

## Fiddling with pasts: from tradition to heritage

*Owe Ronström*

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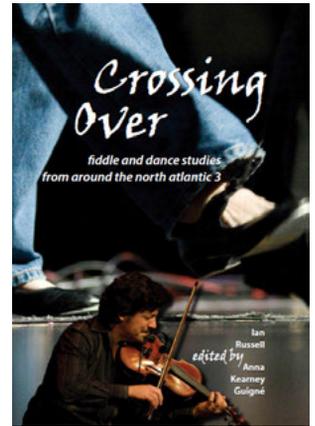
### Crossing Over

Fiddle and Dance Studies from around the North Atlantic 3

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## Fiddling with pasts: from tradition to heritage

OWE RONSTRÖM

The fiddle, or the violin, has travelled far from its birth in sixteenth-century Italy to today's globalised world. On the one hand, this instrument is a very standardized, homogenized object. On the other, it is a most diverse and varied phenomenon, an instrument approached, used, listened to, represented, and understood in so many different ways.

In this article I will first discuss the violin or fiddle as an object, before I turn to it as a phenomenon. My focus is upon the ideas and stories that fiddlers learn together with the tunes, especially about their origins, functions, meanings, and about what their music is and where it belongs. I like to think of 'folk music' as a kind of live-action role playing, based on 'old music'. What you are supposed to do may be fairly clear to most participants, but what is it all about? What kind of world is to be staged? What roles are there to distribute, and what symbols and values to manage? You have to know something about time and place, friends and enemies, social and cultural norms. You may not need all the details, but you will certainly need a basic understanding of the main issues.

Taken together, these stories, ideas, norms, and values, make up a kind of virtual reality, or 'world'. Here, I will call such worlds 'musical mindscapes',<sup>1</sup> a concept that urges us to understand phenomena like fiddles, fiddle music, and folk music, as both mental and physical – 'mind' for the former and 'scape' for the latter. Mindscapes are set up by establishing a certain perspective or gaze that makes us see a few things and overlook a whole lot more. Mindscapes are institutionalized in 'domains', or large networks of interlinked practices, ideas, artifacts, institutions and so forth.<sup>2</sup> These domains operate in different ways, with different goals, and occupy different niches in time and space. In the second section of the article I will sketch out some major changes in the musical mindscape of Northern European fiddles and traditional fiddle music in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. I will take most of my examples from Sweden, but I argue that the general picture is valid for a larger part of the western world today.

## **History**

The violin, or to be more exact, the viol, was born as a low class instrument. We find it first in the hands of dance musicians in small Italian towns in the first half of the sixteenth century. Soon it was to be elevated and house-broken. With its loud voice, some even described as rude, by the mid-sixteen hundreds, it seems to have become a hit among the gentry and the nobility, replacing the old, more intimate sounding gamba family of instruments. The sixteenth century was a period of great changes in Europe, writes English historian Peter Burke.<sup>3</sup> At this time the nobles drew themselves back into ever larger and more exclusive castles. A reformation of folk culture took place, as a consequence of the catholic and protestant reformations. The result, Burke argues, was a separation between high and low culture over large parts of Europe, which forced the nobles to find new means to express and legitimize their privileges, new ways to produce difference and distinction. In a remarkably short time the violin moved into a musical mindscape rather different from where it was born; in the hands of the nobles in Italy and France it became not only a hallmark of cultivation, but also a tool for expressing a new self-consciousness, and a new individuality.<sup>4</sup>

This marks the beginning of a new era in Western musical life. From the courts and castles of Italy and France in the late sixteenth century, the violin took off on its triumphant journey to most other countries in Europe. The first violins were brought to Sweden by Queen Kristina (1626–1689, reigned 1632–1654), in an attempt to reform the Swedish court. As a child she had been taught dances of the latest fashion by a French dancing master, and when she ascended to the throne, a young woman of nineteen, she gave orders to bring musicians from France. The first six French ‘violists’ were presented to the court in 1646, and a few years later, German and French violists were to be found in the courts of other Swedish nobles. We do not know how, or by whom, the new instrument spread in Sweden, but we do know that, by 1682, in many places the fiddle had already replaced keyed harps, bagpipes, and hurdy-gurdies. In record time the fiddle had become the most beloved instrument of the Swedes, from high to low, in castle, farm houses, and simple sheds.

Out of the same object grew rather different instruments. The violin with its sweet and mellow tone, large ambitus and expressive possibilities, became the voice of the new self-assured individuality of the Swedish nobility, at that time aspiring to be the rulers of northern Europe, in one of the world’s most modern states. The fiddle, with its continuously sounding rather harsh tone and small ambitus, a remnant of the older instrument that it had replaced, became the voice of the peasantry. From early on, this instrument in Swedish became known as the *fiol* or *fela*, semantically marking the cultural difference between the classier *violin* and its cruder popular version. Also in other languages we find the same difference, for example, in German, *violine* as opposed to *fidel*/fiddle, and, in English, violin as opposed to fiddle.<sup>5</sup> In English, fiddle ‘has been relegated to colloquial usage by its more proper cousin, violin’, notes etymologist Douglas Harper.<sup>6</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century we find violins and fiddles, also in the hands of a growing

urban population. All over Europe violins became a constitutive part of new urban popular musics, from the Strauss waltzes of the Austrian gentry, the café music of Hungarian and Romanian gypsies, to the *gammaldans*, or old-time dance music of the Scandinavian urban working class.

### **One or three instruments?**

Today the violin/fiddle is a constituent part of at least three large, interconnected, but rather differently constructed domains, commonly known as the classical, folk, and popular, each containing a number of musical mindscapes. Clues to the degree and content of these differences we may find if we take a look into a record shop, if this is still viable in these days of record-shop extinction. To be able to do business, record dealers have to organize their records to help consumers find what they are looking for, starting from a simple assertion of common cultural knowledge, 'what we know that you know that we know'.<sup>7</sup>

To find a certain classical recording, a good starting point is the name of the composer, and when he was active.<sup>8</sup> In the classical domain, composers are distributed chronologically over a number of slots, such as 'baroque' or 'romantic'.<sup>9</sup> The domain is organized to answer the questions 'who' and 'when', which of course mirrors a master narrative of cultural history, that of divinely inspired, creative artists, organized as pearls on a string of time. In this domain the violin becomes a tool for producing individual artists/composers, and a set of time-slots in the past.

