

Une ville - plusieurs reels: Montreal's Multicultural Irish Soundscape

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Abstract

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As one of the principal European ethnic groups to populate Montreal in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Irish have left an indelible imprint on the city's history, culture and landscape. In carving out a space for themselves in a city which they shared with French-Canadians, English, and Scots, the Montreal Irish relied on the establishment and maintenance of cultural territories, such as Irish parishes and Saint Patrick's Day parades. Tautologically, these cultural markers of Irishness were once safeguarded by Irish people and by their immediate descendants. However, as Montreal's Irish population became absorbed into Canadian and Québécois culture over the course of the twentieth century, an increasing number of non-Irish people adopted certain elements of Irish culture, to the point of becoming primary custodians for certain dimensions of Irish culture in Montreal.

This dissertation explores the evolution of one dimension of Irish culture - Irish traditional music – in Montreal from 1970 to 2018. It maps the development of the city's Irish soundscape and explores the social and cultural forces – local and global – that created this vibrant yet precarious milieu. These include: the acculturation – or ethnic fade – of Irish communities in Canada, Quebec, and Montreal, the privileged place of Ireland and the Irish in Québécois culture, the global flow of commodified forms of Irish culture, and the complex interplay of *tradition* and *innovation* in Irish traditional music.

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 1 |
| Defining the Music | 3 |
| Theoretical Approach | 5 |
| Methodology | 7 |
| Ethnomusicology | 10 |
| Quebec History | 17 |
| Irish Diaspora Studies | 29 |
| Proprietary claims on Irish culture and heritage | 34 |
| Chapter One: Musical Organizations | 40 |
| Ireland and the Diaspora | 41 |
| The Montreal Scene | 44 |
| Broadcasters | 51 |
| For Ireland I'd Not Tell Her Name | 56 |
| Conclusion | 61 |
| Chapter Two: Space-Place | 62 |
| Private spaces | 72 |
| Semi-private spaces | 75 |
| Semi-public and public spaces | 79 |
| Centripetal attraction | 84 |
| Centrifugal propulsion | 87 |
| Conclusion | 89 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Chapter Three: Memory | 92 |
| Archive and repertoire | 93 |
| Irish O'Québec | 101 |
| Un vent de fraîcheur | 110 |
| Conclusion | 115 |
| Chapter Four: Irish Institutions | 116 |
| History of Irish Associations in Montreal | 117 |
| Saint Patrick's Society (SPS) | 119 |
| United Irish Societies (UIS) | 125 |
| Uneasy neighbours | 132 |
| Conclusion | 137 |
| Chapter Five: Commodification and Globalization | 138 |
| Globalization | 139 |
| Digital space | 144 |
| Commodification | 146 |
| Musicians' livelihood | 149 |
| Why So Serious? | 152 |
| Conclusion - the session as mirror | 154 |
| Conclusion | 158 |
| A vibrant, or precarious, future? | 161 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Bibliography | 163 |
| Interviews | 163 |
| Internet Sources | 163 |
| Video Sources | 166 |
| Primary Sources | 167 |
| Secondary Sources | 171 |
| Appendix A – Maps | 181 |
| Notables Sites where Irish Traditional Music was Performed, 1970s | 181 |
| Notables Sites where Irish Traditional Music was Performed, 1980s | 181 |
| Notables Sites where Irish Traditional Music was Performed, 1990s | 182 |
| Notables Sites where Irish Traditional Music was Performed, 2000s and 2010s | 182 |
| Appendix B - Tunes and Performers / Composers on <i>Composium</i> | 183 |
| Appendix C - List of the sponsors of the Irish Fêtes for the Celebrations Montreal 1992 festival, and the amounts donated by each sponsor | 184 |
| Appendix D - Funds attributed by the Saint Patrick’s Society of Montreal to select Irish cultural initiatives (in Canadian dollars), 1990-1998 | 185 |
| Appendix E - Select Interview Transcripts | 187 |
| Interview with Robin Beech | 187 |
| Interview with Kate Bevan-Baker | 210 |
| Interview with Chris Crilly | 220 |
| Interview with Julien Després | 240 |
| Interview with Jean Duval | 252 |
| Interview with Alan Jones | 273 |
| Interview with Steve Jones | 289 |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Interview with Paul Legrand | 309 |
| Interview with Aindriú MacGabhann | 319 |
| Interview with Richard Morgan | 332 |
| Interview with Philippe Murphy | 343 |
| Interview with Rae Shepp | 359 |

INTRODUCTION

The Irish have left an indelible mark on the culture and history of Quebec and Canada. They were among the earliest European migrants to form ethno-national societies in Canada; the Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal was active as early as 1834.¹ The Irish also counted for sizeable proportions of the populations of most Canadian provinces in the last decades of the nineteenth century, particularly Ontario and New Brunswick.² Their contributions to Quebec's early industrial development has already been well documented, and much Canadian folk music - particularly in the Maritime provinces - has a distinctive Celtic flavour.³ In the midst of these contributions, Irish culture in Canada has been modified, bolstered, diluted, and redefined by various actors. The "acculturation and the Canadianisation of the Irish of Griffintown...by the first decades of the twentieth century [...and the] upward social mobility which threatened Irish-Catholic ethno-religious identity in Montréal" are but two examples of this process of cultural mutation.⁴

While Irish culture in its various manifestations may be thriving across Canada, an obvious question should be asked: who maintains it in such form? The Irish themselves would be the most obvious, and through most of Canadian history, certainly the most accurate answer. Culture

¹ Kevin James, "The Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal: Ethno-religious Realignment in a Nineteenth-Century National Society," (Master's thesis, McGill University, 1997), 2; Kevin James, "Dynamics of Ethnic Associational Culture in a Nineteenth-Century City: Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal, 1834-56," *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* vol. 26, no. 1 (2000): 47-66.

