access to a copy of it. The content of the box was, according to Joey, relatively hard to analyse: even if some of the dances could be recognised as "traditional", or were known to have been called regularly by other people in other places, and some others are known to be "fairly recent", the dances' origins are often hard to track down. Identifying which ones the collector of the box actually devised himself, if he created any at all, would seem to be almost impossible.

However, Joey pointed out that, in some cases, it seemed possible to "have a guess" at the approximate age of a dance. In effect, as with tunes, the name of a dance can itself be a "good enough give away", as the oldest dances tend to be named after the places they come from or be "fairly descriptive of the dance", whereas more recent dances tend to have more "silly names".<sup>173</sup> In the same way, looking at the figures used in the dances, their simplicity could also give an idea of how old the dance could be, as modern dances tend to have more complex figures than older and more traditional ones.<sup>174</sup>

"There are some figures that you kind of think might be new. If they've got some kind of intricate geometry involved then you'd guess it hasn't been [...] done for centuries by people who haven't really been thinking about what they were doing."

Not only do these clues help one to estimate the age of traditional items; they also indicate the constant transformation of the folk culture in accordance with general trends that can be identified by knowledgeable 'insiders', whether they are practicing professionally or as a hobby. Joey uses the same metaphor that Malcolm Taylor did to describe both the uniqueness and limitations of this collection; it is a "snapshot":

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<sup>173</sup> P. C. (Joey Oliver, July 2012)

<sup>174</sup> P. C. (Joey Oliver, July 2012)

"The dances in it [...] are a good mixture of a lot of different types of dances. [...] And if you ask my opinion, that is [...] evidence that there is not a specific unique English ceilidh style, a unique Northumbrian Ceilidh style: people tend to do loads of different types of dances."

Although this collection is not unique in its type nor exhaustive in its content, it sheds light on one person's view of the dances at a particular time and place in history, providing a piece of the puzzle in which each piece represents one person's experience of folk music and dance. If it were possible to find all these pieces and put them together, a full picture of an area's constantly changing tradition would emerge.

#### 7.2.4. Handling donated collections

It appears that after the death of a musician, families seem to recognise, or at least question, the value of their collection, and try to give the books and manuscripts they found to "the right person" or to "someone who will be able to do something with it", in the same way as old instruments have been passed on to other musicians. Some folk musicians decide to mention their resources in their will, to make sure that their collections are not lost.

This is the case of Anne Cockburn, from Ravenshead in Nottinghamshire. The choice of Liz Davenport was made by Anne Cockburn herself on the basis of friendship and trust between the two folk musicians. When asked why Anne chose her to handle her collection, Liz explained:

"She approached Sheffield university a number of years ago - Paul went to speak to her and we became close friends [...] shared love of folk music, plus she was an ex lecturer in art / textiles which was what I taught until I retired. I think she felt we could be trusted to do the best with the books."<sup>175</sup>

This quotation reflects the personal character of the collection and also the importance of knowing that a collection will be passed on to someone who can make "good use" of it – corroborating Tanselle's analysis of individual collecting practices as usually being intended for the benefit of the wider community (see Chapter 7.1). As detailed earlier, personal collections tend not to exist in a vacuum but rather to be associated with a more global objective, looking beyond the collector's immediate sphere of influence; specifically, the collection is intended to contribute to the "advancement of knowledge". To meet this objective, Liz explained that she now planned to identify and compile the most interesting materials and donate them to the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library at Cecil Sharp house. She justifiably regarded the integration of Anne Cockburn's materials within the archives curated by the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS) as the essential next phase in the collection's life – when the contents would be brought into close proximity with other

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<sup>175</sup> P. C. (Liz Davenport, 2 August 2012)

related materials to add to the collected body of knowledge about English folk culture (see Tanselle 1998, p.20). At the same time, as curator for the resources, Liz has ultimately been tasked with valorising Anne Cockburn's life work of collection by making it more readily available to a wider audience –transforming the personal into the truly collective and rendering it accessible to the community. According to Liz, the collection is hard to evaluate in many ways, including size, quality of contents and origins. Reflecting both the huge size of the collection and Anne's exclusive knowledge of her own collection, Liz says that one of the main problems is "deciding what the collection actually consists of", going on to say that there are

"Book shelves in four rooms all double & triple stacked (a set of Bronson in the kitchen). Some contain a slip of paper saying who the book is to go too."<sup>176</sup>

Liz also found some manuscript books within the collection, as well as printed ones, but going through all these sources is a monumental task:

"There are a couple of Manuscript books. I haven't even dared to dip into them to be able to say if I recognise the tunes. It is a massive job, and I daren't get too interested. The lady concerned had been a collector for at least 40 years and the material appears to be Chap books etcetera from the eighteenth century onwards."<sup>177</sup>

Nonetheless, Liz has identified some tendencies and general trends within the tunes. For example, Anne collected many the tunes from the 18th century and ballads, and she had a "special interest in Northumbrian material". Liz is particularly interested in creating a digital "list of titles and publishers", to make the whole collection more comprehensible before giving it to the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library.

In conclusion, Liz summarises the role played by her and her husband by saying: "we consider ourselves to be facilitators" – dedicated to enabling other musicians to access and draw from a departed person's legacy. Like Dave Cave's box of dances, Anne Cockburn's collection of books and music notations constitutes an intensely personal accumulated vision of the folk music world; however, once integrated within the larger archive, the materials can play an active role in revealing a fuller, more detailed picture of folk culture while also reaching beyond Anne Cockburn's social world to influence a much broader range of interested parties.

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<sup>176</sup> P. C. (Liz Davenport, 2 August 2012)

<sup>177</sup> P. C. (Liz Davenport, 2 August 2012)

### 7.3. The uses of archived collections: the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library

The organisation and management of archived collections has been discussed through numerous accounts and interpretations. Nonetheless, very few have specifically considered folk music archives, addressing the particular issues surrounding preserving the past and present of a living tradition, and examining how the archives are used by current folk musicians. This is surprising because it is apparent that a significant proportion of folk musicians do actually make use of folk music archives. For example, Ian Carr told me that, in addition to drawing from his own personal collection, he frequently consults the archives and collections held in libraries – specifically for “inspiration” and “old tunes”.<sup>178</sup> Rua MacMillan specifically mentioned the archives in Perth, which he extensively used during his degree in folk music and still uses regularly. Similarly, Catriona MacDonald and the Wrigley sisters highlight the archives in Edinburgh, which notably preserves some manuscripts and extensive collections of tunes from the Shetland Islands, where they come from.<sup>179</sup> Archived collections open to the public undeniably constitute a primary resource for many artists for finding tunes to add to their sets and inspiration for their compositions. The ensuing discussion focuses on one of the largest and most widely used institutional collections of folk music in the United Kingdom, the folk collection at the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library in London run by the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS).

According to Malcolm Taylor, the Library Director at Cecil Sharp House's Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, the main focus of their collection is "core traditional material and what emanates from it".<sup>180</sup> He opposes this definition to "secondary traditional material", giving examples such as Peter Kennedy and Sam Lee, who found inspiration in traditional music but play mainly gypsy tunes. Stressing the uniqueness of some of the material and resources they own, he underlines that EFDSS is not only a library, but also archives, pointing out the difference being the uniqueness of some of the material and resources they own. The organisation has led several projects to make this material "available to the world", notably as early twentieth century publications which presented altered versions of texts and melodies, "edited for school use" and "cleaned from crudities". For the first time, they intend to make the "true voices of the people" available to the communities where they were originally from.

Malcolm Taylor went on to explain that a major problem they face is that "some people don't do libraries", meaning that, despite the library's many unique items, many interested parties find it

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<sup>178</sup> P. C. (Ian Carr, July 2012)

<sup>179</sup> P. C. (Rua MacMillan R., 26 August 2012 ; Catriona MacDonald, 26 August 2012) see also The Wrigley Sisters <<http://www.wrigleysisters.com/> [accessed 25 January 2016]

<sup>180</sup> P. C. (Malcolm Taylor, 14 September 2012)

daunting to enter such institutions. He made an interesting comparison with the National Census going online, and the huge interest it aroused during the first few days after its release, despite its having been accessible in local archives for several years. For these reasons, digitalising the resources from the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library and making them available to anybody online has become one of the priorities for EFDSS. Several projects have been funded to achieve this goal, the latest to date being "Take 6", as a prolongation of the "Full English Project" to "put [the resources] out there", including pictures and photographs. However, he underlines the difficulty of assessing the real impact of such projects as it is impossible to know both how many people and what kinds of people have been consulting the resources online. Nonetheless, he points out that the library receives positive reactions and feedback from the public, notably in regards to visual resources, when family members contact the EFDSS to identify their relatives in digitalised photographs.



**Figure 16: A view of the archives at the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library**

The archives not only include a great many music recordings and dance photographs, but also costumes, artifacts and other items. In consequence, a wide variety of researchers, from musicians and anthropologists, to students in fashion or history of art, come to visit. Malcolm Taylor explained that the "Full English Project" was not only trying to show the original versions of tunes and songs, but also "how they travelled and changed".<sup>181</sup>

Malcolm Taylor also described to me how the manuscripts have been classified, worked with, catalogued and indexed. He explained that very few personal collections donated to the library are

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<sup>181</sup> P. C. (Malcolm Taylor, 14 September 2012)

kept intact as a coherent body; rather, they are divided up and integrated into the overall resources of the library while the unique manuscripts are usually put in the archives and digitalised or put on microfilms. In terms of the shelving system, there is no "classification scheme" and the shelving is relatively "arbitrary", the latest acquisitions usually taking the next space on the shelf. Nonetheless, all the resources, before being shelved, are catalogued by name and keywords, and their allocated place is registered on the catalogue to allow easy access to anyone looking more or less specifically for resources. In this way then, the library presents a highly detailed and varied composite overview of folk music and dance culture, pooling together diverse contributions from both academics and non-academics in a variety of formats.

In addition, Malcolm Taylor discussed the importance of the good reputation that the library tries to maintain, as it is crucial for folk musicians to feel that "this is the right place" for their personal, and sometimes life-long, collections of music and other resources to be deposited. Becoming a "designated library" and obtaining lottery heritage funds were key in this process. Nonetheless, he underlined that they often have to make difficult choices about what they can keep and what they cannot store, as they sometimes receive box-loads of materials of variable worth.

Nicholas Wall, librarian at the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, described in more depth the classification system used, which follows the standard library congress system detailed by Margaret Dean-Smith in 1951.<sup>182</sup> The main categories are History, Dance (subdivided into country and ritual dances) and music (differentiating songs from music). Nicholas explained that this system was designed by the intellectuals of the time, and that changing it would be a major project. However, he added that there is room for flexibility in classification. For example, if too much material appears in the same category, it can be subdivided into more specific categories. Thus, reflecting a rise in popularity, sword dancing has recently had to be designated as a new separate category.

The archives, however, are not organised in the same way, but are catalogued individually in a separated branching system. Nicholas underlined that the descriptions of archived items are more detailed, with the individual pages within boxes and folders being described in the catalogue.<sup>183</sup> A major problem that influences the library's handling of acquisitions is the paucity of space, which means that duplicates often have to be returned to the donors or sold to raise money for the EFDSS. The issue with donated books is the duplicates and the lack of space: when annotated books are kept with the archives and manuscript, some other books donated amongst collection are already present in Vaughan Williams Memorial Library. In this case, they consult the family, and can sell them to raise

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<sup>182</sup> P. C. (Nicholas John Wall, 14 September 2012)

<sup>183</sup> P. C. (Nicholas John Wall, 14 September 2012)

money for EFDSS. In terms of periodicals as well, space in the library seems to be the key factor in the choices and the classification. The latest copy is put on display in the library including some international publication if they receive them as donation, but older publications are stored in a room upstairs. Nonetheless, as in the case of archives, each article is indexed to allow easier access when looking for specific topics. They also strongly encourage academics to give them copies of their research theses, which are then stored away separately. Another type of document that they actively try to collect is folk festival programmes, notably post Second World War, as this period has seen the golden age in the creation of festivals (see Chapter 5).