To find a jazz, pop, or rock recording, the name of the composer will be of little help. Also the popular music domain is organized to answer the question 'who', and also here we find the idea of the inspired individual artist, or group of artists. But here artist means performer, not composer.<sup>10</sup> In general, the popular music domain is uninterested in time or space. Only on a secondary level will it answer to questions about history and geography. Instruments, among them violins, are tools for producing a generic placeless present, according to the formula 'one world – one market'.

To find a folk music record, composers are principally useless, as are artists. From the very beginning folk or traditional music in Europe was cast as a collective creation of an anonymous 'folk'. From the outset, in opposition to the classical domain's foregrounding of 'who' and 'when', the folk music domain was built around 'where'. Records are filed under continent, country, and region.<sup>11</sup> Until recently, artists have been secondary, as has the component of time. In the general traditional musicscape, composers and performers are the collective 'folk', and there is but one time, a generic past.

### **A musical geography**

The idea of a traditional music, a folk music, is a result of the growing bourgeoisie's discovery of the people in the late eighteenth century.<sup>12</sup> In their hands the fiddle became a tool for producing a geography of music, folk costumes, dances, and dialects, all of which spoke of unique local origins. The fiddle itself, however, was

never really nationalised or localised, not even in Sweden, where in some villages for every two villagers there were three violinists, as the saying goes. There is no such thing as a Swedish fiddle, although there certainly is something which is definable as Swedish fiddle music. Here we find the basic paradox of different productions at work – the locally distinctive becomes visible only against a common, transnational, or global background. The violin fulfils this role elegantly, being played everywhere in Europe, but everywhere in a different voice.<sup>13</sup>

By the late nineteenth century, in the eyes of the Scandinavian bourgeoisie, the fiddle had become the central symbol of all that was good about the folk and the good old days. As the instrument was hand-made, refined, old, authentic, and individual, it was praised as the true voice of the ‘folk’. It was the very antithesis of modernity, as represented by the cheap and simple factory-made accordions or guitars of the working class. This symbolic opposition has been a prominent part of the ‘folk’ mindscape ever since, especially in the Nordic countries, which is why the fiddle still is held as the number one folk instrument, albeit there is a much larger number of accordionists and guitarists.

My point is that traditional music or folk music are headlines, or to use Feintuch’s words, captions for ‘a territory of imagination’,<sup>14</sup> a ‘world’ or ‘virtual reality’. What is staged is something rather different from the past lived reality that is claimed to be represented. Then again, the idea was never really to reconstruct an authentic image of a bygone world as it once was. Rather the aim was to stage it as it ought to have been.<sup>15</sup> From such a world you should not ask for authenticity or empirical truth.

### **Local music**

Burt Feintuch, in his work on folk music in Northumberland, northwest England, writes that ‘tradition’ brings about a narrative of rural, illiterate, bagpiping shepherds and a music that is intimately bound up with place, part of the social landscape of a disappearing world characterised by collectivity, stability, and continuity. In the lived reality, however, there were few shepherds, the staged stability contrasted sharply against the many profound changes, and continuity was a result of constant revival. The music, he finds, was highly literate, the repertoire was derived almost entirely from publications, performed by educated middle and upper-class urbanites.<sup>16</sup>

In the Shetland Isles the ethnomusicologist Megan Forsyth finds a traditional musical mindscape full of references to an old-fashioned world of small homesteads in remote and isolated islands, centring around fiddles and a distinctive Shetland fiddling style, full of slurred bowings crossing over bar lines, shivers and ringing strings, rhythmic accents, and a pregnant driving quality. This world may point to a distant past, but Forsyth argues, it was created just after the Second World War by four legendary fiddlers, living and working in cities like Lerwick and Aberdeen.<sup>17</sup>

In the Shetland Isles, as in Northumberland, ‘traditional music’ is seen as naturally growing out of the landscape, producing a continuous musical geography of distinct local musics. In his work on the extensive Celtic revival, anthropologist

Malcolm Chapman, writes that ‘Celtic’ to a large extent is an idea based on local language and traditional music. The notion of a Celtic tradition leads to the local, the idea is that this music belongs to, represents, is used and loved by a local ‘folk’. It is often true, Chapman finds, that locals have an idea about ‘their’ local music, even if they can’t stand the stuff, but they seldom know anything about it, it is not their music. ‘Local’, Chapman concludes, is an idea about a local music that is not locally anchored.<sup>18</sup>

Many similar studies point out and discuss the differences between an imagined, ‘virtual’, traditional folk music mindscape and the lived realities that it depicts and represents. An instructive example from Sweden is Jan Ling and Märta Ramsten’s article on the birth of the fiddle style in the village Leksand, in Dalarna, middle Sweden.<sup>19</sup> Their argument is well illustrated by some pictures. In the first, from 1898, the ‘Västanviks stråkkapell’ (‘Västanvik string orchestra’) poses for the photographer. They are seven serious young men with fiddles in their hands, wearing black costumes and small black hats. The second, from 1902, shows the same young men, with the same instruments, now a little older – and, more importantly, in folk costumes.

What we see is a trace of a new idea about music and history, that in only a few years around the turn of the century produces a new type of folk music, locally distinctive, anchored in a new type of past. It is a music that has left the dance floors behind and entered the stage. As concert music, a new type of narrative could be spun around it, about an ancient and unique Leksand-style that had survived modernity’s disrupting and destructive forces in the hands of a small number of head-strong, powerful fiddlers. This narrative, Ling and Ramsten argue, has more to say about the modern world of the narrators than about the past. One of the founding fathers of the narrative about the ancient Leksand fiddle style was the engineer and fiddler Knis Karl Aronsson. He played a decisive role for the creation of the cultural ideology that inspired Leksand and surrounding parishes.<sup>20</sup> (He was originator of the chamber musical style, that during the 1950s, became a Leksand trade mark or brand. Under his auspices, the fiddlers in Leksand were transformed from a tourist ensemble performing printed musical arrangements to a fiddling team with archaic, locally distinctive traditions.<sup>21</sup>

My point up to here is simply that folk, or traditional music, consists of a number of closely related musical mindscapes, built on ideas from philosophers, linguists, ethnologists, and cultural historians of the late eighteenth century. These mindscapes have been institutionalized in a large domain organized according to a ‘mythical geography’<sup>22</sup> or a musical ‘geosophy’ that sets up a folk and their music as consequences of place.<sup>23</sup> The idea of a music ‘intimately bound up with place’ has from the very beginning been a constitutive element of the ‘folk’ or ‘traditional’ musical mindscape in Western Europe.<sup>24</sup> During the last few decades, however, a number of major changes have occurred in this musical mindscape and the domain built around it, especially in North Western Europe. Here I will discuss a few of them, starting with some aspects concerning who the actors are, then a few words

about festivalisation and the question of ownership and control. To conclude, I will discuss two competing ways of producing the past, that I call 'tradition and heritage', my argument being that we are now rapidly in a process of heritagisation of the folk or traditional musical mindscape.