² Donald Harman Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer* (Toronto: P. D. Meany Publishers, 1996), 261-262.

³ H.C. Pentland, *Labour and Capital in Canada, 1650-1860* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, Publishers, 1981), 96-129. Roland Viau, *La sueur des autres: Les fils d'Érin et le canal Beauharnois* (Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, Québec: Triskèle éditeur, 2010), 82; Paul-André Linteau, *The History of Montréal: The Story of a Great North American City* (trans. Peter McCambridge. Montreal: Baraka Books, 2007), 72-74; Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, "The Stranger's Land: Historical Traditions and Postmodern Temptations in the Celtic Soundscapes of North America," in *Celts in the Americas*, edited by Michael Newton Sydney (Nova Scotia: Cape Breton University Press, 2013), 198-199.

⁴ John Matthew Barlow, "The House of the Irish': Irishness, History, and Memory in Griffintown, Montréal, 1868-2009" (PhD Thesis in History. Concordia University: Montreal, Quebec, 2009), 115, 128.

and ethnicity may be closely linked, but this relationship is far from ironclad. Cultural practices are often performed within what education theorist Etienne Wenger calls “communities of practice.” The practice are “the property of a kind of community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise. It makes sense, therefore, to call these kinds of communities *communities of practice* [sic].”⁵

Prima facie, Wenger’s mention of communities created over time by the pursuit of common goals suggests the concept of national culture. However, Wenger specifies that “[m]embership [in a community of practice] is not just a matter of social category...[and] is not defined by who knows who...Neither is geographical proximity sufficient to develop a practice.”⁶ A possible corollary would be that engagement with a cultural practice over time can help foster attachment to a certain culture by those who partake in a cultural practice, regardless of their own ethnic origins. Obviously, Irish ancestry is by no means a prerequisite to partake in Irish culture. This has led, according to one scholar writing on Celtic music, to the rise of a plethora of modern Celtic archetypes: “born-again Celts, Anglo-Celts, Afro-Celts, Cuban Celts, Serbian Orthodox Celts, Elvis Celts, Russian-Celtics [and] Sino-Celts.”⁷ Canada and Quebec are also home to their fair share of pseudo-Celts and hybridized Celts.

This dissertation explores the evolution of Irish traditional music in Montreal as of the 1970s. It argues that the Irish traditional music soundscape of Montreal has reached its current state of precarious vibrancy - or vibrant precarity - through a complex interplay of historical forces and circumstances between 1970 and the present. Foremost among these factors are the

⁵ Etienne Wenger, *Communities of practice: learning, meaning, and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 45.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁷ Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, “The Stranger’s Land,” 188.

ethnic fade of the Irish populations of Canada, Quebec and Montreal, the privileged place of Ireland and the Irish in Québécois culture, the global flow of commodified forms of Irish culture, the interplay of notions of tradition and innovation within the Irish music tradition, and the individual and collective actions of players of Irish traditional music. As Almo Farina notes, there are many viable definitions of “soundscape.”⁸ For this thesis, “soundscape” is defined as “the totality of all sounds within a location with an emphasis in the relationship between individual’s or society’s perception of, understanding of and interaction with the sonic environment.”⁹ In other words, Montreal’s Irish traditional music soundscape encompasses all knowable instances of Irish traditional music played or heard in Montreal, and the attendant social interactions and worldviews shaped by and through this music.¹⁰

Defining the Music

Music and Irishness have long had a close, even intimate association. In an otherwise disparaging account of the medieval Irish, Cambrio-Norman cleric Giraldus Cambrensis wrote that “[i]t is only in the case of musical instruments that I find any commendable diligence in [the Irish] people. They seem to me to be incomparably more skilled in these than any other people that I have seen.”¹¹ Regardless of the purported musical skills of the Irish, defining Irish music raises complex issues of identity and ownership. John O’Flynn illustrates this point in his 2009

⁸ Almo Farina, *Soundscape Ecology: Principles, Patterns, Methods and Applications* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2014), 3.

⁹ Payne et al., cited in Almo Farina, *Soundscape Ecology*, 3.

¹⁰ The name “Montreal” is used throughout this thesis as an umbrella term for the city of Montreal proper, and for other municipalities on the island of Montreal - such as Westmount, Hampstead, and Pointe-Claire - which maintain independent municipal governments.

¹¹ Barra Boydell, “Irish Music and Anglo-Irish Identity in the Eighteenth Century,” in Mark Fitzgerald and John O’Flynn, editors, *Music and Identity in Ireland and Beyond* (Farnham, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014), 20.

study of Irish music and culture. Irish music - let alone Irish *traditional* music - can and has been defined in different ways: “music produced in Ireland...music produced by populations of Irish people living in other countries...[and music] associated with fixed conceptions of Irish ethnicity.”¹² Other scholars have tied Irish music to some form or other of Irish ethnicity, describing it as: “instrumental music developed by Irish people at home and abroad over the course of several centuries.”¹³ However, many practitioners of Irish traditional music view their tradition in an inclusive light, as expressed by scholar and flute player Desi Wilkinson in 1993: Irish traditional music “belongs to anybody who wishes to play it.”¹⁴

This dissertation will employ a hybrid and inclusive definition of Irish traditional music, combining those set forth by Lawrence McCullough and Sean Williams. For McCullough, Irish traditional music originated in Ireland “during the 18th century and has continued to exist in an unbroken tradition that has stayed remarkably close to its 18th-century form.”¹⁵ Just as in the eighteenth century, dance tunes such as reels, jigs, polkas, and hornpipes make up the bulk of this music’s repertoire. Although new compositions are continually added to the tradition’s repertoire, some tunes played today have indeed been passed down since the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries. For Sean Williams, the music is “not just one sound. It is solo harping, rowdy pub session playing, bilingual singing, solo fiddle music, lilting, piping, and much more.”¹⁶

¹² John O’Flynn, *The Irishness of Irish Music* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009), 4.