The collection of recordings in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library is also relatively extensive, supported on different media but not including recordings as early as cylinders. Nonetheless, as Nicholas was keen to point out, the contributed recordings vary greatly in form, content and quality. Thus Percy Grainger was particularly interested in recording variations between song renditions, Alfred Williams favoured recorded only the song without accompaniment, and Peter Kennedy spent a lot of time "doing his own thing, rather than working for EFDSS" but published the series "the voice of the people" joining together different versions of the same songs and presenting them as one.<sup>184</sup>

The preceding detailed account of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library's *modus operandi*, holdings and initiatives aims to show just how much care and effort is devoted specifically to making the collected items easily usable and easily accessible to all – academics and musicians alike. As Landau and Topp Fargion have pointed out, this is accordance with contemporary ideals, wherein the archive's role is no longer seen to be that of preserving knowledge for the benefit of the cultural elite; they quote Lance (1978) as follows:

"Access and use seem to me to represent the *raison d'être* of an archive. The various other tasks with which sound archivists are concerned such as acquisition, organisation and preservation are not ends in themselves, but processes directed mainly towards the dissemination and exploitation of recorded sound collections. Archives exist to be used and, I believe, should be used in order to justify their existence." (cit. Landau & Topp Fargion, 2012, p.133)

Undoubtedly, in the case of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, there is clear evidence of a fluid two way exchange: musicians donate their own personally collected items to the institution (as in the case of Liz and Paul Davenport's contributions) and, meanwhile, the institution grants access and use to other musicians, who draw inspiration, ideas and repertoire from its extensive holdings. Thus, during his concert spot on the main stage at Shrewsbury Folk Festival, Jim Moray specifically mentioned playing one of the tunes collected by Vaughan Williams followed by a Child ballad. At the

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<sup>184</sup> P. C. (Nicholas John Wall, 14 September 2012)

same event, the band Blowzabella also mentioned on stage using the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library in 1978, and finding the tune that they went on to name their band after.

At the end of my interview with him, Malcolm Taylor raised an interesting query, specifically: why do so many contemporary musicians still feel a desire to revisit the old collections?

"Sharp and the others were just taking a snapshot of such generation. The way of life has died, but why do people keep going back is an interesting question."<sup>185</sup>

To begin to answer his own question, he mentioned *The folk handbook, working with songs from the English tradition*, published in 2007, which chooses to organise the songs according to the themes addressed in the lyrics: "all these themes are still out there", he explained.<sup>186</sup>

#### 7.4. The Cecil Sharp Project and Other Legacies

Bohlman underlines that "collecting, moreover, was not simply historical. It had the power to historicize" (2000, p. 661). It is clear that collectors have indeed shaped the way that musicians conceive of the past, identifying certain periods, repertoires, regions and contexts as being significant in the tradition's development; as shown above, the collectors' work is evidently often consulted by contemporary folk musicians. Occasionally, musicians explicitly refer to sources that pre-date the "first revival" – for example, Tom Kitching referred to Playford's *Dancing Master* from 1650 during a performance.<sup>187</sup> However, generally, if the original source is not direct oral tradition (unmediated by folklore collectors) then material tends to be drawn from the wealth of collecting work dating from the late nineteenth century onwards.

Howes places the beginning of the so-called "English Musical Renaissance" in the 1880s (Howes, 1969, p.90) – a time when attentions turned to the identification of "national music", with influential figures becoming convinced that the essence of national identity could actually be preserved within folk song (see, for example, Anderson, 1983; Harker, 1985; and Boyes, 1993). A fervour for folksong collection duly followed, spurred on by the creation of what was initially known as the "Folk Song Society" in 1898 (prior to merging with the English Folk Dance Society in 1932 to form the current English Folk Dance and Song Society, EFDSS). Typically working under the auspices of this society, a number of deeply committed and highly active collectors emerged to dominate the ambitious task of acquiring, analysing, classifying and publishing intangible cultural heritage – often inspired by model collectors based elsewhere, such as the American folklorist Francis James Child (see Howes 1969; Francmanis 2002).

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<sup>185</sup> P.C. (Malcolm Taylor, 14 September 2012)

<sup>186</sup> P.C. (Malcolm Taylor, 14 September 2012)

<sup>187</sup> P. C. (Tom Kitching, March 2015)

Amongst the most active (and subsequently well-researched) collectors were figures like Cecil Sharp, Lucy Broadwood, John Alexander Fuller Maitland and Anne Gilchrist – although subsequent assessment has turned to acknowledge the accomplishments of other previously less-celebrated collectors such as Frank Kidson (discussed in depth by Francmanis 2004) and Alfred Williams (see Clissold, 1969 and Purslow 1969). As the archives of collections grew, over the course of the early twentieth century, a slew of publications emerged, exhibiting various approaches and focuses. Quite a large proportion demonstrate an impressively meticulous approach; see, for example, Gilchrist, Howes and Hammond’s coverage of eight collected ballads (1930), which provides musical notations, lyrics, and a commentary interrogating minute details of word-choice and meaning. Many collections also demonstrate acutely critical self-reflexive awareness of methods, as clearly illustrated, for example, in Kate Lee’s early publication, “Some experiences of a folk song collector” (1899).

As Francmanis highlights, these collectors invariably came from markedly different class and educational backgrounds from their subjects (2004, pp. 186-188). Nevertheless, some sought to establish a two-way relationship; rather than simply taking the material from marginal communities to be used elsewhere, they emphasised a need to make their legacy available to those people they collected from; for example, this was clearly very important to Alfred Williams (Clissold, 1969, p. 298). Nowadays, more than in previous times, due to the work of publishers, archivists and educators and profound socio-cultural transformation, access to the old collected materials is indeed easy for much of the folk musical community. As such, collectors have come to be highly regarded, with certain figures taking on heroic status as pioneering champions of the traditional folk arts (from the perspective of most musicians, but not necessarily academics; see for example, Harker 1987; Gammon, 2008, pp. 79-84). Cecil Sharp’s fame considerably surpasses that of the other similarly deeply-committed contemporaneous collectors and a good indication of his continuing stature within the folk community is the Cecil Sharp Project, which took place in 2011 and involved the EFDSS and Shrewsbury Folk Festival commissioning a group of eight young folk musicians from both Britain and America to create new music loosely relating to Sharp’s life and work. Neil Pearson, who devised the project, explained to me that, in order to unite the British and American contributions, special attention was given to Sharp’s collecting missions in North America conducted between 1912 and 1916.<sup>188</sup> Over a course of a week, the eight musicians – Jim Moray, Patsy Reid, Caroline Herring, Steve Knightley, Jackie Oates, Andy Cutting, Kathryn Roberts and Leonard Podolak – collaborated on the creation of the new music under the pressure of having to deliver concerts thereafter at Shrewsbury Folk Festival and in Cecil Sharp house in London. Jim Moray explained to me that, although a few of Sharp’s collected Appalachian tunes were re-arranged for performance by the

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<sup>188</sup> P. C. (Neil Pearson, 26 August 2012)

group, most of the musicians were keen to write new material focusing on the man himself and his experiences.<sup>189</sup>

At the same time, however, as demonstrated in the previous sections, it is clear that the old division between the oral transmission-focused folk musician and the text-focused collector, accentuated by differences in class, educational background and objective, has largely been dissolved within the UK. Collecting is, in fact, an inherent part of musical life for folk musicians in general with individuals developing their own collections of resources in their own private spheres – serving to consolidate what they already know and contribute knowledge they would like to know. Here the primary concern is usefulness: they are gathering their personal collections for themselves. Moreover, personal collections are not limited to a few tunes conventionally notated on paper. The variety of collections that can be found amongst the folk community reflects the richness of folk culture, including manuscripts, dance notations, books and folk-related artifacts, reflecting the fluidity and intrinsic links between the many facets of folk life. They can also include a number of resources never published and that may only recently have been composed. They represent the musical life of the individual and, in time, can become valuable legacies to friends, family, or larger audiences if donated to an archive such as the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library. Thus, collections help to keep the folk repertoire in a state of constant revision.

### **7.5. Online Resources: Folk Music Thriving in the Internet Age**

Successive evolutions in communication means are commonly identified as a key factor influencing changes in traditional music. In the 1970s, looking back at the second revival, Woods notably mentions the "present interpretation of oral transmission, and how it has inevitably changed with improved methods of communication" (1979, p. 33). Even though the earliest appearance of the Internet dates from the 1980s, it is only in the late 1990s and the early 2000s that its opening to a wider public, and its dramatic increase in size and resources, has presented opportunities for musicians to use it both as a modern networking means and as a platform to exchange data, be it sheet music, recorded performance, or information through forums. As revealed by the quantitative analysis of interview answers (see Chapter 2), the majority of the folk musicians I interviewed use online resources when looking for new tunes or for further details about tunes they already know, regardless of their age or their position as either professional or amateur musicians. While Kearney has identified the internet to be an extensively used tool in the sphere of Irish music in Ireland, encouraging transformations in many aspects of transmission and experience (2013), I have uncovered an equivalent situation in the folk scene of contemporary England. This constitutes a

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<sup>189</sup> P. C. (Jim Moray, 26 August 2012)

significant change, as some musicians now seek resources on the internet rather than using face-to-face transmission or printed resources. Furthermore, whereas some of the interpersonal communication dynamics employed online are not dissimilar to long-established offline dynamics, other aspects of internet usage have fundamentally changed the social dynamics within the communities of folk musicians. Both the social and resource-sharing aspects of the use of the internet will be explored in this chapter.

## **7.6. The internet as a networking means**

### **7.6.1. Continuity in the dynamics of networking**

Since the development of the World Wide Web, many ethnographers and ethnomusicologists have attempted to undertake comprehensive studies of the Internet and its impact on human behaviour, communities, music and networking. Nonetheless, many of these studies were carried out in the early 2000s when the internet was only at its beginning (See, for example, Lange, 2001; Avgerou, 2002; Lysloff & Gay, 2003). Technology, and in particular digital media, is constantly developing at a rapid rate, and internet studies are quickly obsolete. As an example, hypertexts as studied by Lange (2001) notably focused on the use of CD-ROMs to reproduce and share digital media. Furthermore, Lange's study of networking and digital through chats, forums and fan websites were very relevant when internet connection was relatively limited and most shared information was textual. Nowadays they are relatively less relevant, with many more users focusing more on the sharing of pictures, videos and instant communication. Similarly the use of Mods, described by Lysloff (2003), is not as significant a decade after his study. Nonetheless, even if these technologies are less prevalent or even obsolete, having been replaced by further development, the study of their impact can still be particularly relevant if extrapolated to current contexts of online communication.

Some of the opportunities offered by the internet that seem to have become commonplace particularly quickly are, unsurprisingly, those that offered the least revolutionary practices. Thus, in the key areas of networking and communications, many of the innovations actually constitute extensions or enhancements of existing practices rather than radical new departures. For example, the early creation and general use of email addresses was a particularly efficient way to improve the already relatively popular use of mailing lists, to communicate about events and venue programmes. Postmes and Baym notably offer a thorough theoretical analysis of the impacts of the internet on group communication (Postmes & Baym, 2005). Just as newsletters and programmes used to be sent to postal addresses (and sometimes still are), email has been used extensively by music venues and organisations since the late 1990s to promote their events. Nonetheless, it has to be underlined that these e-mailing lists have rarely entirely replaced the postal mailing lists. Notably in the case of regionally or nationally significant concert venues, such as The Sage Gateshead, the development

and maintenance of professional websites has not made printed versions of programmes redundant. They are still being designed, printed, and sent by post to a large population, not limited by geographical area.

Furthermore, mailing lists are also nowadays widely used by individual artists and bands to promote their performances, their recordings or, as in the case of Tim Kliphuis, the classes and workshops which they are leading. In the case of independent folk musicians or bands, no manager or professional promotion teams are involved in writing and sending these emails. Most of these emails are written by the musicians themselves, and are sent to mailing lists which have been gathered while meeting their audiences after concerts or workshops. On a voluntary basis, individual members of the audience give their email address to musicians in order to receive their newsletters. In addition, members of the audience usually also have the opportunity to contact artists directly through "contact details" or built-in email pages, and thus be added to the mailing list (list of individual receiving newsletters). Most often, the artists manually manage their own emailing lists, and usually have a professional email address directly linked to their official websites. It has to be underlined that, in contrast with major organisations' newsletters, the frequency of artists' emails to the audience can vary substantially, from only the one-off email to advertise the publication of their latest recording to a monthly update of upcoming events. Nonetheless, it is worth highlighting that the impact of such online communications from individual artists to individual members of the audience are thus particularly difficult to analyse, as numbers of mailing list members are not available, and little is known about how many of these email are actively read, or left amongst other promotional communication in personal email inboxes. Nonetheless, this practice is not negligible when attempting to understand the most recent changes in communications and networking and the approachability of folk artists to their audience.