### **From knowers to doers and marketers: shifting control over folk music**

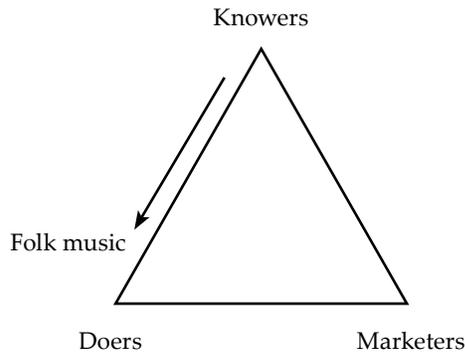
Never before have so many musical styles, genres, and forms been accessible at the same time. Never before have so many people been involved so much with music. This is true also for folk music, at least in Scandinavia. It is possible today that there are more folk fiddlers than existed throughout the whole of the nineteenth century. Also, they are better educated, have better instruments, and many of them play better than their older models and idols. Interestingly, many of these are now women. In some countries, like Sweden, among young fiddlers, men are now often outnumbered by women, which may eventually lead to men abandoning the fiddle for other instruments, such as guitars, mandolas, and saxophones.

Most of these folk fiddlers' prime motive is simply to make music, they are 'doers'. For another and much smaller category of actors, it is not doing, but knowing about music that is the goal. For 'knowers', the goal is the knowledge itself and the research involved to find answers to questions about when, where, how, and who. A third category of actors, also quite small in the field of folk music, are the 'marketers', producers, managers, salesmen, and entrepreneurs, whose prime motive is to distribute the results of the activities of doers and knowers. The goals of doers and knowers are, for marketers, more often than not a means to reach other goals. This could be, for example, to raise attention, spread messages, attract audiences, or to make money.

Doers, knowers, and marketers are three positions that actors can take in relation to any musical field.<sup>25</sup> They make up a system, an analytical model that can be used for description and analysis of processes of change in the control of, and power over, the expressive forms that make up the centre of a musical field. By applying these analytical categories to the development of folk music in Sweden, it is possible to follow two important shifts, first from knowers to doers, and then from doers to marketers.

The concept of folk music was coined in the late eighteenth century on the initiative of knowers. The content grew out of long-standing negotiations between knowers and doers. By the late 1900s, folk music had become petrified into a national symbol, and as such it survived well into the 1970s (see Figure 1). Then a new generation of young doers arose in countries such as Sweden, Norway, Finland, the British Isles, France, and Hungary, who simply took power over the definitions, in turn moving folk music from the urban salons and the national manifestations, to small clubs, dance halls, and large popular outdoor celebrations. They were many and they soon became well trained. As a result, in these countries there were more traditional musicians than ever before.

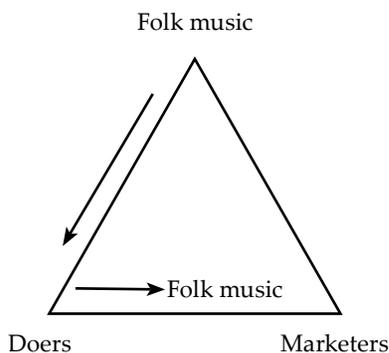
1970s



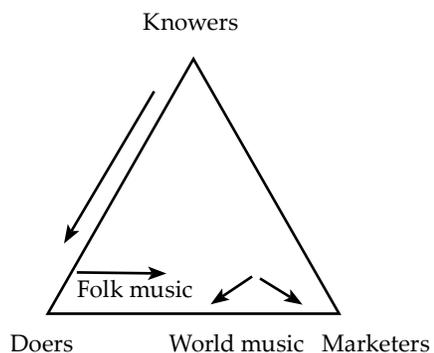
**Figure 1** Knowers, doers, and marketers in the 1970s

With the popularisation of folk music during the 1970s and 1980s, the emergence of marketers followed a new and earlier almost insignificant type of actors in the field of folk music: these were record producers, managers, festival organisers, and so on. With them came stickers, flyers, riders, posters, CD demos, all important features of a pop/rock musical format, that during the following decades would become standard in the field of folk music. In the course of only a few years, marketers took control over arenas and media central to the field. Their perspective soon came into conflict with those already established, and an immediate result was a split of the field, and the birth of a new type of folk music, in Sweden first coined 'FUP' (Folkmusik Utan Polis, or 'folk music without police'), then 'new folk music' and 'världsmusik' ('world music') (see Figures 2 and 3).

1980s



1990s



**Figures 2 and 3** Knowers, doers, and marketers in the 1980s and 1990s

A result of these shifts was a new wave of mediaization of the folk music scene, the 'process whereby local forms of music are adapted to mass media'.<sup>26</sup> The ideas about the locus of music, 'where the action is', changed. Earlier in Sweden folk musicians tended to hold that the music was located in the interaction between musicians, and between musicians and their audiences. This was institutionalized in fiddlers' gatherings, *spelmansstämmor*, and expressed through its focus on informal playing together. Recordings were seen as secondary representations of music. Today, often the opposite is true, as has since long been the case among rock and pop musicians. The prime locus of modern folk, traditional, or world music is formally controlled situations, such as festivals, studios, or rehearsal rooms. Live performances are now seen as secondary representations of recordings, or recordings still to be made. This has led to a new level of objectification of the music, not so much as 'folk' of the old days, but as artistic creations of especially gifted individuals, a bow to the old romantic notion of the composer and artist, so important in the domains of classical and popular musics.