¹³ Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, *Pocket History of Irish Traditional Music* (Dublin: The O’Brien Press, 1998), 8. NAME claims: “There is no iron-clad definition of Irish traditional music. It is best understood as a broad-based genre, which accommodates a complex process of musical convergence, coalenscence and innovation over time” (Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, *A Short History of Irish Traditional Music* (Dublin: The O’Brien Press, 2017) 8).

¹⁴ Peter McNamee, editor, *Traditional Music: Whose Music?: Proceedings of a Co-operation North conference, 1991* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, the Queen’s University of Belfast, 1992), 93.

¹⁵ Lawrence E. McCullough, “Irish Music in Chicago: An Ethnomusicological Study” (PhD Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1978), x.

¹⁶ Sean Williams, *Focus: Irish Traditional Music* (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), 234.

Within the “much more,” one finds Irish traditional music as a subset of Celtic music. Since the 1970s, this term has come to denote one of two things: either music by played “Celtic” peoples or their descendants - which means Celtic music thus often stands for an amalgam of traditional musics from Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Brittany - or a distinct genre of music that draws on Irish, Scottish, Breton, and other musical traditions.¹⁷ At the periphery of Irish traditional music, one also finds the genre’s instruments and idioms mixed with other styles and genres. This cross-pollination is evident in a variety of bands, from Celtic punk groups like Dropkick Murphy and Flogging Molly, to Afro Celt Sound System, which combines uilleann pipes, reels, African percussion and electronic music. Given the rich blend of tradition and innovation that has marked Irish traditional music for the past 300 years, McCullough and Williams’ combined definitions strike a more comprehensive balance.¹⁸

Theoretical Approach

This dissertation draws on a theoretical framework developed by anthropologist Arjun Appadurai’s five “-scapes”: ethnoscaples, mediascaples, technoscaples, financescaples, and ide-

¹⁷ Some well-known Celtic music artists include Loreena McKennitt and Enya. Although use of the term “Celtic” may seem logical given the cultural similarities between these ethno-cultures, Erick Falc’her-Poyroux, among others, questions the validity of this term. For Falc’her-Poyroux, the term “Celtic music” represents “une solution simple pour regrouper de façon sommaire (pour les médias et le grand public) des réalités musicales issues de régions voisines et culturellement proches, mais qui ne sont finalement qu’un ensemble disparate de musiques très différentes” (Erick Falc’her-Poyroux, *Histoire sociale de la musique irlandaise: Du Dagda au DADGAD* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2018), 372).

¹⁸ See Erick Falc’her-Poyroux, *Histoire sociale de la musique irlandaise*, and Valley, Fintan, Hammy Hamilton, Eithne Valley and Liz Doherty, editors, *Crosbhealach An Cheoil: The Crossroads Conference 1996: Tradition and Change in Irish Traditional Music* (Cork, Ireland: Ossian Publications, 1999) for extensive discussions of the interplay between tradition and innovation in Irish traditional music.

oscapes. For Appadurai, each term represents a particular aspect of global cultural flows; analysis of the relationship between these dimension helps account for these dimensions' fluidity and irregularity.¹⁹ Appadurai defines these five aspects as follows:

By *ethnoscape*, I mean the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live...moving groups and individuals [that] constitute an essential feature of the world...By *technoscape*, I mean the global configuration, also ever fluid, of technology and the fact that technology, both high and low, both mechanical and informational, now moves at high speeds across various kinds of previously impervious boundaries...*financescapes* [are] the disposition of global capital...[in] now a more mysterious rapid, and difficult landscape than ever before...*Mediascapes* refer both to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information...*Ideoscapes*...have to do with the ideologies of states and and the counterideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power or a piece of it [all italics original].²⁰

This framework is particularly well suited to the analysis of Irish traditional music in a North American city. Irish traditional music has circulated around the world, with people - and later, commercial recordings - as its main vehicle. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, mediascapes such as Youtube, or musicians' private and professional websites have become pivotal spaces for this music's dispersal among new audiences. Economic imperatives have permeated the music's history, from the publication of various tune collections to the salaries received by famous and lesser-known professional players. Finally, the linking of Irish traditional music - intentionally or not - with specific forms of political and cultural Irishness may be considered an ideoscape. These points, among many others touched on later in this thesis, confirm the benefits

¹⁹ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 33.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 33-36.

to be gained from applying Appadurai's framework to the analysis of even just one segment of an interconnected, global web of Irish soundscapes.²¹