#### **7.6.2. New opportunities challenging established ways**

From early studies, we can nonetheless draw some conclusions on the use and the recent needs created by the internet. Maintaining a public profile on the internet has never been so important, with the media not hesitating to talk about an "online music scene", where online success and popularity can result in contacts and success in the real world alongside other musicians. In effect, the recognition of artists on the internet plays an increasingly important role in the non-virtual music scene. The development of fans' websites, followed by the use of MySpace, and the most recent use of Facebook and Twitter, have been playing a major role in securing the recognition of artists in a wider context. Moreover, numbers of "friends" or "likes" on Facebook, and "followers" on Twitter have become new standards of recognition of quality and a measure of fame outside of the virtual world. In this way, investment from members of the public to the production of artists' albums online

have now imposed new standards on the more traditional music industry, influencing producers and investors to promote a band or a musician to a national or international level of recognition. In the context of folk music, which is most often advertised outside of the main popular music scene and therefore substantially less widely, the development of the internet seems to have a proportionally much greater impact. In effect, not only does it extend the artists' networks and offer new professional opportunities but it also opens their music to a wider audience than the local or regional communities to which it had tended to be bound due to lack of investment and low budgets, in what was often considered to be a small music scene.

Few studies have been carried out on the use of the internet by artists to promote themselves, but the popular music scene has seen a number of musicians coming into successful career on the non-virtual music scene after being spotted by music producers, media, or creating a "buzz" with audiences online. Even though such breakthroughs are less frequent in the folk music scene than in popular music, it is nonetheless admitted by most professional musicians that a presence online, though a website, Facebook profile, and/or Facebook fan page is essential for professional or semi-professional artists to be reachable.

Furthermore, Facebook is also used by non-professional musicians to communicate about folk-oriented cultural events. It should be underlined that this tool has grown in importance in the last couple of years and is now widely used by all generations of musicians. An example of this is the group "Durham Folk Sessions" that was created on Facebook in December 2011 and is aimed at anyone who has a Facebook profile and wishes to know about the folk events taking place in the Durham area. On a day-to-day basis, it is used by the usual session attendees to discuss whether or not they are turning up to the pub this week and to evaluate whether there will be a fair number of musicians, as well as, less frequently, to discuss practical issues, such as transport to and from the pub, and car sharing. Significantly, it has also been used by owners of venues and event organisers to advertise their events to the folk music audience in the local area, and to call for musicians on particular evenings. In this way, as well as standard Beer Festivals or non-folk music specific social events, several "one-off" informal folk music sessions have been taking place in Alington House Community Centre in Durham city for various specific events.

It has to be underlined that Facebook, as a website and as a social phenomenon, is relatively new and little can be anticipated about its longevity and its relevance in the future. In fact, there is precedent for such a website to have huge success and wide popularity for a few years, but to disappear as quickly as it arrived. An example of this, specifically relevant when considering folk music sharing, is MySpace, which had been at the centre of music sharing and fan clubs since 2003,

but which has been declining since 2008 and is now relegated to the periphery of newer sharing resources. Nonetheless, it seems that even though online networking interfaces change relatively quickly, their disappearance most often occurs by being overtaken by a more efficient, more recent and/or more popular comparable resource. In this way, as a communication tool, MSN was extremely popular in the 2000s, but was overtaken by Skype and Facebook covering more efficient chat tools and video conferencing. In this way, Becky Harrison mentioned Skype as one of the main means she uses to exchange and share tunes with other folk musicians<sup>190</sup>. MSN was put out of use in 2012, and all remaining users were redirected to the comparable networking tools. Consequently, the flow of information and communication links does not seem to be interrupted, and remains increasingly important as a networking means.

### **7.6.3. The use of the Internet by younger folk musicians**

When looking at the uses of online technologies with regards to traditional and folk music, it seems intuitive to look at communications between younger generations of musicians. In fact, when looking at specialised websites, the audience might be wider, appearing more interesting to older generations actively looking for resources online. Many studies have been carried out about specialised websites, and their sociological impacts. Nonetheless, there has been little analysis on the use of general websites, or social networking website as a resource for young musicians. Websites such as Facebook, as well as allowing musicians and bands to create profiles to gather fans and diffuse their music, can be (and regularly are) used by young folk musicians to expand their knowledge and share ideas and tunes. Even though this process might seem to be on the periphery of musical practices, particularly when looking at traditional music transmission, the impact of such posts can be measured through the number of comments, and tracking tools offered by the website showing the number of users who have seen the post. For example, one might consider the group created by young musicians playing together at the Folkworks Youth Summer School. Requests for tunes they have learnt together and posted digital photographs of handwritten transcriptions (see figure below) are a common topic for discussion, reflecting the will to communicate and remain in contact with other participants as well as the need for resources.

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<sup>190</sup> P. C. (Becky Harrison, July 2012)

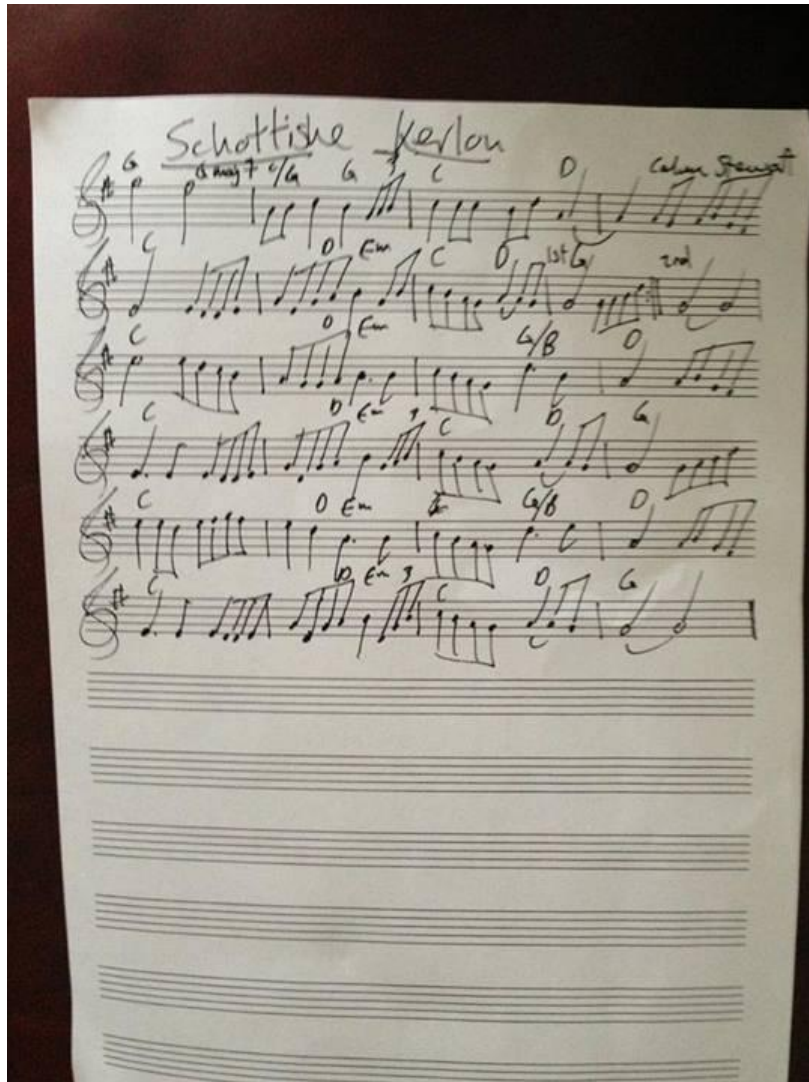


Figure 17: An example of a tune shared amongst young participants of Folkworks Summer School on Facebook<sup>191</sup>

Furthermore, when considering the impact of such communication, it is worth noting that many less-experienced newcomers to Folkworks Summer School post questions regarding which tunes they should learn in order to be able to join in the sessions quickly and easily. A recent example of this is the following:

"Can everyone do me a favour and post the names of some common Folkworks session tunes so I can learn them for next year? Ta."<sup>192</sup>

The post was recorded as "seen by 90 people" and received over 60 comments offering the names of tunes within just two hours of the initial posting. This not only shows the important role this

<sup>191</sup> Retrieved from Facebook, "Folkworks People" group, conversation starting date: 17 August 2012, <<https://www.facebook.com/groups/204763452884979/permalink/672093832818603/>> [accessed 26 September 2013]

<sup>192</sup> Retrieved from Facebook, "Folkworks People" group, conversation starting date: 14 August 2012, <<https://www.facebook.com/groups/204763452884979/permalink/489194777775177/>> [accessed 16 September 2013]

communication can play for young musicians to expand their repertoire, but also highlights how the internet works in conjunction with other forms of institutionalisation to facilitate commonly shared repertoires – in other words, the much-debated issue of standardisation discussed in Chapter 5.3. In addition, it can be assumed that conversations such as these are commonly read by other young folk musicians looking for new repertoire, as two "commenters" (not from Folkworks Summer School) expressed that they wished to learn the same list of tunes. Meanwhile, it is clear that many such conversations have lasting influence (further serving to solidify repertoires and standards): the conversation started in August 2012 was still being referred to a year later, after the end Folkworks Youth Summer School 2013, when new participants were joining to ask similar questions.

Furthermore, when looking at the list of tunes which they collectively created, it has to be underlined that alongside the standard folk tunes, often played in traditional pub sessions, such as *Spoostiskerry*, *Drummond Castle* and *Stool of Repentance*, tunes composed by the musicians themselves, as well as by their tutors and other contemporary professional folk musicians seem to make up a large part of their suggestions. In this way, such conversations can be used to promote the adoption of tunes into the tradition, young folk musicians encouraging one another to learn their own tunes. Whereas the "standard" folk tunes are just mentioned by their title, the more recent tunes are referred to with title and composer's name. Moreover, young musicians make use of the "like" tool on Facebook to express their approval or particular interest in one of the tunes previously quoted, thus providing an indication regarding the popularity of the tunes to the learners.

In addition, such Facebook groups can also be used for more focused conversations when folk musicians have specific requests regarding tunes, notably referring to previous events and workshops which they attended with other members of the Facebook group. The following query, for example, concerns a workshop given by Frigg, a very popular Finnish and Norwegian folk music band who featured prominently at Cambridge Folk Festival in 2013:

"Hello! Anyone who went to the Frigg workshop at Cambridge [Folk Festival], what was the name of the first tune they taught??"

While demonstrating another way in which Facebook is used for the sharing of knowledge and evaluation, this particular example notably also highlights how critically important such forums become when the participants are seeking to extend that knowledge into relatively unfamiliar areas such as Scandinavian folk music. Over the next few hours, the conversation continued as follows:

[Initial post] Person A: "Hello! Anyone who went to the Frigg workshop at Cambridge, what was the name of the first tune they taught??"

[Comments] Person B: "It was a complicated Finnish name, which roughly translates to 'The piece that the young men used to play', catchy right"

Person A: "right, thanks "

Person A: "that's probably why i have it saved in my recordings as "frigg tune 1""

Person C: "Our failed over to you tune!!!"

Person B: "Everyone, it is actually a nice tune! Don't be put off by our rendition!"

Person D: "cyeyogsrjhd or something..."

Person A: "I'm not sure if you're serious or not there hahaha"

Person B: "on my recording it sounds like 'Morgdan Meergdan Spellig' but I'm pretty sure that's wildly misspelled"<sup>193</sup>

As well as clearly demonstrating the language issues that logically come with learning foreign tunes, this example shows how young folk musicians are now well-accustomed to applying modern modes of SNS communication to their folk music-related communication and networking.

### 7.7. Resource Sharing

Amongst both professional and non-professional musicians, one of the most often cited source for finding folk and traditional tunes, after person to person transmission, in different contexts evoked above, is the Internet. Nonetheless, in both these groups, some musicians declare not using staff notation at all, whether because they have never learnt to read music, because they don't feel that they can use it efficiently enough, or because they find this method less attractive. The ensuing discussion will therefore examine a variety of resources that can be found on the internet and consider their impact upon musicians – addressing text-based resources, notations of various kinds, and audio and video recordings. All of these types of resource are widely used by folk musicians to learn new tunes. As has been succinctly articulated by Brailoiu, "the variation [in traditional music] is annihilated by writing" (1984, p. 57); of course, much of the material posted on line meets Brailoiu's definition of writing (including participants' comments and notations), but one could argue that by encouraging such a profusion of contributions that are expressed using such a variety of different media, the current predicament still allows a degree of variability.