In the field of folk music, more and more of what are considered to be the 'original' sources of folk music have become available on the internet in the form of transcriptions, MIDI files, recordings, texts and the like. Today, doers are equipped with new tools, while at the same time knowers are rapidly losing control to marketers over such important parts of the field as aesthetical evaluations and definitions of central concepts. This shift is partly a result of the impressive general growth of both doers and marketers in most fields of music in the last decades. Earlier, when music was an activity of the few, marketers were neither many nor significant. In the twentieth century, the music market has exploded creating a symbiotic relationship: that is, the more doers, the bigger market, and the bigger the market, the more marketers. Today, the number of marketers in the field of folk music is larger than ever before, and it is among the marketers that we find many of folk music's most 'burning souls'. What they are burning for is not necessarily more or better music, nor more money, but more ephemeral goods, such as raised visibility, recognition, and status for 'their' kind of music, for their country, or ethnic group, if not for their record company, artist agency or festival. Through this development, folk music has become a part of a growing world-wide 'attention economy',<sup>27</sup> which, in turn, is closely related to the new global mode of heritage production.

Today, much folk and traditional music has moved closer to the domains of classical and popular music. In turn, artists and also composers have moved up several steps in the categorisation hierarchy of the record industry. As a result of the marriage between traditional musics and the popular music industry, new musical behaviours and new musical mindscapes have been produced, with traces from both these worlds. It is now possible to find individual composers and artists also in the folk music domain, and even more so in the domain of world music.

To summarize: an impressive trend in the folk music domain is the shift, first from knowers to doers, and then from doers to marketers. The knowers' loss of the monopoly over the sources has meant that they can no longer control definitions

of content, meaning, right or wrong, which has given the doers new possibilities. This can be understood as a part of a massive trend in many parts of society, nicely summarised by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett as 'from the informative to the performative',<sup>28</sup> a shift from the earlier so central intellectual capacities to the sensual, emotional, and experiential. When the emotional and experiential are foregrounded, objects are transformed into instruments for the experiencing subjects, interesting as long as they produce emotional experiences. This creates a drive for raised levels of aesthetical expression, and then aesthetics, not ethics, moral or knowledge, become leading principles for evaluation.<sup>29</sup>

Taken together, these shifts – from knowers to doers and marketers, and from knowing, doing, and marketing, to the results and effects – emotional experiences, performances, profits, raised attention, and so forth – represent a new order in the power structures around the production and managing of musical knowledge that without doubt will have many consequences in the future.<sup>30</sup>

### **Festivals and festivalization**

Another pronounced trend during the last decades of the twentieth century is that festivals have increased in number. In Sweden 'fiddlers gatherings' became common during the first decades of the twentieth century, often set up as low-key and rather informal outdoor events, sometimes also as large folk feasts, attracting many thousands. After the Second World War, and up until the end of the 1960s, festivals in Sweden were mainly aimed at spreading art music to new audience groups, often in the form of local 'music weeks'. Woodstock Music and Art Fair (commonly referred to as Woodstock), held 15–18 August 1969 near Bethel, New York, became an important model for pop, rock, and jazz festivals from the late 1960s. During the following decades, festivals became steadily more numerous, in increasing numbers of places and genres, claimed by municipal policy-makers and large companies as marketing and image-strengthening tools. Carnivals spread from the 1980s, and during the most recent decade the old concert festivals and the newer carnival type have melded into large municipal 'happenings' and pop festivals, such as *kulturnatta* 'The night of Culture', the Stockholm Water Festival, and the Medieval week in Visby.<sup>31</sup> From being arenas for selected forms of music and specific audience groups, festivals developed during the 1980s into arenas for a broader public, and, during the last decade, to large popular festivals with every possible kind of music and every possible theme (for example, water, homosexuality, food, the Middle Ages, regions, cities).

Festivals can be seen as an expression of a range of important changes in society. An explanation for the increase in festivals is that they are cost-effective events for audiences, arrangers, and musicians. For small investments of time, money, and energy, the audience gains access to many different artists. For the arrangers, many different kinds of artists and groups help to spread the risks, at the same time as the total costs per artist are reduced. For musicians, festivals are a way of reaching, with a limited investment, a large audience. The increase in the

number of festivals can be seen as an expression for the market's growing demands for maximising profit and efficiency in the area of music.

The increased number and importance of festivals has given rise to a range of changes in musical behaviour that can be summarised as festivalisation. An effect of festivalisation is increased concentration on certain times and places. Because the point of festivals is to gather a lot of people, the majority take place outdoors during a couple of hectic summer months. The result is a division of musical life into two parts, a long period of production at low intensity, with small resources and low visibility and a short period of high intensity consumption, with large resources, large audiences and high visibility.

In many ways music has also been adapted to festivals, in the same way as music has been mediatised, by adaption to say, the record media, the cassette, CD or to MySpace and YouTube. Among such adaptations are the use of time and level of expression. In important ways festivals relate to ordinary concerts as television does to cinema. While concert and cinema visits are usually highly focused and formalised events, the festival crowd devote themselves not only to the music presented but also to the surrounding social interaction such as eating, small-talk, or meeting others. That is why festivals, just like television, find it difficult to capture and hold the audience's attention for longer periods, which demands increasing numbers of powerful effects. In order to break through the flood of impressions that characterise festivals, the music is often charged up by higher volumes, stronger lights, flashier and more spectacular clothes, dance, speech, as well as décor, and by an increased emphasis on new effects. Festival audiences tend to respond to the increased levels of expression and effect precisely as they do to television. By 'zapping', or channel surfing, audiences constantly shift and change between different stages and programmes, leading to a spiral of ever higher levels of expression and effect. One example is the Falun Folk Music Festival (FFF), launched in 1986. Since the mid 1980s it has become Sweden's largest folk music event, attracting more than 50,000 visitors annually.<sup>32</sup> In the beginning the FFF was designed as a 'classic' festival with a large number of concerts in different places over three and a half days. By the 1990s, the FFF had developed more in the direction of the pop music type festival where many different artists succeed one another on a few large outdoor stages. This led to an increase in the levels of effects and expression, and, in turn, to a crisis for the festival at the end of the 1990s, when the original folk music audience disappeared without any large, new audience groups to replace them.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the newcomers devoted themselves to 'zapping' between different activities to a greater extent than the original folk music audience, which led to the levels of effects and expression being raised even more.