Methodology

The core of the original ethnographic research for this dissertation consisted of directed discussions with key participants in Montreal's Irish soundscape: concertina players Rae Shepp and Robin Beech, tin whistle and mandolin player Richard Morgan, singers and *bodhrán* players Julien Després and Aindriú MacGabhann, fiddler and accordion player Steve Jones, uilleann piper Alan Jones, flute player Philippe Murphy, fiddlers Kate Bevan-Baker, Paul Legrand and Chris Crilly, and fiddle and flute player Jean Duval.²² In my selection of respondents, I sought as much as possible to strike a balance between various factors. First, I tried reaching players of a different array of instruments. Second, I sought a mix of English-speakers and French-speakers. All the respondents can communicate in French and in English. That said, Julien Després, Philippe Murphy, Paul Legrand and Jean Duval are primarily francophone, while all the others are anglophone. I sought musicians with varying levels of ancestral connection to Ireland. Some of my respondents were born in Irish families and grew up in Ireland: Chris Crilly and Aindriú MacGabhann. Others are many generations removed from Irish ancestors: Philippe Murphy and Jean Duval. Others still, notably Rae Shepp and Steve Jones, have no Irish background. Third, I sought a mix of amateur and professional musicians. Aindriú MacGabhann, Kate Bevan-Baker, and Paul Legrand all earn their living primarily by playing Irish traditional music; the others do

²¹ Appadurai understands locality as "primarily relational and contextual rather than as scalar or spatial...as a complex phenomenological quality, constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy" (Ibid., 178).

²² Alan Jones and Steve Jones are not related by blood.

not. Finally, I sought a mix of musicians who have been active in Montreal's Irish traditional music scene across various decades. All the respondents still play Irish music today, though some play more actively and regularly than others. Jean Duval, Alan Jones and Chris Crilly were playing Irish traditional music in Montreal in the 1970s. Paul Legrand and Steve Jones emigrated to Montreal during the 1980s. Aindriú MacGabhann came to Montreal in 1996, during the same decade Rae Shepp began playing Irish music. The other respondents - Julien Després, Philippe Murphy, Richard Morgan, Robin Beech, and Kate Bevan-Baker - have been active in the Montreal Irish music scene since the 2000s and 2010s.²³

The following six questions served as a base for the directed discussions:

- i. How were you first introduced to Irish traditional music?
- ii. Why have you kept playing Irish traditional music for as long as you have?
- iii. Why do you play Irish traditional music?
- iv. Please rank the following three terms in order of personal importance to you, and explain the reasoning behind your choices.
 - i. Irish
 - ii. Traditional
 - iii. Music
- v. What does it mean to play Irish traditional music?
- vi. What (if anything) has changed about the music since you began playing it?

²³ There are only two women among my respondents because female performers of Irish traditional music in Montreal are, very simply, outnumbered by their male counterparts. See Chapter 1 for further details.

The respondents' answers naturally sparked follow-up questions. The answers to these questions in turn helped flesh out the discussions with details on the respondents' engagement with Irish music, and on the history of Irish music in Montreal.²⁴

These discussions were supplemented with insights drawn from the archival records of the Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal and of the United Irish Societies of Montreal, as well as my own observations and analyses of the soundscape. As an uilleann piper, tin whistle player, and former teacher at the Siamsa School of Irish Music, I am a participant in this soundscape, hence bringing an insider's perspective to my research.

I began this project with the hypothesis that most of the active players of Irish traditional music in Montreal were not of Irish descent. I soon realized that this was very much the case, and that I could not make the validation of this hypothesis the sole focus of the thesis. I therefore broadened the scope of my analysis to the cultural flows that have given the soundscape its peculiar *zeitgeist*. Given the wealth of information my respondents provided about the soundscape in the past decade, I extended the initial timeframe of the thesis - 1974 to 2004 - to 2018.

The introduction provides an overview of relevant scholarly work in the three fields that inform this thesis: Ethnomusicology, Irish Diaspora Studies, and Quebec History. Chapter One addresses organized music and media initiatives that instilled vitality in Montreal's Irish music scene. In Chapter Two I explore the shifting spatial distribution of Irish traditional music in Montreal between the 1970s and the present. In suggesting reasons for these topographical shifts, I emphasize informal music-making settings, such as traditional music sessions. In Chapter Three, I connect Irish music history in Montreal to broader themes within Quebec's cultural and

²⁴ In addition to the twelve interviews, I have drawn on insights from personal conversations with Alan Jones, Jocelyn Patenaude, and Ken Quinn. These conversations took place informally, and were not part of any interview or directed discussion.

political history, and analyze the process of memory-layering that gave birth to Montreal's current Irish traditional music scene. In Chapter Four, I consider the shaping of the soundscape by Montreal's established Irish cultural associations. The globalization and commodification of Irish culture in the twentieth century, and the impact of these processes on the feasibility of earning a living in Montreal by playing Irish traditional music professionally, are explored in Chapter Five.

Ethnomusicology

Although there has been significant scholarly interest in Irish traditional music in Ireland, music in the Irish diaspora has received less scholarly attention. Studies of Irish traditional soundscapes in North America have usually analyzed Irish traditional music as both a cultural product unto itself and as a barometer for the vitality of Irish culture outside Ireland. Lawrence McCullough's 1978 doctoral dissertation was "the first attempt to examine in detail a local tradition of Irish music in the United States."²⁵ The study presents a highly detailed portrait of Irish music in Chicago between the 1870s and 1978, leaving hardly any aspect of the music uncovered: instruments, performers, audiences, performance occasions, methods of transmission and repertoire.²⁶ Interestingly, McCullough also remarks on the beginnings of people without Irish ancestry contributing to Chicago's Irish music scene, and even outnumbering first-generation Irish performers.²⁷ For McCullough, this bursting of the music's initial ethnic boundaries have

²⁵ Lawrence E. McCullough, "Irish Music in Chicago," ix.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, ii-iii.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 245.