The relevance of internet contents within their various fields and the impact of the internet in general upon communities and global networking have been analysed from the early days of the technology and its development (see for example Lysloff, 2003). A number of studies have also

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<sup>193</sup> Retrieved from Facebook, "Folkworks People" group, conversation starting date: 31 August 2013, <<https://www.facebook.com/groups/204763452884979/permalink/680332748661378/>> [accessed 16 September 2013]

appeared that explore internet-based methodologies for conducting research. For example, Sade-Beck's *Internet Ethnography: Online and Offline* considers the ethnographical research potential of the internet, notably detailing the qualitative data gathering opportunities found online at that point in time (Sade-Beck, 2004). In this article, he specifically explores the intricacies of conducting ethnographic study online, pointing out the various implications and challenges raised within such an environment, particularly concerning the dynamics of the interaction between researcher and online community members (Sade-Beck, 2004, p. 8). Despite not being directly concerned with ethnomusicological studies, Sade-Beck's ideas and theories can be applied to the study of online music communities to ascertain the dynamics of group interaction and the technology's impact upon the culture more broadly. Furthermore, even though Sade-Beck's study appeared relatively early in the technology's history of rapid development, past views and analyses of the internet provide significant insights into changes in use and perception. Comparison with more recent studies, such as that by Miles Foley (2012), which considers the sharing of oral tradition through the internet, reveals the internet's striking transformation from being a novel tool employed in limited ways by only a small faction within the community into being a principle means through which knowledge and relationships are managed and negotiated amongst the majority of members.

The variety of resources that can be shared between individuals and groups is innumerable. In the context of cultural and musical exchanges, resources include musical scores, transcripts and recordings, but also musical videos, as well as instruments and music related items. Tom McConville explained to me that he does not always use notation for his own compositions: "I make my own tunes up. People talk about writing them out. I am not really good at writing them out, but I make them up."<sup>194</sup> However, he stressed that that is no obstacle to sharing: he is easily able to record his creations and upload them without any recourse to notation – and, like many others, he sometimes also provides additional information about interpretation, inspiration, and extra-musical significance, in order to provide a comprehensive representation of his musical endeavours. Thus, musicians are able to share both old and newly-composed repertoire in such a way that musical patterns remain tightly wedded to accompanying ideas regarding where they came from and how they relate to other patterns.

In developed countries, organised or institutionalised resource sharing is often seen as critically important for developing efficient musical exchanges amongst the population. Accordingly, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have seen the development of libraries, archives and cultural centres, in order to preserve and share cultural resources, whether tangible (such as books, prints,

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<sup>194</sup> P. C. (Tom McConville, August 2011)

manuscripts, costumes, photographs, etc.) or intangible (dances, events, customs, traditions, etc.). Musical libraries and archives have also been developed, specialising in offering musicians and music enthusiasts access to wider musical resources than in their close community. Nonetheless, to create such a sharing environment, these organisations also have to preserve the technologies necessary to access their recordings. This issue is exemplified by the collaboration between the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library in London and the British Library. Because the former Library does not have the required technology to preserve and offer the opportunity for researchers and members of the public to listen to wax cylinder recordings, it collaborates with the British Library. Nonetheless, Cecil Sharp House and the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library remain very often quoted by folk musicians, such as Adrian McNally, as central institutions for the preservation, documentation and transmission of folk music.<sup>195</sup>

In the context of the globalised world, the processes of resource sharing are continuously being greatly enhanced by the development of new technologies, both in terms of the volumes of material exchanged and the extents of the networks and access. The internet has played a major role in the process of sharing resources. As well as a profusion of forums and discussion websites specialised in music, sizeable and varied musical databases have been collectively created, making available a large number of musical resources to professional and amateur musicians of any musical genre. Participative websites and databases, such as YouTube, constitute the core of this sharing process.

Since the late 1990s, many studies have investigated the impact of the development of the internet on cultural and intercultural communication (see Featherstone, Lash and Robertson, 1995; Miller and Slater, 2000; Moss Kanter, 2001; Woolgar, 2002; Mackay, 2004; Burgess and Green, 2009; Piller, 2001). Amongst the studies realised in the last few decades addressing internet-enhanced intercultural communication, ethnomusicologists have initiated reflections on musical adaptation, typically identifying the emergence of challenges to established genre subdivisions and the setting of new standards within musical cultures ( see for example Taylor, 1997; Baltzis, 2005).

While the internet offers a myriad of new opportunities for sharing resources within a globally-scaled network, issues relating to language and codification seem to be the most problematic obstacles to communication. Looking beyond the obvious issue of language comprehensibility, various linguistic studies and multidisciplinary research groups have extensively analysed the implications of translation in relation to resource sharing and cultural exchange. However, it is apparent that, despite these continuing obstacles, the internet has greatly assisted initiatives geared towards the fostering of cross-cultural music exchange, further complemented by concurrent improvements in

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<sup>195</sup> P. C. (Adrian McNally, August 2011)

transportation. Naturally, this has helped people to forge socio-musical connections beyond their earlier class-, status- and region-bound musical worlds.

Nonetheless, it has to be underlined that, despite recent technological developments granting access to a wealth of musical cultures for many populations, much musical transmission still appears to happen in a relatively traditional way, within close communities or even in the family environment. In the case of the folk music scene in England, pub sessions, open mic events and privately organised meetings with friends still lie at the heart of transmission processes while the bulk of internet communication explicitly refers to the goings-on within such contexts – and never the reverse. Consequently, one can argue that internet interaction ultimately serves to complement and enhance face-to-face music making, rather than replace it.

### 7.7.1. Internet and written sources

#### 7.7.1.1. Uses of online databases

When asked about their favourite sources for finding new folk or traditional tunes to play, the vast majority of the folk musicians I interviewed mentioned frequently looking online for sheet music. It has to be underlined that not all folk musicians have had a classical music education and can read staff notation. Furthermore, many do not consider staff notation to offer an accurate representation of the music they play since it does not capture inherent variability and ornamental nuance – echoing the reservations expressed by many ethnomusicologists concerning the limitations of staff notation (see, for example, Hood, 1971, p. 61). The process of transcribing folk tunes into staff notation is often recognised as a "classicization" of the tradition (see Hughes, 2008, p.174) and it therefore tends to be opposed by the more traditionalist folk musicians, even though it can be seen as an effective means to attracting musicians from other backgrounds into playing traditional music.

*The Session*<sup>196</sup> is the website the most cited by my interviewees in England as a place to look for tunes (See Figure 18, below). Even though they all seem to be aware that the website started as a database specifically designed for Irish traditional tunes, musicians perceive this website as a more general sharing platform for folk musical resources. As Jérémy Tétrault-Farber emphasised in his paper at the International Council for Traditional Music Ireland and British Forum for Ethnomusicology Joint annual conference in 2013, amongst the new features of *The Session* website are new descriptions of tunes.<sup>197</sup> Thus, alongside the traditional "hornpipes", "slip jig" or "strathspey", other types of tune category have become available, an example of a rather uncommon

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<sup>196</sup> *The Session* <<http://www.thesession.org>> [accessed 20 April 2011]

<sup>197</sup> "Democratic Collections: The Role of the Internet in the Collection, Transmission and Community Dynamics of Irish Traditional Music", Jérémy Tétrault-Farber (Paper presented at the Joint BFE-ICTM Ireland Annual conference, Queen's University Belfast, 5 April 2013)

one being "mazurka". Amongst the comments attached to submitted tunes and in the forum conversations, some members of the websites strongly defend the Irish traditional music focus of the website and object to other types of tune being submitted, be they recently composed or from a different place of origin. Nonetheless, it seems that the creators of the website's policies are more and more open to other types of tune. Another significant website feature that appeared on a recent redesign (in September 2013) is the opportunity to make parallel comparisons of different versions of a similar tune. Further enhancing the site's already intensely participatory ethos, this feature not only allows personal or local versions of tunes to be submitted, as shown in the comments and explanations of the tunes, but also helps to highlight specific points of variation, thereby slightly alleviating the difficulties faced when trying to work with a very large number of resources. Arguably the most valuable benefit of this facility is that it counters the perceived trend towards standardisation by encouraging the contestation of norms and the cultivation and acceptance of multiple versions; it represents a return to the old folk ethos wherein there was no single "right" version of any tune.

Your profile TUNES RECORDINGS SESSIONS EVENTS DISCUSSIONS

THE SESSION

[EDIT TUNE DETAILS](#)

## The Atholl Highlanders JIG

Also known as Athol Highlander, The Athol Highlanders, The Athol's Highlander's March, Athole Highlanders, The Athole Highlanders, Atholl Highlanders, The Atholl Highlanders March, The Atholl Highlanders' March, The Athyll Highlander, Duke Of Atholl's March, The Duke Of Atholl's March, Lord Athlone's March, Peggy's Wedding, The Scottish.

There are 52 recordings of a tune by this name.

The Atholl Highlanders has been added to 707 tunebooks. [REMOVE FROM TUNEBOOK](#)

Three settings [DOWNLOAD ABC](#)

X: 1  
T: The Atholl Highlanders  
R: jig  
M: 6/8  
L: 1/8  
K: Amaj  
|:e2e ecA|ecA Bcd|e2e ecA|Bcd cBA|  
e2e ecA|ecA Bcd|eae fed|cdB A3:|  
Ace Ace|Adf Adf|Ace Ace|Bcd c2B|  
Ace Ace|Adf Adf|eae fed|cdB A3:|  
|:a2a sec|a2a sec|a2a sec|Bcd cBA|  
a2a sec|a2a sec|eae fed|cdB A3:|  
c2c cBA|d2d fed|c2c cBA|=G2=G BA=G|  
c2c cBA|d2d fed|eae fed|cdB A3:|  
# Added by *Jeremy* 11 years ago.

[LISTEN](#) [PRINT](#) [SHEET MUSIC](#)

X: 2  
T: The Atholl Highlanders  
R: jig  
M: 6/8  
L: 1/8  
K: Amaj  
e2 e e>cA | e>cA B>cd | e3 e>cA | B>cd c2 B |  
e3 e>cA | e>cA B>cd | c>eae f>ed | c>dB A2 :|  
A>ce A2 e | A>df A2 f | A>ce A2 e | B>cd c2 B |  
|: ecc acc|acc Bcd|ecc acc|Bcd cBA|  
ecc acc|acc Bcd|eae fed|cdB A3 :|  
# Added by *biribirdie* 6 months ago.

[LISTEN](#) [PRINT](#)

[+](#) [ADD A SETTING](#) Do you know another version of this tune?

### Eighteen comments

This is a classic pipe tune, presumably Scottish in origin.

The four parts are basically variations on a theme. The end of each part is always the same, so the tune isn't as hard to learn as it at first seems.

This jig has a range of just one octave all the way to the fourth part where it drops down to a G. The G is natural, although the tune is in the key of A major.

If you feel up to playing a marathon set, you can play this jig with that other four-part tune, the jig of slurs.

# Posted by *Jeremy* 11 years ago.

**March**

I've played this song as a march, mainly because that's the way I learned it. It makes a great march, with the Scottish ornaments, it was orginially a bagpipe tune, I believe.

P.S. I'd heard rumors that this was played as a jig, now I know they're true.

# Posted by *fiddlergirl15* 10 years ago.

Figure 18: Screen shots from *thesession.org* with the transcription of the tunes, comments and alternative suggestions<sup>198</sup>

<sup>198</sup> The Session <<http://www.thesession.org/tunes/107>> [accessed 16 September 2013]

*The Session* is one of the oldest online tune collections and contains the highest number of tunes and versions. Significantly, despite its proclaimed focus on Irish traditional repertoire, it also remains one of the most popular online resources – not only amongst Irish musicians in Ireland but also amongst non-Irish folk musicians in England. This is yet another indication of folk musicians in England adopting an eclectic approach to repertoire; not only do Irish tunes feature prominently alongside English tunes in most sessions in England – representing a peaceful musical co-habitation in the performance space – but the English musicians themselves also actively choose to co-habit the same online community with the Irish music enthusiasts. Significantly, the co-habitation of Irish, English, Scottish and other folk tunes is also clearly evidenced within other popular tune resource websites such as *Folk Tune Finder* and *Mudcat café* (discussed further below). In this way, as Rua MacMillan pointed out to me, at the same time as making large bodies of traditional repertoire widely available, these kinds of resources also encourage the "blurring out of regional styles".<sup>199</sup> He clearly places great value on the existence of regional stylistic differences, giving the example of West Coast and Eastern Scotland.