In the words of Zygmunt Bauman, festivalisation's primary effect can be described as 'the greatest possible impression in the shortest possible time',<sup>34</sup> or as the Russian semiotician Boris Uspenskij expressed it, 'the greatest possible number of signs in the smallest possible space'.<sup>35</sup> Festivals are effective arenas for the communication of symbols and signs and can in that light be seen as expressions

of the sort of changes in the late twentieth century that are usually summarised as 'post-modern'. They create much visibility for relatively low investments, which can lead to raised attention, which in turn can give opportunities of higher status and recognition. It is not unusual for individual artists to appear at festivals as representatives of an ethnic group, a nation, an interest group, which have made folk festivals especially important potential resources for identity politics, in terms of struggles for raised status and increased recognition. Folk festivals, then, can be described as a type of arena which both expresses and produces an increased emphasis on the production of difference, and of local, regional, ethnic distinctiveness. The effectivisation and maximisation of precisely those factors that produce visibility and attention make festivals an important part of, using Michael Goldhaber's term, a new and growing 'attention economy', which is a reason why festivals are so often used by groups and institutions to raise visibility and attention capital.<sup>36</sup>

### **Local music, not from here**

According to British sociologist Anthony Giddens, we have since the late twentieth century been moving into a period in which the consequences of modernity are becoming more radicalised and universalised than ever before.<sup>37</sup> Time, space and social relations, the entire social system, he argues, is uncoupled, disembedded, and lifted out of its local contexts of interaction, and restructured across unlimited areas of space and time.<sup>38</sup> 'Disembedding mechanisms', such as money and the extensive system of expertise and technology, organise a large part of today's social and material world, separate social relationships from their concrete time and place-bound contexts, and make it possible for people to interact across large distances in space and time. Much of what is usually described as post-modern 'actually concerns the experience of living in a world in which presence and absence mingle in historically novel ways'.<sup>39</sup> New communication technology creates new relations, which render all kinds of boundaries and all kind of mental geographies problematic.

This accelerating uncoupling is, at the same time, a cause and effect of increasing globalisation. An aspect of globalisation is the introduction of large-scale global structures, a sort of grand-scale motorway network, which requires large organisations, investments, stability, and continuity.<sup>40</sup> On one level, these rapidly growing motorways create extreme homogenisation, standardisation, even monopolisation. On another, they create extreme mobility and diversity. When objects, behaviours, styles, and expressive forms are carried on them, they are disconnected from their original contexts and become accessible to people in completely different places, for completely different purposes.

There are examples everywhere of how objects, expressive forms, styles, and social relations have been uncoupled from their original concrete contexts, eventually becoming accessible for use by people in other places, in other times. Cassettes, recordable CDs, and MP3 files make it possible to disconnect music from the media to which they were originally tied so that they can be copied, demediated and

reused in new and unexpected ways. This is a fundamental prerequisite for what has become known as 'world music', nicely defined by an English music critic as 'local music but not from here (whatever that is)'.<sup>41</sup> It is important to note that these also made an impact on the preconditions of traditional music. Thus this music is disembedded, uncoupled, not any more so 'bound up with place', to quote Burt Feintuch.<sup>42</sup> Irish folk music, to take just one example, has during the last decades been effectively uncoupled from Ireland and become a common global style. In Gotland, my home island in the Baltic Sea, there is a successful composer of Irish reels, jigs, and hornpipes. The musical homeland of this young man, a Gotlander, born and raised on the island, is not Ireland, to which he pays an occasional visit, but a virtual Ireland, located nowhere and thus everywhere.

Today there is more Irish folk music outside Ireland than inside; also more didgeridoos outside than in Australia. Yodelling is as popular in Tokyo as it is in the Tyrol; Swedish *nyckelharpa* is played professionally in Hungary, Netherlands, and of course in the United States. In a small town in north Germany there is even a band devoted to covers of my own band's recordings of old Gotlandic tunes.<sup>43</sup> My argument is not simply that traditional music is changing, after all, tradition has always been changing, or to put it bluntly, all tradition is change.<sup>44</sup> What I am arguing is that, as an effect of the intermingling of presence and absence in novel ways, the ideas about where traditional music comes from, the musical mindscapes of traditional music, are now quickly changing.

### **From 'tradition' to 'heritage'**

The tendencies I have outlined above are but a few of the systemic structural changes that have occurred in the folk music domain recently, changes that have moved traditional music into new territories, new musical mindscapes. On the one hand, it has moved closer to the classical and popular music domains, thereby being equipped with new formats, values, and types of musical behaviour. On the other hand, radical changes have also taken place within the traditional domain itself. One of these concerns the ideas of what kind of pasts this music stems from, and why it should be preserved. In the last section I will consider some aspects of this change, from what I call 'tradition' to 'heritage'. A generalized comparison, based on field work in Sweden, will point to some of the differences.<sup>45</sup>

In a northern-European context, 'tradition' and 'heritage' may seem like two words meaning about the same.<sup>46</sup> Certainly, they are in many ways similar: both are produced from things past – memories, experiences, historical leftovers. Both promise things in danger of disappearing – 'the obsolete, the mistaken, the outmoded, the dead, and the defunct' – a second life as exhibits of themselves, by adding value, such as pastness, exhibition, difference, and indigeneity.<sup>47</sup> They operate on the same markets and are rationalized and legitimized in much the same way.<sup>48</sup> It is nevertheless important to recognize that they are not the same and that we are dealing with two rather different modes of production, two different mindscapes of the past, anchored in different domains.

To begin with, the 'tradition' mindscape centres around the rural, the 'old peasant society' of the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, and is mainly geared towards production of locality and regionality.<sup>49</sup> 'Heritage' is predominantly urban, even when located in the countryside, and geared towards the international or transnational. Whereas 'tradition' tends to use time to produce 'topos', place, distinct localities, and is interconnected into large cultural geographies, heritage tends to use place to produce 'chronos', pasts more loosely rooted in place.