“increased [the music’s] chances of survival in a non-native environment.”²⁸ Michael Nichol森 also considers Irish traditional music in Chicago; however he focuses on the music’s role in the formation of Irish-American identity and nationalism. Although Nichol森 explains that “Chicago’s traditional music devotees of the late nineteenth century perceived their art as a direct connection to Ireland.”²⁹ He also points to a general lack of interest in Irish music by most of Chicago’s Irish and Irish-American population, but makes no mention of non-Irish people playing the music in Chicago between 1867 and 1900.³⁰ The closest Nichol森 comes to the mention of non-Irish practitioners is a vague concluding statement which hints at the possibility of this phenomenon: “Even when allowing their tradition to change, practitioners of Irish music played to those who would listen, and successfully maintained a transplanted, and transformed, art.”³¹

Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin’s 2005 study of Irish traditional music in San Francisco outlines 150 years of integration of Irish traditional music and its practitioners into the burgeoning social life of San Francisco. It also outlines a shift, begun in the 1970s, away from an overlap between Irish ethnicity and the playing of Irish traditional music. Instead, Irish music found new practitioners and patrons, as old Irish-American families abandoned Irish traditional music in favour of American popular culture.³² Ó hAllmhuráin identifies the 1978 death of accordionist Kevin Keegan as a turning point for this trend. From that moment, non-Irish musicians became the music’s primary practitioners in San Francisco, and saved the music from the “lethargy of its

²⁸ Ibid., 356.

²⁹ Michael D. Nichol森, “Identity, Nationalism, and Irish Traditional Music in Chicago, 1867-1900,” *New Hibernia Review* vol. 13, no. 4 (Winter 2009), 112.

³⁰ Ibid., 126.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, “Old Age Pipers and New Age Punters: Irish Traditional Music and Musicians in San Francisco, 1850-2000.,” in Donald Jordan and Timothy J. O’Keefe, editors, *The Irish in the San Francisco Bay Area: Essays on Good Fortune* (San Francisco, California: The Executive Council of the Irish Literary and Historical Society, 2005), 123.

former ethnic trustees.”³³ The music underwent a revival in other major American cities. Rebecca Miller notes that Irish musicians were highly respected in the Irish community of early twentieth-century New York City. Fifty years later the music was ignored, only to undergo a revival in the early 1970s.³⁴ These shifting attitudes towards Irish music and culture have been “directly correlated to prevailing social, political, and economic forces within New York’s Irish community [and the community’s] evolving perceptions of ethnic pride and self-identity.”³⁵ Thus Irish traditional music in New York declined in the 1950s in the face of “the main socializing forces [being] found in the dance hall sense where contemporary European and American music had become the rage.”³⁶ It experienced a resurgence in the 1960s and 1970s when “the physical dissolution of many Irish neighborhoods throughout the boroughs of New York City...[leading to] the loss of immediate physical community...encouraged a reevaluation of heritage and community.”³⁷ However, in other parts of the United States, Irish traditional music coexists tensely with other musical traditions. Cathy Larson Sky has noted the difficulty of fostering an Irish music scene in parts of the American South, where Southern Old-Time music dominates, and Irish traditional music has but a tenuous foothold.³⁸

Michael Moloney is the only researcher to have conducted ethnographic research on Irish music with an entire country – the United States of America – as his focus. He has noted that:

³³ Ibid., 123-125.

³⁴ Rebecca S. Miller, “Irish Traditional and Popular Music in New York City: Identity and Social Change, 1930-1975,” in Ronald H. Naylor and Timothy J. Meagher, editors, *The New York Irish* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 481.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 496.

³⁷ Ibid., 505.

³⁸ Cathy Larson Sky, “Building bridges: challenges in playing, performing, and teaching Irish music in the American South,” in Fintan Vallely, Hammy Hamilton, Eithne Vallely and Liz Doherty, editors, *Crosbhealach An Cheoil: The Crossroads Conference 1996* (Cork, Ireland: Ossian Publications, 1999), 101-106.

Since the mid 1970s... a proliferation of musical groups all over America identifying themselves generically as Irish or Celtic. The constitution of these groups varies somewhat but in general the members either have no Irish ancestral connections at all or if they do they are several generations removed from their Irish forbears and the Irish part of their ancestry has not been significant in their lives.³⁹

Moloney goes on to describe their musical, ethnic, and socio-economic profiles. They are generally “able to read music and have learned to play at least one other kind of music, folk or classical, by the time they develop an interest in Celtic music. They come overwhelmingly from the white middle and upper middle classes in urban and suburban America.”⁴⁰ More interestingly, however, Moloney expounds at length on reasons why non-Irish people play Irish music. In these rationales, Irish ethnicity and the playing of Irish traditional music are firmly distinct:

The non-Irish musicians are not expressing an Irish ethnic identity by performing Irish music. They may, however, be consciously identifying themselves with some kind of counter culture ideology. In a multicultural society with many options, Irish music represents an arcane choice of cultural expression relative to mainstream American popular culture. The attraction of Irish music may exist at a number of levels. It may be appealing on a strictly artistic level or the social context of the music may be an attraction. The fact that Irish music is such a public and open tradition, and that so much music takes place in convivial social circumstances, is very attractive for people who feel alienated from mainstream American culture. Additionally, the fact that the music is embedded in a compelling social and cultural history may be a reason that some non-Irish-American musicians pursue an interest in Irish culture that goes beyond the music.⁴¹

³⁹ Michael Moloney, “Irish Music in America: Continuity and Change” (PhD Dissertation in Folklore and Folklife supervised by Kenneth Goldstein. University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1992), 422.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 422-423.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 448.