Moreover, the extensive availability of staff notation transcriptions of folk tunes and the increasing number of folk musicians who have learnt to read this type of notation have had a profound impact on more recent compositions. While traditional tunes needed to include standardised forms with phrases of regular fixed length and formulaic recurring patterns in order to facilitate oral learning, inclusive participation, and easy co-ordination with social dancing, the use of notation has enabled and encouraged deviation from the old norms. Accordingly, a large number of the more recently composed tunes exhibit harmonic, melodic and rhythmic experimentation within extended and irregular forms. Thus, Alex Wade, an experienced folk musicians and music teacher, characterises recently composed tunes as featuring more syncopation, unusual keys and key changes and angular melodies.<sup>200</sup> Although many recently composed tunes might be deemed better-fitted to modern contexts of folk music playing such as stage performances and festivals, it should be noted that a good proportion can be (and are) picked up by folk musicians to be played in the more informal local context of the pub folk music session. Accordingly, in addition to materials relating to traditional repertoire (which still constitute the main bulk of the contents), most online tune resources also offer areas for cataloguing, sharing and discussing newly composed folk music. In addition, some musicians send transcriptions of their compositions directly to others. Anthony Robb, for example, drew my attention to the fact that he had created an electronic version of his notated compositions (relating to the tunes off one of his albums), so that he could "send [them] to people to learn from,

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<sup>199</sup> P. C. (Rua MacMillan, 26 August 2012)

<sup>200</sup> P. C. (Alex Wade, 13 April 2013)

and then, they can just [...] print them off if they want".<sup>201</sup> In this case, the Internet is used not only to store different versions of tunes and dances, but also to enable communication between musicians who may have met in a specifically designed environment for folk music sharing but are not living in the same area.

Anthony Robb added:

"You know, twenty people have asked for it, [...] it's not going to shake the world to bits, but it's just one other way of doing it"<sup>202</sup>

His statement points out the small scale of this initiative within the more complete and thorough range of methods employed to transmit folk tunes. Nonetheless, it can be put in comparison with other small scale initiatives, such as sharing tunes with fellow musicians in the context of the home, which seems to happen regularly only for a small proportion of musicians. Moreover, this process of learning with the help of transcriptions and recordings also links to the way that folk music publications have evolved in the last few decades, as described earlier, when looking at collections (See Chapter 7).

#### *7.7.1.2. Collections in the perspective of new technologies*

As outlined above, amongst both professional and non-professional musicians, one of the most often cited sources for finding folk and traditional tunes, after person-to-person transmission, is the Internet, which is particularly valuable for those who cannot read staff notation. The aforementioned online resource *The Session*<sup>203</sup> is notable in offering an efficient browser to find tunes, transcribed with ABC notation, staff notation and sometimes recorded. Even more accessible to musicians without classical education, *The Folk Tune Finder*<sup>204</sup> offers the opportunity of locating a tune by entering a part of the tune using a virtual keyboard on the screen or another virtual instrument. Similar databases have also been created for folk songs. An example of this is *Mudcat Café*, which contains thousands of songs, including a wide number in Welsh.<sup>205</sup>

Another database of folk music is the *Irish Traditional Music Tunes Index*.<sup>206</sup> As its title points out, this database is specifically focused on Irish traditional music. It is composed of the indexation of 112 tune books published between 1963 and 2012<sup>207</sup> and track lists of 635 CDs recorded by Irish Folk

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<sup>201</sup> P. C. (Anthony Robb, 24 August 2012)

<sup>202</sup> P. C. (Anthony Robb, 24 August 2012)

<sup>203</sup> *The Session* <<http://www.thesession.org>> [accessed 20 April 2011]

<sup>204</sup> *Folk Tune Finder* <<http://www.folktunefinder.com>> [accessed 20 April 2011]

<sup>205</sup> *Mudcat Café* <<http://www.mudcat.org>> [accessed 10 January 2013]

<sup>206</sup> *The Irish Traditional Music Tunes Index* <<http://www.irishtune.info/>> [accessed 9 September 2013]

<sup>207</sup> *The Irish Traditional Music Tunes Index , Bibliography* <<http://www.irishtune.info/books.htm>>, Page mentions "This page was updated on 26 July 2013" [accessed 9 September 2013]

musicians up to "a total of 18,188 tune and song recordings" including archived recordings from 1891 to resources from 2013.<sup>208</sup> The search engine for the database is relatively simple, allowing keywords search from the title of the tunes, with the possibility of restricting the search to a particular rhythm.<sup>209</sup> The search result (if successful) offers in parallel an extract of the musical transcription of the particular tune, an extract from a recording, and references to the albums and books in which it can be found. Recording tracks can also be searched by musician, album or instrument.<sup>210</sup> Even though this particular database is not directly participative, suggestions of recordings and books to be added to the index are welcome, and the resource also offers information of sessions and other traditional music gathering and related events. The impact of such websites is relatively difficult to assess, as little is known about the number of users or their particular interests. Nonetheless, it is apparent that folk music enthusiasts regularly direct each others' attention to these resources by SNS or "word of mouth". Thus, for example, in January 2012, one of the members of the *Durham Folk Sessions* Facebook group, Andy McLaughlin, used Facebook to encourage the other members to visit the *Irish Traditional Music Tunes Index*, the Facebook tool which records the total number of readers for each post shows 102 in this particular case. Although Facebook does not release information regarding whether these viewers actually went onto the website, two comments were also published confirming interest in the resource.

Some projects have been undertaken to archive folk musical resources on the internet in an especially methodical way. One example is the Folk Archive Resource North East (FARNE) project,<sup>211</sup> which is described as "an exciting and innovative project bringing Northumbrian music to people's homes across the world".<sup>212</sup> The aim of making a large number of songs, lyrics and tunes widely available to the community that they originally came from (in this instance, Northumberland) is typical of many websites and databases of traditional tunes, whether produced by experts or the wider internet community. The preservation and diffusion of tradition is of paramount importance in people's minds. In contrast with participative databases that are ceaselessly developed by the users, the FARNE project's results were limited by two years' funding. However, as the organisers explained,

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<sup>208</sup> *The Irish Traditional Music Tunes Index, Discography* <<http://www.irishtune.info/r.htm>> Page mentions "This page was updated on 26 July 2013" [accessed 9 September 2013]

<sup>209</sup> *The Irish Traditional Music Tunes Index, Tunes Search and Finder* <<http://www.irishtune.info/search.php>> [accessed 9 September 2013]

<sup>210</sup> *The Irish Traditional Music Tunes Index, Album Search and Finder* <<http://www.irishtune.info/album-search.php>> [accessed 9 September 2013]

<sup>211</sup> Folk Archive Resource North East <<http://www.folknortheast.com/>> [accessed 10 September 2012]

<sup>212</sup> Folk Archive Resource North East <<http://www.folknortheast.com/about-farne>> [accessed 10 September 2012]

the objective was never to conduct an exhaustive study of all traditional music of the North East; rather it "leaves room for another project".<sup>213</sup>

### 7.7.2. Internet and recordings

Recording technology has long been perceived as an effective way of preserving tunes for future generations. While methodologies for collecting tunes through recording and transcription have been widely studied and often criticised for the simplifications and distortions they can engender, the development of recording technology effectively made the task of accurate transmission much easier – producing resources that can be repeatedly referred to and scrutinised in detail, section by section if desired. In the present day, the internet has added another dimension, allowing audio and video files to be broadly disseminated in conjunction with dialogue, offering spaces for young musicians to explore each others' work and find inspiration to forge their own interpretations and compositions.

In addition to the collection-type online resources detailed above, individuals also use websites such as YouTube to upload their own musical performances and tunes and to find others' versions of traditional tunes, sets or compositions. Thus, on stage, Sam Mabett and Dylan Howarth, two young musicians who have been playing together for several years, performing at festivals and regularly attending Folkworks Youth Summer School, do not hesitate to mention YouTube as one of their primary sources for finding and learning tunes. On stage, they jokingly explain that they have found the tune in "the new oral tradition that is YouTube".<sup>214</sup> They have used this joke on several occasions when introducing the tunes that they perform. As Kevin Burke explained during an advanced workshop at Fiddles on Fire, within the folk tradition it is still the case that emulating the playing of masterful musicians dominates the learning process (without recourse to notation):

"There is not a third of the music written on the paper. Even in classical music, there is not everything, but there is more than in folk music [...] you learn about your instrument at home, but you learn about the music by listening."<sup>215</sup>

Although the face-to-face musical encounter remains the favoured dynamic for this musical learning, many musicians devote hours to scrutinizing internet resources; the computer's screen, keyboard and speakers now serve as a vital window through which one can access model performances – taking or leaving as one desires.

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<sup>213</sup> Folk Archive Resource North East <<http://www.folknortheast.com/about-farne/project-remit>> [accessed 10 September 2012]

<sup>214</sup> Sam Mabett and Dylan Howarth, Whitby Folk Week, August 2013

<sup>215</sup> P. C. (Kevin Burke, May 2011)

Moreover, as significant as it is as a resource for developing personal repertoire, folk musicians are also perceiving and starting to use the internet as a direct educative resource. Indeed, Ged Lawson and Nikki Williamson stated:

"Anybody who is interested, now with YouTube, [...] all the downloads [...] or the CDs [...], with the Europe non-competitive and static, over here, you get a new tune, you go out make an album and record (or you just stick it on YouTube) [...] things are a lot more shared and explored, so the transmission is very healthy."<sup>216</sup>

In effect, Alex Cumming, besides exchanging contexts such as folk sessions, mentions:

"in terms of getting material out there, [...] I do put things online. MySpace is the best place ever for that, because it's free [...] and SoundCloud... Loads of Folk musicians put material out there. [...] It is there as educational source [...] people use it as a promotional source. [...] The whole online thing [...] oh, and YouTube... Very vital that YouTube."<sup>217</sup>

Similarly, the use of these online sharing platforms by more experienced folk musicians is meaningfully illustrated by Anthony Robb's statement:

"Youtube is quite good, because, again, you are learning orally. After somebody's hand, it is the next best thing."<sup>218</sup>

This comment makes particular reference to the wide number of tunes recorded and available to be learnt online by ear, as folk tunes have traditionally been learnt. Several dozen versions of well-known tunes such as Egan's Polka can be found on YouTube. The wide variety of these recordings is very significantly representative of the different backgrounds of the musicians who might access and use similar resources, whether the tunes are performed on stage by bands to an audience, in an outside space by groups or buskers, or by individuals recording themselves in a private space for the purpose of putting their recordings online. One can assume that the variety of musicians sharing these recordings is at least partially representative of the wider folk music scene in England – although, again, it is evident that users frequently wish to search beyond their own national and regional boundaries, adopting an internationalist approach. This observation clearly applies to others within the trans-national folk scene. For example, Nina Fjeldet told me that while she considers archives in her Norwegian village to be her first source when searching for traditional repertoire "of [her] own tradition", she primarily uses internet sharing resources when looking for music from elsewhere.<sup>219</sup> She specifically mentions looking for traditional music from America, Scotland and

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<sup>216</sup> P. C. (Ged Lawson, 29 April 2012)

<sup>217</sup> P. C. (Alex Cumming, May 2012)

<sup>218</sup> P. C. (Anthony Robb, 24th August 2012)

<sup>219</sup> P. C. (Nina Fjeldet, 5 April 2013)

Ireland on Spotify, notable as an international recording database, which arguably offers more reliable quality recordings than YouTube.

Nonetheless, the use of participative resources online can have major disadvantages in the transmission of traditional music. Sam and Dylan mentioned that sometimes when they use YouTube as their source for learning they do not know with certainty what the accessed tunes' names, origins and significance are. Even though it seems to offer opportunities to listen to a wide variety of tunes, and choose amongst them any they wish to learn, the participative character of online resources such as YouTube results in the unreliability of crucial information available concerning the repertoire. In fact, many tunes of the folk music repertoire are simply referred to as "air", "tune" or "jig", rendering it very difficult to conduct further research into the tune's origins, age, status as either traditional or newly composed, or the identity of the tune's collector, arranger or composer. This is very much in accordance with Burgess and Green's central critique of YouTube: because sites such as YouTube allow any users to upload whatever "user-created media" they wish, the result is a massive profusion of items – some having extensive accompanying explanation and others remaining decidedly obscure, and all being only very loosely inter-linked through often arbitrary key-words (see Burgess and Green, 2009).

One can assume that the musicians who post videos do so in order to assert their own personal identity within the online affinity community (through displaying their own knowledge and skill) and, at the same time, to offer opportunities to other musicians, such as Sam and Dylan, to learn from their content. The individual then exercises his or her own personal choice – navigating around the available resources to identify recordings that, in their point of view, have sufficient artistic value to merit drawing from in their own creativity. Of course, one's online learning experience is partly determined and partly limited by a number of factors, including one's searching skills, existing knowledge of bands, musicians and repertoire (- the "leads" for one's enquiry), knowledge of resources, what is actually available (and how readily accessible it is), and also a large degree of chance. Ultimately, as a session participant put it: "The internet changes the types of tradition you are exposed to."<sup>220</sup> Some forms of music are relatively easy to discover, others are peripherally located within the virtual network, and still others are hardly represented at all.