The two mindscapes operate with two rather different interfaces. Tradition produces a closed space, you cannot just move into it. Tradition works much like ethnoscapes or VIP-clubs: to enter you have to be a member, or to be invited by a member. Membership is genealogical, it comes with birth or marriage. Heritage produces a much more open space that almost anybody can move into. Instead of membership by birth or marriage, the right kind of values and wallets are necessary. Using computer language you could say that while tradition operates like Windows, with restricted access to the source codes, and with closed interfaces, heritage operates more like Linux, with open sources and interfaces.

If tradition is principally in the plural, every parish, every group of folk can have its own tradition, heritage tends to be understood in the singular, as 'our cultural heritage'. There is much less heritage, which makes it more precious and expensive. If 'tradition' produces the local, 'heritage' clearly is tied to larger units, such as the nation, Europe, or as in World Heritage, the entire world. Anybody can make a tradition, but not everybody can have or appoint heritage, which is why heritage production, to a much higher degree than tradition, is in the hands of specially approved professional experts that select what is to be preserved according to certain approved criteria. Selection is the key; the more selection, the more need for expertise. In that sense, heritage is a good example of the kind of global abstract expert systems, dependent on new forms of impersonal trust, that Giddens has described as one of the consequences of late modernity.<sup>50</sup>

Tradition brings about ownership and cultural rights: the local traditions produced are understood as belonging to the locals. Heritage tends to resist local people's claims for indigenous rights. Heritage tends to 'empty' objects and spaces, which makes them possible to refill with all kinds of owners and inhabitants. While tradition can be produced locally, the production of heritage is centralized and produces something beyond the local and regional, beyond the distinctive, the ethnic, and the multicultural. It is everybody's and therefore nobody's.

Not least important is how the two mindscapes structure feelings. Tradition tends to evoke a nostalgic, bitter-sweet modality, a longing for and mourning over lost good old days, together with commitments to honour a specific local past, often personalized as 'family roots'. Heritage is about a much more generic past that you may pay an occasional visit to without much obligation, nostalgia, or grief. It is an 'inspiring model, a spicy and mythical taleworld without attaching sorrow'.<sup>51</sup> If tradition mirrors the desires, anxieties, longings and belongings of modernity,<sup>52</sup> heritage is more of an answer to processes in a late or post-modern world that

promote play and experience, a shift from the informative to the performative in relation to the past.

### **Heritagization**

Lately, the changes in the musical mindscapes of folk or traditional music are great and impressive. As I have pointed out, in many places in Northern Europe folk music is readily accessible and folk musicians are more plentiful and better educated than ever before. Many of these do not see themselves as traditional fiddlers, as in the old Swedish *spelmän*, but as professional folk musicians, fusion artists, and world musicians.<sup>53</sup> Doers and marketers have taken control over the mindscape, knowers have been transformed from definers and controllers to mere suppliers of material. A whole new musical infrastructure has developed, from teaching institutions to festivals and clubs. The traditional music world has become one comprised of a world of managers, posters, riders, festivals, copyright issues, and record releases, all rather far from the world of the old fiddlers.

I have also argued that 'tradition' and 'heritage' are two rival and incompatible modes of producing pasts, or to put it more generally, two forms of production of the absent in the present. Both are global phenomena that are 'downloaded' locally to redefine, reformulate, and take control, over aesthetics, history, economy, and power. I also argue that folk music, and certainly north European fiddle music, is now rapidly moving from an older 'tradition' mindscape into a much more recent 'heritage' mindscape. Even when music is locally understood as 'traditional', it is today often used as 'heritage' on a global arena. This change or shift from tradition to heritage introduces new discourses and redefines concepts. It also changes our understanding of what kinds of pasts the music comes from, to whom it belongs, and what it stands for, all of which are signals of important changes in the production of collective memory and history.

This shift from tradition to heritage is deeply interconnected with globalisation. As an effect of new globalised technology, local styles are uncoupled or disembedded from their former musical mindscapes, their specific places and pasts, and made available over large spaces as 'local musics but not from here'. Freed from former understandings of 'local', specific forms of traditional music become possible to download and stage everywhere. Megan Forsyth, in her work on Shetland fiddlers, calls this 'Shetlandising': the traditional Shetland fiddling styles are boiled down to a minimum of signs, a few distinctive and highly typified stylistic traits representing the Shetlands as a whole, which makes it possible for Shetland fiddlers to play jazz, pop, rock with a Shetland touch, and for non-Shetlanders anywhere in the world to become, in a sense, Shetland fiddlers.<sup>54</sup> An obvious example is 'klezmer music', which as ethnomusicologist Mark Slobin points out, is a globalised style of recent American origins, often staged as old local 'Eastern European-Jewish'.<sup>55</sup> In *Fiddler on the Move: Exploring the Klezmer World*, Slobin analyses klezmer as 'heritage music' along lines similar to the ones I have discussed above.<sup>56</sup> 'Heritage', Slobin notes,

today 'replaces older terms perhaps now thought of as problematic. A prominent victim is the word 'traditional'.<sup>57</sup>

When music is homogenised and spread via global motorways over large areas, problems will inevitably arise with control over ownership and use of rights. Fiddle music from Cape Breton, homogenised as typical 'Cape Bretonish', is today performed also in the United States, England, and Scandinavia.<sup>58</sup> This may eventually lead to a kind of crisis for the fiddlers in Cape Breton, when they discover that they are not in control over this 'local music, not from here', that they might not any longer fit into the model of themselves as themselves, thus becoming inauthentic.<sup>59</sup> Since traditional music and heritage music, are so often used as representations of local or ethnic identities for whole groups, regions, or nations, the tendencies I have outlined above will no doubt again turn the traditional music domain into a battleground in new and unexpected ways.<sup>60</sup>

By being heritagized, traditional music now is moved into a new domain, which makes new kinds of things possible. The changes have implications for individuals and groups, as they may get access to more musical forms to express their emotions, affections, and identities. There are implications also for the global music and tourist industries, as well as for transnational organizations, such as UNESCO with its World Heritage Lists. These global structures seem to have much to gain in terms of control over resources by promoting music as heritage. When local fiddle musics, formerly understood as 'traditional', today are transformed to 'heritage music', or even to 'World Heritage', what does this mean in terms of control over musical behaviour, over the understanding of what the music is, represents, and comes from, or over the mindscapes and domains of these musics? Embraced by such structures, what risk is there of suffocating?