Precious few scholarly studies of Irish soundscapes in Canada exist. These studies are also exclusively focused on eastern parts of the country. Johanne Devlin Trew's research on the Ottawa Valley has revealed pervasive and enduring Irish musical influences in the Valley, and also a synthesis of Irish, Scottish, English, and French-Canadian elements into a musical culture unique to this region.⁴² In other words, "Ottawa Valley culture has become a Canadian regional culture."⁴³ Similarly, a 2008 study by Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin sought to counter the "eclipsing" of the Irish presence in Newfoundland by traditional Irish-American historiography.⁴⁴ Ó hAllmhuráin presents an overview of the music's evolution in Newfoundland, concluding that Irish influences will endure on the island as long as musicians "continue to revisit the music of their Irish past, engage with the music of an Irish present, and invariably absorb the music of an Irish future."⁴⁵ The most recent study of Irish music in Canada is Kate Bevan-Baker's 2018 PhD thesis on the Irish traditional fiddling traditions on Prince Edward Island (PEI). She rightly notes that the apparent ethnic fade of the Irish in PEI - and elsewhere in North America - is compounded by "the multiplicity of identities that North Americans are embracing at present."⁴⁶ She also remarks that this ethnic fade has not had a detrimental impact on the island's Irish traditional music scene. Indeed, she posits that the increased numbers of performers travelling back and forth between PEI and Ireland, and PEI musicians' engagement with the music through digital means, are firm proof that "[t]he musical isolation of former times has now well and truly

⁴² Johanne Devlin Trew, Johanne. *Place, Culture and Community*, 124-166.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 257.

⁴⁴ Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, "Soundscape of the Wintermen: Irish Traditional Music in Newfoundland Revisited," *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* vol. 34, No. 2 (Fall 2008), 33.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁴⁶ Kate Bevan-Baker, "Archipelago Soundscape: Irish Music History and Vernacular Fiddle Cultures on Prince Edward Island" (PhD Thesis, Concordia University, 2009), 22.

ended.”⁴⁷ In this sense, PEI is one of many places around the world where the “mediascapes, ideoscapes and technoscapes continue to jolt and alter orthodox notions of ethnicity, identity and tradition.”⁴⁸

Scholars and musicians agree that Irish traditional music has been played in Quebec since the earliest days of Irish settlement in the Saint Lawrence River valley. The music flourished with the increase of Irish immigration to Quebec in the nineteenth century. While some consider the influence of Irish music on traditional Québécois music to be overestimated, its presence became strong enough in the nineteenth century to have a definite influence on the French-Canadian fiddling repertoire.⁴⁹ Yet despite this influence, Irish music in Quebec has received little scholarly attention, and what attention it has received is often perfunctory, and ignores instrumental music. In one compendium of scholarly sources on the Irish in Quebec, only 15 sources on Irish music were listed. 14 of the 15 sources were concerned with either Quebec traditional music and musicians, or with the place of Irish song and singers in Quebec. The sole source on instrumental music was a two-page entry on Ireland in the 1983 *Encyclopédie de la musique au Canada*.⁵⁰

A notable exception to this dearth would be Jean Duval’s research on composers of traditional music in the Irish, Scottish and Québécois traditions in Quebec. Duval argues that through their playing styles, their sources of motivation for composition, their repertoire and their iden-

⁴⁷ Ibid., 23.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 104.

⁴⁹ Jean Duval, “*Singularités et similarités chez les compositeurs de musique traditionnelle québécoise, écossaise et irlandaise*” (Mémoire présenté à la Faculté des études supérieures en vue de l’obtention du grade de Maître en musicologie (option ethnomusicologie), Université de Montréal: Montréal, Québec, 2008), 49.

⁵⁰ Grace et al., *The Irish in Quebec*, 211-212.

tity, composers in these traditional idioms manage to distinguish themselves, all the while remaining embedded in their chosen musical tradition.⁵¹ Although Duval articulates the interesting notion of a “*territoire compositionnel*” (which one may loosely translate as “compositional territory”) to explain the lack of correlation between composers’ geographic territory and the traditions in which they choose to operate, his work does not directly address the composers’ ethnic identity, nor the identities of the people who play their music.⁵²

Only two focussed studies of Irish soundscapes in Quebec exist. However, they are both concerned with rural Quebec. Focussing on the Gaspésie village of Douglstown, Ó hAllmhuráin argues that elements of Irish musical culture have endured in parts of rural Quebec, rather than dissipating over time.⁵³ This *survivance* is all the more remarkable given that most bearers of Irish musical tradition in Douglstown are of an older generation, and that there no formal institutions to ensure the music’s continuity in this locality.⁵⁴ Harry White’s comparative study of the culture of musical practice in Quebec and Ireland discusses many relevant issues: Irish traditional music often standing in for Irish music as a whole, and compendia of musical history - namely the Encyclopedia of music in Canada and the Encyclopaedia of music in Ireland - reflecting taxonomies largely unrelated to Canadian and Irish identities.⁵⁵ White rightly points out that rigid reliance on these taxonomies obviates the analysis of many forms of musical expression in Dublin and in Montreal, including traditional music.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Jean Duval, “*Singularités et similarités*,” 1.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 236.