This comment incisively pinpoints one of the major impacts of the development of new technology on traditional and folk music. Indeed, these recordings and their free availability to a global audience have also profoundly changed folk musicians' perceptions of traditional tunes. The internet not only allows new ways of sharing but also automatically generates archives of tunes in an almost

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<sup>220</sup> P. C. (Anonymous Contributor, 17 April 2012)

"undeletable" digital environment. Another recently developed online initiative is online tuition. Not only has tuition through video conferencing programs such as Skype started to be offered (see for example the discussion on *Mandolin Café Forum*<sup>221</sup>), but many pre-recorded online video tutorials have been created and shared on generalist websites such as YouTube. The audience for these tutorial videos can be analysed by consulting YouTube's demographic data on logged in users. However, as Julia Bishop has underlined in her study of children's songs in digital media, presented at the International Council for Traditional Music Ireland and British Forum for Ethnomusicology Joint Annual Conference in 2013, these data tend to lack accuracy because electronic devices are often shared amongst several family members without logging out and some tutorial websites do not allow members under the age of 13, rendering children an unaccounted-for category even though they might still represent a significant proportion of the audience for online music tutorials.<sup>222</sup> While there is no data available to indicate to what extent folk music-related tutorials are followed by young enthusiasts in the UK, it is clear that another tendency within the folk amateur music scene in England is the late involvement of older adults, either reigniting an earlier hobby or starting a new one. This is evidenced by the popularity of adults' folk music tuition, both privately and through events such as Folkworks Adult Summer School and Burwell Bash. It seems logical that many adult beginners might look online for teaching resources, probably favouring methodical tuition by professional or very experienced folk musicians.

### **7.8. Conclusions: Learning online: new teaching methods in folk music**

In the field of education studies many studies have been carried out on the virtual teaching environment, recognising that, nowadays, in formal teaching environments such as universities and schools, it is not uncommon to see teachers directly using the internet as a teaching tool. This is also the case in regards to the formal teaching of music. Firstly, music teachers can communicate with their students through teaching applications and interfaces such as Blackboard, designed for class teaching, sharing resources, homework and assessment, but these tools are designed for a general teaching environment and are used in a wide range of subjects. In the case of music teaching, a wider variety of resources are also available, relating to most musical topics (even though not always originally created for didactic purposes). The most obvious example might be university music lecturers who often go online to websites such as YouTube to find musical examples to illustrate their lessons. These teachers are no longer restricted to the use of locally available CDs or other tangible formats of music recording held in libraries or other collections in the immediate vicinity.

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<sup>221</sup> "Mandolin Cafe Forum - What is your opinion of Skype music lessons?" <<http://www.mandolincafe.com/forum/showthread.php?80861-What-is-your-opinion-of-Skype-music-lessons>> [accessed 25 January 2016]

<sup>222</sup> "'Cool Hand Games': Children's Clapping Play on YouTube", Julia Bishop (Paper presented at the Joint BFE-ICTM Ireland Annual conference, Queen's University Belfast, 5 April 2013)

I have not yet encountered the use of online videos and resources by folk music teachers in the classroom or workshop context: unsurprisingly, in such contexts, direct face-to-face oral transmission remains the preferred mode of transmission without recourse to other media. However, a substantial portion of the teaching and learning context itself has been transported into the virtual realm, with both aspiring and already accomplished musicians consulting a profusion of sharing resources to access, contribute to, and draw from an immense wealth of online videos, recordings, and forums. Within the online context, people from all parts of the folk music community devote much time to expressing their preferences, interacting with other kindred folk, and building upon their personal repertoires and skills. The wide availability of easily useable electronic equipment, such as video cameras, webcams, and microphones, offers the opportunity for any folk musician to create digital recordings of learning and teaching resources.

Many folk music enthusiasts use the internet as a self-teaching tool, some for example looking to internet resources to assist them in the learning of specific musical instruments. With so many individuals (both amateur and professional) being able to create, upload, and make available their own homemade teaching resources, a profusion of online tutorials has accumulated on YouTube, other participative websites, personal blogs or social media, some directed at total beginners and others focusing on more advanced techniques, some being free and others requiring subscription. Inevitably, these teaching resources vary greatly in their pedagogical approach, teaching ability and subject focus. However, it is apparent that, as in the classroom, audio-visual resources not originally created for didactic purposes can be used as such. Hence, learners will typically not only consult tutorials but also videos that demonstrate the finished result – accomplished performances that they can emulate. Many of these resources now play an important role in enthusiasts' lives, in some cases granting access to skills and knowledge that may not be readily available in the immediate vicinity. Skill and knowledge acquisition can now happen with little or no need for face-to-face contact. Evidently, it is not only amateur hobbyists who draw on such resources; many established musicians use them to build upon their existing musicianship, acquiring uncommon niche skills beyond the standard instruments like flute, accordion or guitar. In this way, relatively rare instruments, such as the hurdy gurdy, can find a new audience and find the number of their players increase again, after having almost disappeared from the English amateur folk music scene. In this way, Dylan Cairns-Howarts, a young fiddle player, recently decided to start playing the hurdy gurdy, using only internet resources as his teacher. By imitating existing online videos and watching tutorials on the instrument, he has acquired remarkable skill on the instrument allowing him to perform it on stage with Sam Mabett on the melodeon.

Many online videos provide more focused exploration of specific elements in the repertoire – typically, tunes or sets of tunes presented in an education-oriented manner. In these cases, the presenter adopts the role of teacher and makes use of common teaching-and-learning strategies such as breaking down the tune into short phrases and repeating each phrase slowly before the whole tune together. Meanwhile, the presenter seeks to engage on a personal level with the abstracted viewer, emulating eye-to-eye contact and adopting a conversational (albeit one-sided) mode of speech – essentially seeking to recreate, as much as possible, the “real-life” dimension of oral transmission. As Crook and Light have suggested, this kind of "virtualizing [of] the person-to-person exchange of study" is indeed a characteristic feature throughout all kinds of educative internet content (2002, p. 165). Significantly, in addition to traditional tunes, such videos also commonly focus on recently composed tunes, which their composers wish to share beyond the reach of their local music community. It has to be underlined, however, that amongst the profusion of video resources available online, on personal blogs or on YouTube, few of them reach a substantial number of views, and word-of-mouth amongst the community tends to play a considerable role in determining which become popular. Thus, despite the presence of a large online affinity community, it remains the case that localised communication amongst friends and associates continues to play a central role in determining what resources are accessed and how they are used.

In addition, it is clearly apparent that a large proportion of the folk music scene’s live face-to-face participative events are recorded as they are taking place and are then uploaded to the internet, thereby continuing to have an influence on the transmission of folk culture long after they actually occurred. Of course, it is those events that are widely deemed to be useful that tend to achieve subsequent online prominence. Unsurprisingly, workshop leaders (like most folk culture members) stress a preference for real-life interactivity over online virtual interactivity – the former featuring the real-time unmediated exchange of knowledge and skill on a moment-by-moment basis, as has always been the way in the folk tradition. In addition, those present at workshops realise that they are privileged to a special encounter, tailored specifically to the needs and desires of those present – rather than for the world at large. Consequentially, although most workshop leaders appear to allow participants to record their workshops in part or in full, it is explicitly or implicitly understood that the use of those resources should be restricted to those present. It is clear that many participants are keen both to record workshops and to share their recordings with the other participants using online file sharing facilities such as "DropBox", which allow more or less restricted access. Others put the digital recordings onto DVDs and sending them by post to addresses collected at the end of the workshop. In this way, technological application actually serves to strengthen the interpersonal relationships within the network. As a result, these recorded events become highly valued and much-

used resources within the folk community, not only serving as a helpful means for skill acquisition but also grounding the culture within the real-life face-to-face transmission that continues to define the tradition, stretching back long before modern modes of mediated communication.

In short then, sharing resources on the internet, whether through participative websites or privately shared folders, has become an essential component within the transmission of folk music, folk culture, and the wealth of knowledge inherited from previous generations. Despite occasional attempts to restrict access to particular items, the overriding result has been an explosion in the diversity of easily accessible materials – and once they have entered the virtual sphere, it is clear that uploaded items may follow a chain of transmission quite unintended by their creators. Ian Stephenson provided a good example of this when introducing one of his compositions at a concert during Whitby Folk Week 2015<sup>223</sup>. After composing this tune, Stephenson had included it in an online *Dropbox* which he shared with other folk musicians notably in Finland. He then personally forgot about the tune in question until some months later when, at a Youth Summer School, someone played it to him, mentioning that he had composed it. He discovered that a musician in Finland had taught it at a music camp in Finland and it was then passed on and transmitted through a Summer School in Germany and a couple of camps in the US. This unexpected transmission demonstrates both the potential efficiency of the internet as a resource sharing means, but also the little control that musicians have of their work once it is online.

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<sup>223</sup> P. C. (Ian Stephenson, August 2015)

## 8. Conclusions

### 8.1. Living traditions: Eclecticism in cultural practice

This thesis did not aim to offer an in-depth analysis of traditional music's sonic patterns, which can be found in publications, libraries and archives, but to explore the social dynamics of a music scene comprising "folkies" who, supported by new technologies and communication means, are interpreting, reinterpreting and enriching the existing folk music repertoire, and performing it in the twenty-first century. This challenges stereotypes of fixed tradition and raises questions regarding the definition or re-definition of fundamental concepts, such as tradition, cultural identity, and hybridisation. Thus, this research demonstrates that, rather than being threatened with disappearance, traditional music has adapted and thrives in the increasingly globalised world as the community of folk musicians and their audiences are embracing the opportunities that globalisation offers.

It has been shown that folk and traditional music continues to play major roles in the construction of individual and group identities within communities, linking them to particular people, places, times and memories. In the current-day, reflecting the diverse personal backgrounds and identities of participants, not surprisingly, one can identify a variety of different approaches to the inherited tradition. As identified in this thesis' title, eclecticism appears to be a prevailing feature, with culture members engaging in the tradition in diverse ways, drawing from a substantial range of sources, and employing varied types of communication technology, to forge and express their position in the folk music scene. Many enthusiasts (though obviously not all) follow the broader socio-cultural trends towards hybridisation, experimenting across musical genres and cultural boundaries to express their complex identities. Accordingly, the traditional repertoire is subject to ever more radical revisions, exemplified for example by Tom Kitching's re-interpretation of the well-known Morris tune "Old Tom of Oxford", which he described as "played in a minor key, broken down and played backwards... like

that".<sup>224</sup> He added that the tune is "quintessentially English in the rhythm (hornpipe), but the melody is full of twists and turns [...] it has been strongly influenced by various things - which I think is the direction the living tradition is going".

The changing socio-political contexts in Europe throughout the twentieth century have had dramatic direct and indirect impacts on musical traditions. The socio-political meanings of folk and traditional music, notably in relation to nation and national identity, and the interest and active involvement of political powers in such concepts, have been widely and extensively studied through the second half of the twentieth century (see notably Anderson, 1983; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983; Harker, 1985; Vansina, 1985; Bayard, 2005). Inevitably, the evolving twenty-first century folk music scene in England is directly inheriting this history and these changes and, of course, this history is still alive within the minds of older musicians. However, the old ties between identity, nation, and "national" traditional music are being challenged; it is not at all uncommon to encounter an English person who feels a particularly strong affinity for Scandinavian folk tunes.

This thesis has drawn theories and approaches from existing and comparable studies undertaken in similar fields, applying primarily anthropological and ethnomusicological methods and insights to the study of the folk music scene in England – seeking in particular to reveal the full gamut of ways in which culture members engage with music. This broad approach has proved useful in revealing the scene's current state in its entirety, reflecting the experiences of the culture members themselves who, as has been shown, tend to link themselves to tradition through multiple different kinds of group and solitary activity. The same approach was taken from the beginning of the research, through the fieldwork process, and on through the analysis of the results. Thus, this entire study, rather than focusing on the repertoire, the songs and tunes themselves, has chosen to favour deeper enquiry into the processes of networking, community dynamics and transmission. Nevertheless, even though the tunes are not closely analysed in this research, they form the roots out of which the research questions have grown; indeed, the processes and ideas discussed are all clearly registered in the music's patterns. The remainder of this conclusion section will now serve to single-out the key findings that come out of my research.

