

Back on Track CD Series. Various. *It's Time for Another One: Folk Songs from the South Coast of Newfoundland; Folklore of Newfoundland and Labrador: A Sampler of Songs, Narrations, and Tunes; Saturday Nite Jamboree*. By Research Centre for the Study of Music, Media and Place, Memorial University of Newfoundland CDs, 2005, 2006, 2007 (available www.landwashdistribution.com)

Heather Sparling

Volume 30, Number 2, 2008

Hommage à Peter Narváez
In Honour of Peter Narváez

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/019955ar>
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/019955ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Association Canadienne d'Ethnologie et de Folklore

ISSN

1481-5974 (print)
1708-0401 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Sparling, H. (2008). Review of [Back on Track CD Series. Various. *It's Time for Another One: Folk Songs from the South Coast of Newfoundland; Folklore of Newfoundland and Labrador: A Sampler of Songs, Narrations, and Tunes; Saturday Nite Jamboree*. By Research Centre for the Study of Music, Media and Place, Memorial University of Newfoundland CDs, 2005, 2006, 2007 (available www.landwashdistribution.com)]. *Ethnologies*, 30(2), 271–277.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/019955ar>

REVIEWS / COMPTES RENDUS

Back on Track CD Series. Various. *It's Time for Another One: Folk Songs from the South Coast of Newfoundland; Folklore of Newfoundland and Labrador: A Sampler of Songs, Narrations, and Tunes; Saturday Nite Jamboree.* By Research Centre for the Study of Music, Media and Place, Memorial University of Newfoundland CDs, 2005, 2006, 2007 (available www.landwashdistribution.com)

Newfoundland and Labrador has long been recognized for its rich oral traditions, including song, music, and narrative. This province has attracted many folksong and folklore collectors, including MacEdward Leach, Maud Karpeles, Kenneth Peacock, Margaret Bennett and others. Popular books featuring the region's folksongs, such as Gerald Doyle's *Old-Time Songs and Poetry of Newfoundland*, have been the source of songs for contemporary Newfoundland bands, such as Great Big Sea, The Fables, The Navigators, and Rawlins Cross. However, it is difficult to hear the songs, tunes, and stories as first recorded by collectors — unless, that is, you are prepared to listen to them in an archive, such as the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA). But now there is a series of CDs being produced by the Research Centre for the Study of Music, Media and Place (MMaP) at Memorial University, in conjunction with MUNFLA, which aims to make rare and currently inaccessible Newfoundland music available to a broader public. The “Back on Track” archival series currently consists of three CD recordings: *It's Time for Another One: Folk Songs from the South Coast of Newfoundland* (2005); *Folklore of Newfoundland and Labrador: A Sampler of Songs, Narrations, and Tunes* (2006); and *Saturday Nite Jamboree* (2007). In this review essay, I consider each recording individually as well as the series as a whole.

It's Time for Another One: Folk Songs from the South Coast of Newfoundland presents field recordings from the South Coast of Newfoundland recorded by Jesse Fudge in 1968 during his Christmas

vacation from Memorial University where he was studying English and Folklore. Fudge himself grew up in the area. Many of the local songs are not well-known elsewhere in Newfoundland or mainland North America. Although the community was not so isolated as to not have access to broadsides and popular songs, they composed many of their own songs. Some local compositions have not appeared elsewhere in print, such as "The First of October," "A Cold December Day," "My Brother John and I," "Long Pond," and "We're Mighty Glad to See You." Other local songs, including "Taking Back Gear in the Night," "Squarin' Up Time," and "Penny Fair in the Cove," have variants in published collections such as Peacock's *Songs of the Newfoundland Outports* (1965), Lehr's *Come and I Will Sing You: A Newfoundland Songbook* (1985), and Doyle's *Old Time Songs of Newfoundland* (1955). Yet other tracks are variants of songs originating from outside the area, such as "Lather and Shave," a mid nineteenth century comic Irish-American song, and "On the Banks of the Clyde," an Irish ballad on a common broadside theme. Unfortunately, while the liner notes carefully document known printed versions of the CD's songs, there is no information whether any of these songs have been recorded commercially.

A unique feature of this CD is the inclusion of "rearrangements" of three of the songs by local musicians and producers. Beverley Diamond, CD coproducer and author of the liner notes, writes that "the 'new' versions were commissioned explicitly to present several views about the meanings of tradition and modernity." The liner notes include explanations for each performer's interpretation. For example, well-known Newfoundland folk singer Jim Payne explains that he wanted to foreground the story of the comic smuggling song, "The First of October." He therefore kept close to the original version, sung by Robert Langdon, except for the addition of acoustic guitar accompaniment. Unexpectedly, the liner notes also describe how and why Payne's sound engineer modified his performance (for example, he added a bit of air and boosted mid-range frequencies to "shine and warm up the vocals"), making explicit technological processes that often remain invisible. Pamela Morgan of Figgy Duff fame chose to rearrange Robert Childs' bawdy song, "Sal Stopped Up to Iron Some Clothes." She adds her own voice to punctuate Childs' original performance with harmony and also adds three accordion lines and bodhran. Although the lyrics are all very clear, Morgan's interest was to recreate the atmosphere of a kitchen party.