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Mindscape is a concept, related to Mikhail Bakhtin's 'chronotope'. As Bakhtin points out, it is the chronotope that defines the genre; that is, it is by being placed in a certain chronotope, or a certain mindscape, that things like fiddles and fiddle music become meaningful. See Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

<sup>2</sup> Owe Ronström, 'Memories, Tradition, Heritage', in *Memories and Visions*, Studies in Folk Culture 4, ed. by Owe Ronström and Ulf Palmenfelt (Tartu: Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore & Department of Ethnology, University of Tartu. 2005), p. 91.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Burke, *Folklig kultur i Europa 1500–1800* (Stockholm: Författarförlaget, 1983), pp. 38–44, 302–312; first published as Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Temple Smith, 1978).

<sup>4</sup> Burke, pp. 302–12.

<sup>5</sup> In English, fiddle may be used as a generic colloquial term for any bowed instrument, or more specifically for popular versions of the violin, such as 'the folk fiddle' or 'the jazz fiddle'. The etymology of 'fiddle' is disputed. It may derive from Romance languages or it may be Germanic: 'The Teutonic word bears a singular resemblance in sound to its medieval Latin synonym *vitula*, *vidula*, whence Old French *viole*, Pr. *viula*, and (by adoption from these [languages]) Italian, Spanish, Portuguese *viola*: see *viol*. The supposition that the early Romance *vidula*

was adopted independently in more than one Teutonic language would account adequately for all the Teutonic forms; on the other hand, *fiPulôn* may be an Old Teutonic word of native etymology, though no satisfactory Teutonic derivation has been found.' ('Fiddle', *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>6</sup> Douglas Harper, *Online Etymology Dictionary*, [www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=fiddle](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=fiddle) [accessed 1 May 2010].

<sup>7</sup> Ulf Hannerz, *Cultural Complexity: Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

<sup>8</sup> Then maybe you look under the conductor. If you look for a solo concert by, say, Isaac Stern or Yehudi Menuhin, you might find them filed under the artist's name, but this is the exception.

<sup>9</sup> Donald Jay Grout, *A History of Western Music* (New York: Norton, 1960; revd edn, New York: Norton; London: J. M. Dent, 1973), which is a major reader in musicology, starts with 'The Ancient World' and then takes us through time slots such as Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic and Twentieth century music.

<sup>10</sup> On a secondary level you will also find records filed under styles, sometimes associated with specific times or places, such as French swing, New Orleans jazz, Chicago blues, or the big band era of the 1940s.

<sup>11</sup> In the common folk music reader, say the much read Bruno Nettl, *Folk and Traditional Music of the Western Continents* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1965), you will find continents, nations and regions, as in the record shop, which mirrors the widespread ideology of diffusionism of the so called historic-geographical school of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But you may also find, alongside the standard geographical headings, folk music organized according to 'functions'. The Swedish musicologist Jan Ling discusses music for work, dance, song, pleasure and leisure, see Jan Ling *Europas musikhistoria: Folkmusiken* (Stockholm: Akademiförlaget, 1989); trans. Linda and Robert Schenck, *A History of European Folk Music* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1997). Here the 'where' is substituted for 'why', which mirrors the idea that folk music is not art music per se, but functional music, a mark of the profound influence of structural-functional ideologies in the domains of folk music and popular music around the mid twentieth century.

<sup>12</sup> Burke, pp. 17–37; Owe Ronström, 'Nationell Musik? Bondemusik? Om folkmusikbegreppet', in *Gimaint u bänskt. Folkmusikens historia på Gotland*, ed. by Maria Herlin Karnell and Kerstin Kyhlberg (Gotland: Gotlands Fornsal, 1990), pp 9–20. As a consequence of being consciously set up as the antithesis of classical music – as ancient, anonymous, collective, and non-changing – folk music incorporated important traits from the world of classical music. Included among those traits are the formats of chamber music, choir singing (i.e. Estonian, Russian, and Bulgarian folk choirs) and symphonic orchestras (i.e. the balalajka or tamburica orchestras, the Bulgarian folk orchestras, or the Swedish *spelmanslag*). Later, folk music was cast as an antithesis to the urban popular musics of the growing working class, and thereby came to incorporate traits from the popular music domain, such as small bands, a stress on virtuosity, artists, and the new and innovative.

<sup>13</sup> The paradox is elegantly expressed by the European Union slogan 'unity in diversity', adopted 4 May 2000, see [www.ena.lu/proclamation-slogan-unity-diversity-brussels-2000-020705216.html](http://www.ena.lu/proclamation-slogan-unity-diversity-brussels-2000-020705216.html) .

<sup>14</sup> Burt Feintuch, 'Revivals on the Edge: Northumberland and Cape Breton – A Key Note.' *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 38 (2006), 1–17.