## **8.2. Musicians' attitudes and perceptions**

The people-focused "bigger picture" approach that I have adopted for this study has centred upon exploring folk musicians' perceptions – seeking to shed light on the range of ideas fostered within the folk music scene in twenty-first century England. This has necessitated conducting a great many interviews and observing the musicians' diverse activities at close quarters, engaging with both

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<sup>224</sup> P. C. (Tom Kitching, March 2015)

professionals and amateurs in diverse music-related contexts. Accordingly, I have had to make many challenging decisions, for example regarding choice of interviewee; in this respect, I have sought to obtain representative views paralleling those of other folk musicians in England. I have also had to formulate suitable interview processes and methods of data analysis, specifically geared towards revealing musicians' points of view – ultimately aiming to construct a balanced and ethically-aware analysis of the current folk music scene.

I have discovered that the views of folk musicians tend not to be in agreement with either the dominant economical theory of globalisation adapted to the cultural and musical fields of study or with the idea of a cultural grey-out proposed by Nettl. Indeed, in interview, only a small minority of musicians expressed the view that traditional music was under threat in the current context, where younger generations have access to many other musical genres and hence might be less inclined to learn about their local community cultures. Rather, the majority of my interviewees expressed little or no concern that their musical culture was in danger of disappearance: they invariably drew my attention to the thriving communities of musicians that they themselves belonged to, highlighted the broad participation of different age groups, and pinpointed the popularity of festivals, workshops, summer schools and other forums for learning and enjoying folk music. My research has also identified other areas of broad agreement, for example concerning the importance of community-based participatory events for the preservation of the cultural heritage, the importance of orality in the musical transmission processes, and the need to be free to interpret folk music in personal and original ways.

In previous studies, little has been said about the musicians' own points of view regarding their own music and, more importantly, research has been focused on just one or two small facets of the culture. Consequently, there is a tendency amongst some academics, and also within the music industry, to stress a particular vision of the folk music scene, specifically presenting it as a counter-global homogeneous musical movement. As discussed in Chapter 4, within the scene, musicians actually differentiate a great many strains of activity and approaches, a profusion of styles, tune tunes and influences, and diverse perceptions regarding classification. From within the scene, the view is far more one of heterogeneity, with a sizeable faction eagerly pursuing their own experimentation, blurring the boundaries of musical genres. Indeed, rather than “cultural grey-out” the insider perception is distinctly one of “diversification” (Erlmann, 2003).

However, areas of major disagreement have emerged, notably regarding the definitions of “folk” and “traditional” music, the applicability of these labels in different cases, and their interchangeability. Musicians' perceptions also differ subtly regarding what the fundamental defining characteristics of

traditional music are – whether it must be old or not, of unknown author or not, learnt by ear, living as performed repertoire within the community, and so on. There are areas of ambiguity and disagreement about less significant issues also, such as the designation of certain instruments as “traditional”. However, it is important to emphasise that these theoretical concerns – alongside others concerning as globalisation, deterritorialisation, glocalisation and hybridity – cease to be of much relevance to the musicians themselves during the music making experience: the priority for the assembled group is to work together to create an inclusive aesthetic experience, centred on shared knowledge.

### **8.3. Globalisation and hybridity**

This thesis has demonstrated that the impact of globalisation on traditional and folk music takes place through a number of different, and sometimes opposing, processes. Whereas access to different kinds of music may have reduced the interest of young people in certain traditional musics in favour of more globalised genres, at the same time, developments in communication technology have led to wider diffusion of traditional musics across and beyond the British Isles, and greater diversity in the interpretation of traditional repertoires and in new musical creations. Indeed, this has affected both the music scene itself and its audiences: the music scene has substantially widened, allowing professional and semi-professional folk musicians to find a place to be heard and a personal style of playing, which does not only depend only on cultural influences from the immediate vicinity. This celebration of inter-cultural exchange between traditional music cultures has been shown to be particularly pervasive in many different contexts and is, perhaps, epitomised in Ethno-World, as demonstrated by the testimonies and observations collected during fieldwork and explored in Chapter 5.

Globalisation has, indeed, been evincing transformations in all aspects of the folk music scene. In the globalised social context, musicians are exposed to, and have access to, an enormously wide variety of musical styles and genres and many musicians choose to hybridise existing knowledge and style with newly encountered musics from outside of the immediate tradition: crucially, in many contexts, globalisation is affecting approaches to interpreting old repertoire and also influencing newly composed music. Thus, many professional musicians experiment with cross-genre and cross-cultural hybridity, through the assimilation of non-traditional rhythms, melodic patterns, timbres and instrumentation – extending the breadth of borrowing far beyond, for example, the bouzouki that was introduced several decades ago to become a “traditional instrument” (in some enthusiasts’ eyes). In this way, the culture members’ expectations have changed with many adopting a more accepting position towards unexpected musical details, repertoire from far away, and the particular cross-cultural blends offered by certain bands and musicians.

It is apparent that hybridisation has also engendered a degree of deterritorialisation within the folk music scene. This study has revealed the large degree to which repertoire is now shared cross-regionally amongst enthusiasts: old stylistic boundaries have dissolved as musicians have pooled their repertoires and eclectically introduced other regional components into their music making activities – reflecting their own complex social network. National delineations between repertoires, which were once of importance, especially following the nation-building searches for identity initiated in the late nineteenth century, have substantially decreased in importance in the last few decades, leaving space for co-existence and blending. Personal collaboration between musicians of different cultural origins has been, in the recent folk music scene, one of the main sources of inspiration for new bands and new compositions. Indeed, high profile bands such as Baltic Crossing and Blowzabella have embraced the intercultural creative approach to traditional and folk music, using international collaboration to produce interesting instrumental combinations and hybrid musical creations that mix influences from diverse sources. The resulting creations thus promote, through the medium of music, an internationalist vision, bringing different cultures together into a condition of harmony. While the sense of the music being rooted in a particular place and a particular history is weakened, the creativity opens up new scope to express more complex identities and relationships of the present day, which traverse multiple locations and, at the same time, diversify folk music into a global musical genre. The approach of these bands is clearly reflected in various other initiatives discussed in this thesis, including, most notably, the Ethno Project, analysed in Chapter 5.2, where the vision of promoting cross-cultural dialogue is truly all-pervasive. The current research has focused on the contexts, processes and ideas implicated in cross-cultural music making; future research of a more musicological nature, exploring how ideas and relationships are registered in sonic patterns, is recommended to complement my present findings.

While a variety of globalising factors have been encouraging cross-genre and cross-regional hybridisation in recent years, this research also posits the view that hybridisation is, in fact, nothing new. On the level of the individual, each musician's personal style, as reflected in compositions and interpretations, is commonly regarded as a composite of his or her personal history – moulded by a life-long cumulative process of hybridisation. In interview, I encountered this same conception again and again. Because this type of fusion process is now recognised as being an extremely common means for generating originality within human creativity, earlier interpretations of musical traditions as being clearly bounded single units developed in particular places over long periods of time become highly questionable; rather, the formulation and maintenance of tradition involves assembling a collage of linkable elements derived from multiple sources. From this point of view, although hybridisation in tradition may sometimes appear to be a relatively recent phenomenon, it is

identifiable in ancient practices also. Nonetheless, according to the majority of the experts in this area, the main difference between past and present processes of evolution within tradition concerns the great extent of change that seems to have taken place recently.

#### **8.4. The Internet**

The internet, in particular, has been exerting a pervasive impact on the transmission of culture, clearly encouraging processes of glocalisation, whereby local music makers draw from a much larger trans-regional community of “folkies” to gain knowledge and ideas that inform their local music making lives. The widespread adoption of new global technology and communication to strengthen and extend pre-existing music-related networks undoubtedly constitutes a major development in the scene’s evolution. This too inevitably promotes processes of deterritorialisation: music-related knowledge and ideas can now be easily shared within and between smaller communities of folk enthusiasts regardless of where those communities are based or where the material originates from.

This study has shown the internet to play a key role in many enthusiasts’ musical lives, specifically serving to establish or nurture social interaction between enthusiasts – providing forums for discussing earlier or forthcoming events, sharing opinions on recent developments and, crucially, sharing repertoire and interpretations via websites such as *The Session*, *Folk Tune finder*, and *Mudcat Café*. Yet even though the internet offers a huge variety of new opportunities for musicians, this research has shown that users tend to recreate similar dynamics to those existing in the non-virtual world. In fact, the virtual ways and manners of networking are strikingly similar to the networking etiquette that predated the appearance of the internet.

#### **8.5. Collecting**

The folk music scene has long been subjected to collecting and preservation initiatives. From the end of the nineteenth century until the second folk song revival, these initiatives were almost exclusively carried out by non-musician outsiders who momentarily visited musical communities in order to acquire recordings, transcriptions and contextualising accounts, which were then taken away for scrutiny, categorisation, publication and archiving. Nowadays, however, it is clear that the division between non-musician outsider collector and musician insider music maker has largely dissolved. This research has revealed that a great many enthusiasts are involved in collecting – whether it be manuscripts of tune transcriptions, books, short melody reminders, recordings or other folk-related artefacts. Furthermore, this research has recognised and emphasised that even those musicians who do not collect tangible items are also collectors – forever preoccupied with acquiring new tunes, categorising those tunes, and contextualising them with additional information and stories. In contradistinction with the earlier collections, these ‘insider’ collections are wholly geared towards

usefulness: a personal collection of traditional and folk tunes serves as a flexible database that one can refer to and add to at will, in order to enhance one's repertoire, forge a distinct musical identity, and contribute to the community.

While highlighting the musicians' inherent collector sensibilities, these personal collections clearly represent their owners' preoccupations, range of knowledge, and involvement in the scene and, as such, they provide valuable insights to the folk music researcher – although they have remained seldom acknowledged in previous scholarship. Naturally, such collections are far more valued by musicians, becoming an enduring legacy when their owners pass away – either being donated to others in the community or to archives. As this research has shown through study of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library in London, there is clear evidence of a two-way cultural exchange between archives and musicians.

It has been shown that shared collections are also of great importance in many enthusiasts' lives – in particular the aforementioned websites like *thesession.org*, which are employed by countless individuals to develop and contribute to understanding about different tune variants, often in an attempt to chart the tune's historical trajectory. Undoubtedly, such collections would prove a valuable resource for academics also, seeking to understand not only the musicians' personal perceptions and current knowledge but also processes of evolution and continuity within the continuing tradition. This research, then, has highlighted the considerable extent to which musicians make use of published collections, personal collections, archived collections and shared collections – employing these in various ways and various combinations to supplement the internal collections that they foster through oral transmission. Undoubtedly, further research needs to be carried out regarding collections, and especially regarding the collections accumulated by the cultural insiders (as opposed to the cultural outsiders).

## **8.6. Commercialisation**

This study has also considered the commercialisation and commodification of folk music, again focusing particularly on the processes themselves (rather than specific musical products) and on musicians' perspectives. It is apparent that these processes have engendered the creation of new labels and the reworking of older labels to define, gather, qualify, promote and disseminate the evolving musical forms to broader audiences. Changes in labelling are seemingly subject to trends and fashions, as illustrated by the various labels used to describe particular bands such as Blowzabella, who have been variably referred to as "traditional", "folk" and "world". However, even though they are widely used by the music industry and in the media, such labels tend to be viewed sceptically by the musicians themselves. In fact, this thesis has underlined the views of many folk

artists, both professional of amateur, revealing that they tend to disregard the labels and categorisations given to their music. At the same time, however, this research has highlighted the existence of a strain within the scene that seeks to distance itself from the fixing influence of recordings; even while the commercialised products may be appreciated, the feeling is that their contents should not be admitted into the music making space, serving as definitive models representing “the right way”. This view is widely held particularly amongst committed community folk music makers.

Moreover, in some cases, musicians actively work to position themselves outside of the musical restrictions imposed by marketing labels. This is especially the case for those professional musicians who collaborate across musical genres and musical traditions from different geographical areas, seeking to create original compositions of artistic interest. Defining the boundaries of tradition and of other particular genres has always been a concern to cultural insiders, with debate stimulated each time new additions appear within the repertoire and constant references back to the past in order to search for and accentuate authentic roots. Nonetheless, these debates have been intensified on account of these new “folk music” creations that challenge the old norms through hybridity. In this way, the age-old tension between the authenticity-seeking traditionalist outlook and the syncretistic hybridity-favouring outlook is clearly apparent. Inevitably, for each individual, the degree and nature of musical hybridisation that is considered desirable is always shaped by socio-political paradigms – by the individual’s attitude regarding his or her place within the immediate culture and that culture’s position within larger-scale inter-cultural complexes.