The most unanticipated rearrangement is the hip hop version of "A Cold December Morning" by guitarist Glen Collins, journalist Monique Tobin, and DJ Mark Power. The creators admit that it is not necessarily easy to listen to, especially the middle section, which features an extended sample of Gordon Kendall's original performance punctuated by Power's digital response. Tobin argues that "It suggests the two can't really talk to each other. They speak a different language." Rather than emphasize the lyrics and the story, these collaborators responded to the intensity of Kendall's voice. In so doing, they sought to enlarge the theme of loss, but not the explicit loss evident in the song's text about two brothers who fell through the ice and died while travelling to get Christmas provisions for their families. Instead, the hip hop version explores the loss of tradition and a disconnection between generations.

I really enjoyed the rearrangements, although if one were to listen to the CD from beginning to end, one might find that they disrupt the "flow" of the original archival recordings. But by juxtaposing original field recordings with contemporary arrangements, and by including extensive information about how and why the arrangements were developed, all sorts of issues are foregrounded: what does "traditional" mean? How much and what kinds of change are acceptable within tradition? Who gets to modify traditional songs and to what degree? How has technology impacted oral traditions? Is Jim Payne's arrangement somehow more traditional than the one by Collins, Tobin and Power and if yes, why is that so?

I would like to see this experiment continued on future CDs as I suspect it will encourage discussion and debate about musical traditions and their roles within communities. Meanwhile, recordings of these new arrangements become historical documents in their own right, documenting significant performers and performing styles of the present day. What about producing two parallel CDs, one containing new arrangements of original archival recordings found on the other? Each CD might then work better aesthetically on its own while providing the possibility of expanding the concept.

Newfoundland and Labrador Folklore: A Sampler of Songs, Narrations and Tunes was conceived by folklore graduate students as a sampler of folkloric music and narrative from the Folklore and Language Archive at Memorial (MUNFLA). The twenty-seven field recordings span 1960-1994 and carefully avoid most well-known Newfoundland and Labrador

songs (e.g., "It's the B'y" and "Squid Jiggin' Ground"). The majority of the material is musical, including a Child ballad ("Willie O Winsbury"), broadside songs ("The Valley of Kilbride," "The Gay Spanish Maid," "Johnny Reilly"), occupational songs ("The Gypsum Men," "Twin Lakes," "Maggie May"), and dance tunes ("Rakes of Mallo," "Joe Smallwood's Reel"). Most are in the English language, although there is a French macaronic song ("Catherine a passé par ici") and a Scottish Gaelic song ("Oran an Tombaca" [The Tobacco Song]). Apparently, "Tom Tobin's Dickybird," an erotic song on the compilation, received quite a bit of local radio play, causing the initial CD run to sell out in only a few months (more have since been made available)!

The performers include well-known greats such as Emile Benoit, Minnie White, and Mack Masters, but many others are less known. What I find particularly attractive about this collection is that it goes beyond the expected songs and tunes to include two *cante fables* (spoken-sung performances) and "recitations," defined by Kenneth S. Goldstein as "solo, spoken, stylized, theatrically-mannered oral performance[s] from memory of... self-contained dramatic narrative[s] in either poetic or prose form," two of which are fixed-phrased ("Romeo and Juliet" and "Job's Cove Rock"), and one which is free-phrased ("Dogsled Tall Tale"). This gives a better sense of the breadth of vernacular oral expression and performance in the area. I also value how some tracks include the performer's or collector's commentary rather than being limited to the musical or narrative performance alone. This provides some insight into the performers' intent and performance context.

Saturday Nite Jamboree is the name of a popular live music show that played on CBN in St. John's and the Newfoundland Regional Network of the CBC from 1958 to 1969, featuring well-known local entertainers and hosted by Harry Brown, who later went on to become associated with CBC's original edition of "As It Happens" with Barbara Frum. The CD features two shows that aired in July 1963. Normally, radio tapes were reused for new shows after being broadcast, so there were no known surviving recordings of the show until Dinah Hilton Fitchett came forward. She had been a nursing student from England who watched the two shows being recorded. Enjoying the show and being a musician herself, she asked Harry Brown for a copy of the recordings. He gave her the original 7" open-reel tapes. Fitchett kept the recordings for the next forty years and, on a return visit to Newfoundland, asked MUN's Department of Folklore for help in getting

copies made in a format she could again listen to. Folklorist and music scholar Neil Rosenberg, together with Ted Rowe who used to listen to the show as a youth, approached MMAP about turning the recordings into the CD.

The liner notes include an excellent essay about the history of Newfoundland broadcasting and commercial recordings of Newfoundland music, followed by a history of "Saturday Nite Jamboree." A brief biography is provided for each of the performers in the four acts who regularly performed on the show: The Bluegrass Mountaineers (Reg Whitten and Frank Thorne), Brian Johnston and the Dipsydoodlers (Don Randell, Bill Allen, Doug Maher, and Joe English), Wilf Doyle and the Band from Conception Harbour (Christine Doyle), and John White. Combining bluegrass, Irish, and traditional Newfoundland music, the half hour show was recorded live to tape with no rehearsals. I only wish that the song lyrics were included, as they are in the other two CDs in the series. Particularly useful are the references to other recordings of the songs included on this album, although it would have been helpful if references had also been made to any publications in which the pieces appear, for those who might like to learn them.