⁵³ Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, “The place of sound,” 184.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 186.

⁵⁵ Harry White, “Courtyards in Delft,” 200, 205.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 205.

Quebec history

There are records of Irish people in the Saint Lawrence valley since the days of New France.⁵⁷ However, Irish emigration to Canada accelerated after 1815, “with massive peaks in 1831, 1847, and 1849, and only a trickle thereafter.”⁵⁸ Nineteenth-century Irish immigrants to Montreal were confronted with a French-Canadian population with whom they shared the Catholic faith, and an Anglophone population with whom they shared command of the English language. Irish Catholics thus found themselves forging their own cultural and physical living space in a paradoxical context. They were in a minority within each of their broader religious and linguistic communities: Catholics, on the one hand, and English speakers on the other.⁵⁹ However, they enjoyed the benefits of living in a city “in which being Roman Catholic did not entail belonging to a minority group.”⁶⁰ As they carved out a place for themselves between and among French-Canadian Catholics and Anglophone Protestants, Irish immigrants occupied many social strata in Montreal. Indeed, the Montreal Irish as a whole displayed considerable upward social mobility in the nineteenth century. This trend is illustrated by documented changes in housing

⁵⁷ Robert J. Grace, Fernand Harvey, Brendan O’Donnell, Kevin O’Donnell, *The Irish in Quebec: An Introduction to the Historiography, Followed by An Annotated Bibliography on the Irish in Quebec* (Quebec City: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1993), 21-24.

⁵⁸ Sherry Olson and Patricia Thornton, *Peopling the North American City: Montreal 1840-1900* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2011), 51.

⁵⁹ Barlow, “The House of the Irish,” 3.

⁶⁰ Rosalyn Trigger, “Irish Politics on Parade: The Clergy, National Societies, and St. Patrick’s Day Processions in Nineteenth-century Montreal and Toronto,” *Histoire sociale / Social History* vol. 37, no. 74 (2004), 165. Trigger argues that the “powerful and privileged position of the Catholic Church in Quebec provided Irish Catholics with strong religious leadership and encouraged development of Irish-Catholic institutions, although strenuous efforts had to be made by the Irish community to secure separate churches and parishes for the English-speaking Catholic population” (Trigger, “Irish Politics on Parade,” 166).

conditions and professional occupations between the 1840s and the 1890s.⁶¹ However, Irish culture in some areas of Montreal - notably Griffintown and Pointe-Saint-Charles - firmly retained a working-class tinge until well into the twentieth century.⁶²

The demographic decline of Quebec's Anglophone population began in the 1860s in some regions of the province. In regions outside of Montreal, this decline was mainly due to Anglophones moving to Montreal, or leaving for other parts of North America altogether.⁶³ In part because of the Anglophone migration to Montreal from elsewhere in Quebec, and because the bulk of immigrants from the British Isles in the century after Confederation tended to congregate in Montreal, the city did not see such a decline until the 1970s.⁶⁴ By this point the Quiet Revolution was in full swing as proponents of a new Québécois nation pushed aside Catholicism and ruralism as the primary foundations of Québécois identity, replacing them with an emphasis on the French language. Unsurprisingly, this shift posed a number of societal and cultural dilemmas to Quebec's Anglophones, including its population of Irish ancestry.⁶⁵ Just as the place of Quebec in North America and the world was hotly debated during this time, notably in post-colonial terms, within a "framework of global dissent,"⁶⁶ the place of Anglophones in Quebec was also being rethought in light of secularization, institutional reforms, and Quebec nationalism. Ideas of the Québécois nation were framed increasingly as being based on the French language, and the

⁶¹ Sherry Olson and Patricia Thornton, *Peopling the North American City*, 80-86.

⁶² Barlow, "The House of the Irish," 4-5.

⁶³ Ronald Rudin, *The Forgotten Quebecers: A History of English-Speaking Quebec, 1759-1980* (Quebec City: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1985), 178.

⁶⁴ Ronald Rudin, *The Forgotten Quebecers*, 177-178, 198.

⁶⁵ John A. Dickinson and Brian Young, *A Short History of Quebec*, fourth edition (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 306.

⁶⁶ Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), 9.

assimilation of Anglophones “in the Quebec people was implied.”⁶⁷ Political changes accelerated a previous economically-driven trend of Anglophone emigration from Quebec, notably to Toronto.⁶⁸ The bulk of the Anglophone Irish - or rather Irish-Canadians - who decided to stay in Montreal threw their weight in with the rest of the city’s emerging Anglophone community.⁶⁹

Before 2000, the Irish in twentieth-century Montreal had received little scholarly attention. The bulk of the studies of the Irish in Montreal are concerned with the nineteenth century. This is notably the case for Rosalyn Trigger’s analyses of Saint Patrick’s Day processions in Montreal and Toronto and of parish rivalry between Montreal’s French-Catholic and Irish-Catholic population, for Dorothy Suzanne Cross’ MA thesis on the Montreal Irish, Sherry Olson and Patricia Thornton’s studies of infant survival rates and Irish-Catholics’ upward social mobility, and H el ene-Jane Groarke’s MA thesis on performative Irish-Catholic identity in Saint Patrick’s Day parades in nineteenth-century Montreal and Toronto.⁷⁰ This focus on the nineteenth century is also evident in studies of the Irish in Quebec outside of Montreal. Local histories of the Irish in the Eastern Townships and in St-Colomban, by Claude Bourguignon and Gwen Barry, respectively, come to mind.⁷¹

⁶⁷ John A. Dickinson and Brian Young, *A Short History of Quebec*, 306.