### **8.7. Transmission**

The transmission of traditional repertoire has always been a key concern in the mind of the traditional musician and, in interview, a great many of my interviewees stressed the importance of ensuring knowledge and skill transmission to younger generations. As is often pointed out by both academics and musicians, the traditional repertoire is centred upon sets of tunes that have well-known structures and expected patterns, facilitating easy learning and easy remembering and thus making the music accessible to musicians who learn orally. While past ways of teaching, learning and transmitting traditional and folk tunes continue – most notably in the informal session or dance context – it is apparent that new forms of transmission have been developed to adapt to modern needs and modes of communication. Thus, “tune swaps”, one-to-one online tuition, internet forums, workshops, summer schools and other forums have proliferated in recent decades.

My research has uncovered distinctly contradictory perspectives regarding the institutional transmission of folk music culture via workshops, summer schools, and higher education courses –

some expressing concerns about cultural standardisation and others celebrating the extra dimension of community that such initiatives develop and the in-depth concentrated approach to passing on knowledge and skills that they offer. While it has been shown that many individual events still seek to identify and explore specific regional repertoires and styles, it is evidently now also common for institution-organised events to promote plurality – evidenced most spectacularly in the case of Ethno-World, which encourages international collaboration between young folk musicians of different backgrounds, nationalities and musical identities. Little is known about the extent of such initiatives' impact on a more global scale – and this would certainly be a fruitful area for future research. However, at the individual level, taking part in events such as the worldwide Ethno events or Folkworks Summer Schools has undeniable benefits, both in terms of gaining musical experiences and influences and, more personally, in exchanging and sustaining international contacts and friendships. Thus, many current and past participants describe such events as life changing experiences, both musically and personally; these events essentially broaden people's horizons, promoting an ethos of cross-cultural sharing, friendship and hybridity.

Another issue of critical importance relating to transmission (both institutionalised and non-institutionalised) is the balance and interplay between oral transmission and notated transmission within the folk music scene; this too is an area which certainly merits further research. While most musicians still favour the flexibility and diversity encouraged by the former, at the same time, as demonstrated by the aforementioned profusion of collections, many do consult the latter – and it is clear that the spread of music literacy, combined with the increased access to diverse recordings, has enabled musicians to experiment with more complex and less memorable forms and patterns, stepping creatively out of the boundaries of the traditional idiom.

### **8.8. Contexts of music making**

My study has found that folk music tends to be perceived as something which is actively done, rather than passively consumed – despite ongoing commercialisation and commodification. At the same time, my research has discovered that folk music enthusiasts tend to engage in music making in multiple ways, rather than single-mindedly devoting their attentions to just one forum of musical interaction. Indeed, rare are the regulars at local pub sessions who have not attended folk festivals, and even more rare are the professional folk musicians who play on stages but do not play in pub sessions, and a large number of amateur folk musicians have themselves recorded or been recorded performing. Nevertheless, despite the diversification of opportunities in teaching, learning and sharing contexts, it is remarkable that localised traditional music making settings, such as the pub session, remain favourite contexts for the enjoyment and transmission of traditional culture, forging close-knit communities within the larger folk music scene. Indeed, local community folk music

making still occupies a position of centrality in many music makers' lives. It is, after all, only through long-term shared participation in music making that strong socio-musical relationships can be forged, with individuals becoming sensitive to each others' knowledge, skills, styles and personalities..

Complementing the session, a wide variety of other ways to engage in traditional music making are now also prevalent. The festival, in particular, has received scanty coverage in existing academic literature, despite its importance in many people's lives as a crucial means to engage with the larger folk music scene. Various different festivals have been considered in this thesis. Some, such as Shrewsbury, Towersey or Sidmouth, focus on performances by headline artists but others, such as Whitby Folk Week, have been developed along a participative ethos: many of the events are music workshops and dancing events, encouraging and promoting the active musical and cultural involvement of folk enthusiasts. With increased ease of communication and travel, festivals are a major context of transmission within the wider folk community, serving as crucial forums in which musicians from different areas can gather to share their artistry to wider audiences. Crucially, festivals also offer multiple ways in which the enthusiast can engage directly with leading figures in the scene, be it through music making, interview or casual conversation. The competitions that frequently happen during festivals are very revealing of the blurring of the boundary between "amateur" and "professional" in the folk music scene; while open to anyone, the price for the winner is usually a place to perform at the first part of a major event, as well as an invitation as a scheduled performer the following year.

In their conclusion, Monaghan and Just summarise the general anthropological view in which "people are everywhere the same except in the ways they differ" (2000, p. 145). Applied to the broad field of music making, this "admittedly not very profound statement" can be understood as acknowledging the existence of an inherent compatibility between different traditions; this is the critical element that allows hybridisation and eclecticism and the expression, through music, of contemporary complex identities. My ethnography-based study has demonstrated that an ethos of eclecticism is highly prevalent within the folk music scene of twenty-first century England. While enthusiasts are still, of course, preoccupied with absorbing the cultural heritage of tradition, at the same time, their personal understandings of the scope of tradition have broadened to encompass diverse tunes in varied styles from different regions beyond the local. What one encounters again and again is an eclectic mix of different musics that change and evolve through time, following current trends and adopting and integrating modern inspirations.

"I see myself as part of a large group of people who have been working in traditional music for centuries and making it better, and I feel that the best traditional music is going to happen in the future" <sup>225</sup>

This statement from Ian Carr, which he admitted quoting from Martin Hayes, seems to illustrate particularly thoughtfully this idea of the changing nature of traditional music and the folk scene that surrounds it, guided through the input of successive generations.

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<sup>225</sup> P. C. (Ian Carr, 1 July 2012)

## **9. Appendices**

The three appendices below relate to my fieldwork interviewing processes. They provide the following: my interview questionnaire (used in many but not all contexts and often extending into more fluid conversation); a list of interviewees and contributors; and a sample consent form (completed by every contributor to this thesis).

## 9.1. Interview questionnaire

*I am doing a PhD in Folk music, looking at the impacts of globalisation on Celtic traditional and folk music, specifically looking and hybridisation between different genres and traditions. I'd be really grateful if you could tell me about your own experiences and music making. Please write extended answers if possible – but if you're short of time, short answers would be fine. Thank you very much.*  
Elise Gayraud.

### Questionnaire:

#### 1. About your music:

- 1.1. How would you describe the music you are usually **playing**? (e.g. Traditional, World, Celtic...) Please comment on your choices of words.
- 1.2. How would you describe the music you are usually **composing**? Please comment on your choices of words.

#### 2. About traditional tunes: (If you play, perform and/or record traditional tunes)

- 2.1. What is (are) for you the main characteristic(s) of a traditional music?
- 2.2. Why did you choose to learn traditional tunes?
- 2.3. Where would you look for traditional repertoire? (sessions, recordings, dotted music sheets...)
- 2.4. Do you attempt to play traditional tunes as they used to be played, or rearrange them (instrumentation, rhythms, melodies...) or both, and why?

#### 3. About influences:

- 3.1. In your **compositions**, what do you consider being the main influence (e.g. on rhythms, melodies, particular region, style, artist...)?
- 3.2. How did you first get into contact with these different influences?
- 3.3. Why would you mix these influences?
- 3.4. When **rearranging** other musicians' tunes or traditional tunes, do you consider you are integrating mixed influences?
- 3.5. What instruments do you use? (Please list these with the most "traditional" first)
- 3.6. On stage or when recording, would you say you usually stick to "traditional instruments" or integrating other ones?

#### 4. About transmission of tunes:

- 4.1. Do you think the transmission of tunes to younger generations is happening efficiently?
- 4.2. In which context(s) do you exchange tunes / transmit your own tunes?

## 9.2. Interviewees and contributors

In order to address my research questions, I aimed to interview a wide range of musicians currently active in the folk music scene in twenty-first century England. Thus, I attended many folk music-related events, and interviewed tutors, students and participants, gathering their individual opinions regarding the music that they play while also observing their music making activities first-hand.

I designed the semi-structured interview questionnaire above, which most contributors answered for me. Nonetheless, in the context of fieldwork, I adopted participant observation research methods. In this way, some tutors and professional musicians' contributions came from comments which they made in the setting in which they taught or performed, rather than from answering my questions. Similarly, in the spontaneity of fieldwork research, other contributors shared interesting facts or opinions furthering my research during the course of other people's interviews, and signed the consent form (below) for me to use their opinion as well.

In consequence, listing my interviewees in discreet categories is relatively difficult. As developed in the thesis, folk musicians are part of a close-knit community and perform at similar events. For example, in the same way as most Ethno tutors used to be participants, a number of Folkworks Summer School tutors used to attend it as students, and many professional musicians performing at major festivals also play in local pub sessions.

My interviewees are therefore listed below simply according to which context or event I recorded their contributions (- the main one, if several instances). All these interviews took place between September 2010 and December 2015.

**Tutors at Folkworks Summer Schools:** Ian Stephenson, Karen Tweed, Laura Cortese, Patsy Reid, Hannah James, Ben Paley (Jumped in), Joseph O'Connor, Karine Polwart, Alistair Anderson, Sophie Ball, Rachel Unthank, Becky Unthank, Adrian McNally (Jumped in), Sam Pirt, Kathryn Tickell, Emily Ball, Tom Kitching, Tom McConville, Andy Cutting, Amy Thatcher, Claire Mann, Shona Mooney, Peter Tickell

**Fiddles on Fire Tutors:** Tim Kliphuis, Maja Graverermoen Toresen, Nina Fjeldet, Demot McLaughlin, David Milligan, Ruairidh Macmillan, Kevin Burke,

**Participants in Folkworks Summer School, Hexham Gathering and other events in the North East England:** Becky Harrison, Karl Taylor, James Taylor, Andrew Parr, Jessica Lamb, Alex Cumming, David Gray, James Boyle, Kevin Lees,

**Performers at Shrewsbury Folk Festival:** Jim Moray, Caroline Herring, Neil Pearson, Steve Knightley, Catriona Macdonald

**Interviews at Whitby Folk Week:** Anthony Robb, John Dipper

**Regular participants at Durham pub sessions:** including Nicholas Till, Dick Park, Damian Caisley, Isabel Park, Peter Rowley-Conwy, Paul Archer, Martin Matthews, Nikki Williamson, Ged Lawson, Paul Martin

**Participants in Ethno World events:** Johanna Goodlad, Merran Nugent, Kirsten Hendry (From the Shetland Islands), Alan Reid (From Ireland), Jua Yoon, Song hee Kwon (From Korea), Frida Hannerz, Thomas Eriksson, Thyge Soendertoft Pedersen, Frida Hofling, Soren Vinther Rogen (From Sweden)

**Ethno Tutors:** Allan Skrobe, Ian Carr, Myriam De Bonte, Wim Claeys, Kieren Alexander, Wouter Vandenabeele

**Tutors at festivals abroad, such as in Viljandi, Estonia:** Magnus Zetterlund, Erik Rydvall, Anders Löfberg (Members of the Band Nordic), Tarmo Noormaa, Alhousseini Mohamed Anivolla, Jonas Kongsted Frederiksen

Some contributions were more specific to a particular aspect of my research. This is the case for additional questions I asked Folkworks and Ethno tutors but also: Ffion Mair (on online resources), Liz and Paul Davenport, Joseph Oliver (on collections), Alex Wade (on changes in playing styles), Martyn Harvey (on dance calling), Malcolm Taylor, Nicholas John Wall (on archiving), Olli Saukko (on musicians' gatherings), Chris Stephenson (phone interview on the organisation of Whitby folk week)

Additionally, eight of my interviewees preferred not being cited by name. If they were quoted in the core of this thesis, they appear as anonymous contributors.

### 9.3. Consent form

#### Interview Consent Form

I,

(print name)

agree to a videotaped/recorded/written interview for this research project.

I have had the purposes of the research project explained to me.

I have been informed that I may refuse to participate at any point by simply saying so.

I have been assured that my confidentiality will be protected, and my name will not be published unless I have specified below that I wish it to be published.

I agree that the information that I provide can be used for educational or research purposes, including publication.

I understand that if I have any concerns or difficulties I can contact the Head of Department, Music Department, Durham University, Palace Green, Durham, DH1 3RL, United Kingdom.

If I wish to complain about any aspect of my participation in this project, I can contact the researcher Elise Gayraud or the Head of the Music Department, both at the address above.

I  would like to be identified by name  do not wish to be identified by name

*(please delete one)* in any publication of this research.

Signature

Date

*NOTE: If signing electronically, typing your name on the line above will be deemed to have the same effect as a handwritten signature.*

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