Because the recordings were originally made professionally for broadcast, the sound quality of this CD is excellent. The two shows are included in their entirety on this CD, including the banter between numbers, making it a wonderful resource not just for music, but for the appreciation of radio broadcasting at the time. This CD provides a useful example of the intersections between technology (radio, recording) and live music making, as well as the junctures between traditional and popular musics. Of sixteen musical numbers, nine are labelled "traditional," but some pieces demonstrate the difficulty of differentiating between "traditional" and "popular" songs. For example, "I Wish I Was Single Again" was popular in eighteenth-century Britain, later published in English broadsides and songbooks, collected throughout North America, found in the repertoire of blackface minstrelsy star, Edwin Ford Piper, and published in Newfoundland's *Old Home Week Songster*. Not only are the lines between "traditional" and "popular" blurred, but so are the lines between local and global.

My immediate reaction was that this CD could be used for injecting Canadian content into a popular music course. There are tunes traceable to blackface minstrelsy ("Bile Them Cabbage Down," "I Wish I Was Single Again"), broadsides ("Pretty Polly"), early country music ("Then

I'll Stop Loving You," "Oh Lonesome Me"), and western swing ("My Shoes Keep Walking Back to You"), as well as more traditional tunes ("A Rip in the Jig," "The Rollicking Skipper"). Some tunes can be traced back to broadsides while others are more contemporary compositions by Grand Ole Opry singers (e.g., Marty Robbins, Jim Reeves, Louis "Grandpa" Jones) or local Newfoundlanders.

Aside from the inclusion of hard-to-access archival materials and lesser-known oral expressions from Newfoundland and Labrador, the strength of this series lies in its liner notes. All the CDs are packaged in DVD cases to enable the inclusion of extensive liner notes (ranging from twenty-one pages for *Saturday Nite Jamboree* to approximately forty pages for the other two), as are maps depicting the areas from which the repertoire comes. A nice addition in the sampler, is transcriptions of all the tunes "to enable musicians to learn the pieces." Warnings in the first two recordings prepare the listener for "imperfections" in the recordings, including audience interjections, ambient noise, and varying recording quality. However, I appreciate these sounds as they help to situate the recordings in time and place. They seem more immediate than the more disembodied sounds of polished, professional recordings. This may be especially helpful for conveying to students the living and lived context of unfamiliar music. Brief notes are provided about all the performers and the songs. Lyrics are also provided in the sampler and by producing a series, MMAP is able to be more representative of vernacular oral expression in Newfoundland and Labrador than would ever be possible on a single CD. There is potential for future CDs to focus on other regions, genres, performance styles, instruments, ethnic groups, and language. Since all three existing CDs feature mostly English-language song, I especially look forward to seeing a CD focus on the repertoire of more marginalized groups such as Natives and immigrant groups. And while it would be a significant undertaking, I wonder if MMAP might also consider producing DVDs and/or CD-ROMs that would enable the inclusion of video as well as audio, text, and images.

In addition to instructors of Canadian music and folklore courses who will appreciate these recordings as classroom resources, these CDs will appeal to folk music aficionados and singers who will not only welcome the access to a broad Newfoundland and Labrador repertoire, but who will also value being able to hear a variety of performance styles by entertainers well known and respected in their home region.

They are at least as important for lessons in performance as for that which is performed.

Overall, the “Back On Track” CD series is a valuable record of music making and oral traditions in Newfoundland and Labrador, and serves as a model of accessibility and scholarship that I hope other archives might follow. Available for purchase from Landwash Music (www.landwashdistribution.com) for about \$20 each, these CDs are well worth the price.

*Heather Sparling
Cape Breton University
Sydney, Nova Scotia*

Making Music in the Polish Tatras: Tourists, Ethnographers, and Mountain Musicians. By Timothy J. Cooley. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005. Pp. viii + 293, ISBN 0-253-34489-1)

What impact do we have on those in the “field” of our research? Two decades of self-examination have explored the nature of fieldwork as an increasingly participatory, self-reflexive and dialogic process built on personal relationships and commensality. In a post-colonial, post-modern, global world, we are becoming increasingly aware of the range of implications that our work has inspired among the peoples and cultures we study. Timothy Cooley compellingly addresses such issues in his insightful examination of “outsider” involvement in the Podhale region of southern Poland. Located on the northern side of the Tatra Mountains that form part of the Carpathian Mountain crescent which extends from southern Poland into the Balkans, Podhale is home to the Górale (Highlanders) and has a long history of association with outsiders despite its relatively isolated geographic position. In this book, the author explores constructions of ethnicity and music-culture as a direct corollary of the impact of tourists (long attracted to this mountainous region) and ethnographers (similarly attracted to a rich folk culture) in a study drawn from over ten years of research and fieldwork, and built on a dissertation and several published articles.

Locating his work in the tradition of Anderson (1991) and Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), Cooley suggests that over a period of