- <sup>15</sup> This is a paraphrase of the core idea of The Society for Creative Anachronism, see [www.sca.org/officers/chatelain/sca-intro.html](http://www.sca.org/officers/chatelain/sca-intro.html) [accessed 1 May 2010].
- <sup>16</sup> Feintuch, p. 4.
- <sup>17</sup> Meghan C. Forsyth, 'Reinventing "Springs": Constructing Identity in the Fiddle Tradition of the Shetland Isles', *Shima*, 1, no 2 (2007), 168–79 (p. 170).
- <sup>18</sup> Malcolm Chapman, 'Thoughts on Celtic Music', in *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*, ed. by Martin Stokes (Oxford: Berg, 1994), pp. 29–45 (pp. 30–31).
- <sup>19</sup> Jan Ling and Märta Ramsten, 'Tradition och förnyelse i svensk spelmanstradition: Leksandsspelet förr och nu. I', in *Musikochkultur*. ed. by Owe Ronström (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1990), pp. 211–46.
- <sup>20</sup> Ling and Ramsten, p. 212.
- <sup>21</sup> Ling and Ramsten, p. 232.
- <sup>22</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Contemporary Religion* (New York: New American Library, 1964).
- <sup>23</sup> 'Geosophy' is a notion from John Kirtland Wright that stands for metaphysically inspired world views, different from the physical geography. See John Gillis, *Islands of the Mind: How the Human Imagination Created the Atlantic World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 17.
- <sup>24</sup> Feintuch, p. 4. This idea has never been very strong in the Americas, with some possible exceptions, such as parts of South America, the Appalachian Mountains, and eastern Canada.
- <sup>25</sup> These are analytical positions, not roles. One and the same individual can take all three positions, depending on the context of analysis.
- <sup>26</sup> Krister Malm and Roger Wallis, *Media Policy and Music Activity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 24.
- <sup>27</sup> Michael H. Goldhaber, 'The Attention Economy and the Net', *First Monday*, 2, no. 4 (7 April 1997), [firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/519/440](http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/519/440) [accessed 11 December 2009]; Michael H. Goldhaber, 'What's the Right Economics for Cyberspace?' *First Monday*, 2, no. 7 (7 July 1997), [firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/viewArticle/537/458](http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/viewArticle/537/458) [accessed 11 December 2009].
- <sup>28</sup> Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, lecture in Visby, Högskolan på Gotland, 16 March 1999.
- <sup>29</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, 'Från pilgrim till turist', *Moderna tider*, 47, no. 5 (1994), 20–34.
- <sup>30</sup> Dan Lundberg, Krister Malm, and Owe Ronström, *Musik, medier, mångkultur. Förändringar i svenska musiklandskap* (Gidlunds: Hedemora, 2000).
- <sup>31</sup> See [sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kulturnatten](http://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kulturnatten) [accessed 1 May 2010]; [www.laserfx.com/Backstage.LaserFX.com/WaterFestival-SR/SWFintro.html](http://www.laserfx.com/Backstage.LaserFX.com/WaterFestival-SR/SWFintro.html) [accessed 1 May 2010]; [www.medeltidsveckan.se/](http://www.medeltidsveckan.se/) [accessed 1 May 2010].
- <sup>32</sup> See [sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Falun\\_Folkmusik\\_Festival](http://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Falun_Folkmusik_Festival) [accessed 1 May 2010]; [www.dalarna.se/kulturidalarna/eng/fff.html](http://www.dalarna.se/kulturidalarna/eng/fff.html) [accessed 1 May 2010].
- <sup>33</sup> This is based on my experiences from Falun Folk Music Festival during the past fourteen years. I served as musician, producer, educator, ethnomusicologist, and member of the artistic committee.
- <sup>34</sup> Bauman, 'Från pilgrim till turist', p.20.
- <sup>35</sup> Boris Uspenskij, open lecture at Gotland University, May 1999.
- <sup>36</sup> Goldhaber, 'The Attention Economy and the Net'.
- <sup>37</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p 3.
- <sup>38</sup> Giddens, p. 21.
- <sup>39</sup> Giddens, p. 177.

<sup>40</sup> These include, for example, the telephone network, the electricity grid, the system of pipelines for the world's oil supply, the internet, cable television, satellite transmissions and so on.

<sup>41</sup> Johannes Brusila, *'Local Music, Not From Here' : The Discourse of World Music Examined Through Three Zimbabwean Case Studies: The Bhundu Boys, Virginia Mukwesha and Sanduza*. (Helsinki: Finnish Society for Ethnomusicology, 2003), p. 11.

<sup>42</sup> Feintuch, p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> I met the band in Bremerförde, while touring with Gunnfjauns Kapell in north Germany in 1999.

<sup>44</sup> Barbro Klein and Mats Widbom, eds, *Swedish Folk Art: All Tradition is Change* (New York: H. N. Abrams in association with Kulturhuset, Stockholm, 1994).

<sup>45</sup> For an expanded discussion see Owe Ronström, *Kulturarvspolitik. Visby: Från sliten småstad till medeltidsiko* (Stockholm: Carlssons, 2007).

<sup>46</sup> In Europe 'heritage' is a rather new word, that has been incorporated in an antiquarian discourse, first for 'old valuable buildings, monuments and sites', and later for almost anything worth preserving. Its usage differs considerably from North America. In the USA, as Slobin points out, students studying their home language at college may now be called 'heritage speakers'. This phrase would be difficult to understand if translated to European languages. Conversely, a phrase like 'I have Swedish heritage,' may be meaningful in North America, but will not be understood in a Western European context. See Mark Slobin, *Fiddler on the Move: Exploring the Klezmer World* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press. 2000), p. 12.

<sup>47</sup> Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, p. 149.

<sup>48</sup> They also share a set of double references; first to something in the past that is re-enacted in the present; then to artefacts as well as behaviour; and lastly to the process of handing over things from one generation to another, as well as to the objects that are handed over.

<sup>49</sup> See Feintuch for an interesting example of tradition and the production of locality.

<sup>50</sup> Giddens, pp. 79–106.

<sup>51</sup> Lott n Gustafsson, *Den förtrollade zonen: Lekar med tid, rum och identitet under Medeltidsveckan på Gotland* (Nora: Nya Doxa, 2002), p. 181.

<sup>52</sup> Anne Eriksen, 'Den nasjonale kulturarven – en del av det modern', *Kulturella perspektiv*. 1 (1993), 16–25.

<sup>53</sup> Compare Forsyth, p. 175.

<sup>54</sup> Forsyth, pp. 174–75.

<sup>55</sup> Mark Slobin, 'Klezmer Music: An American Ethnic Genre', *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 16 (1984), 34–41.

<sup>56</sup> Slobin, *Fiddler on the Move*.

<sup>57</sup> Slobin, *Fiddler on the Move*, p. 13.

<sup>58</sup> See for example the impressive list of folk fiddlers from Cape Breton listed in [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music\\_of\\_Nova\\_Scotia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_of_Nova_Scotia) [accessed 1 May 2010] and [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape\\_Breton\\_fiddling](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_Breton_fiddling) [accessed 1 May 2010]. A number of these, as for example Natalie MacMaster, are well-known in the folk festival circuits of Western Europe and North America.

<sup>59</sup> See Burt Feintuch, 'The Conditions for Cape Breton Fiddle Music: The Social and Economic Setting of a Regional Landscape', *Ethnomusicology*, 48, no. 1 (2004), 75–104.

<sup>60</sup> One example is how some forms of Swedish folk music have recently been embraced by the Swedish Democrats, a new right-wing nationalist party, to the dismay of many young folk musicians.