⁶⁸ Ronald Rudin, *The Forgotten Quebecers*, 220.

⁶⁹ Barlow, “The House of the Irish,” 5.

⁷⁰ Dorothy Suzanne Cross, “The Irish in Montreal” (MA thesis, McGill University, 1969); H el ene-Jane Groarke, “Becoming Irish: How Irish Catholic Identity Was Performed and Changed in the St. Patrick’s Day Parades of Toronto and Montreal (1858 and 1866)” (MA thesis, Concordia University, 2018); Sherry Olson and Patricia Thornton, “The Challenge of the Irish-Catholic Community in Nineteenth-Century Montreal,” *Histoire Sociale/Social History* vol. 35, no. 70 (2003): 333-62; Sherry Olson and Patricia Thornton, “A Deadly Discrimination among Montreal Infants, 1860-1900,” *Continuity & Change* vol. 16, no. 1 (2001): 95-135; Rosalyn Trigger, “Irish Politics on Parade”; Rosalyn Trigger, “The geopolitics of the Irish-Catholic parish.”

⁷¹ Gwen Barry, *Ulster Protestant emigration to Lower Canada: Megantic County & St-Sylvestre* (Lower Sackville, N.S.: Evans Books, 2003); Claude Bourguignon, *Saint-Colomban : une  pop ee irlandaise au pi emont des Laurentides* (Chambly, Qu ebec :  ditions Pass e pr esent, 1988).

Since 2000, there has been a proliferation of research on the Irish in Quebec. Some researchers have studied the Irish in Quebec outside of Montreal in their own right; others have done so in studies of other historical topics that touch upon the Irish indirectly. Among the former are Peter Southam's history of the Irish in the Eastern Townships and Roland Viau's study of the Irish labourers who built the Beauharnois Canal, while the latter include Peter Bischoff's book about the labour struggles of longshoremen in Quebec City's port, and Dan Horner's study of the 1843 Lachine Canal workers' strike.⁷² For some scholars, Quebec and Ireland - or sometimes Quebec and Northern Ireland - are an intuitive pairing for comparative analysis. However, these studies are generally more concerned with politics and education than with culture. This is notably the case for Julie Guyot's study of colonial resistance against the British empire between 1790 and 1840, Kathleen O'Brien's analysis of language and monuments at Grosse-Île and Kilrush, Katherine O'Sullivan's study of first-world nationalisms, and studies on education by Ulrike Niens and Marie-Hélène Chastenay, and by Claire McGlynn, Patricia Lamarre, Anne Laperrière, and Alison Montgomery, among others.⁷³ In contrast to these aforementioned studies, Jason King's research on Famine migration and representations of Famine narratives deals more

⁷² Peter Bischoff, *Les débardeurs au port de Québec : Tableau des luttes syndicales, 1831-1902* (Montréal : Éditions Hurtubise Inc, 2009); Dan Horner, "Solemn Procession and Terrifying Violence: Spectacle, Authority, and Citizenship during the Lachine Canal Strike of 1843," *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine* 38, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 36-47; Peter Southam, *Irish Settlement and National Identity in the Lower St. Francis Valley* (Richmond, Quebec: Richmond St. Patrick's Society, 2012); Roland Viau, *La sueur des autres*.

⁷³ Julie Guyot, *Les insoumis de l'empire: le refus de la domination coloniale au Bas-Canada et en Irlande, 1790-1840* (Québec, Québec : Les éditions du Septentrion, 2016); Kathleen O'Brien, "Language, Monuments, and the Politics of Memory in Quebec and Ireland," *Irish-American Cultural Institute* vol. 38, no. 1 (2017): 141-160; Katherine O'Sullivan, *First World Nationalisms: Class and Ethnic Politics in Northern Ireland and Quebec* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016); Ulrike Niens and Marie-Hélène Chastenay, "Educating for Peace? Citizenship Education in Quebec and Northern Ireland," *Comparative Education Review* vol. 52, no. 4 (Nov. 2008): 519-540; Claire McGlynn, Patricia Lamarre, Anne Laperrière and Alison Montgomery, "Journeys of Interaction: Shared Schooling in Quebec and Northern Ireland," *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education* vol. 3, no. 4 (2009): 209-225.

directly with literary culture.⁷⁴ Two recent collections of essays - one in English, edited by Margaret Kelleher and Michael Kenneally, and the other in French, edited by Linda Cardinal, Simon Jolivet and Isabelle Matte - also present comparisons between Quebec and Ireland with an emphasis on culture and identity. Citing the Quebec specificities of the Irish emigrant experience in Canada, the editors of *Le Québec et l'Irlande: Culture, Histoire, Identité* present a case for Quebec-Irish studies - "Les études irlandais-québécoises" - as a distinct and new academic field.⁷⁵ In so doing, they seek to challenge an Irish-Canadian historiography that, in their view, has excessively lionized Thomas D'Arcy McGee as a founding father of Canadian confederation.⁷⁶ A distinct political dimension permeates the collection. This is not surprising given that the first half of the collection addresses political history, and given the myriad ways in which Ireland informed political discourse in Lower Canada.⁷⁷ However, this dimension is also evident in texts from the second half of the collection, which is devoted to cultural and artistic works highlighting the links between Quebec and Ireland, with the Irish historical and cultural experience serving as a metaphorical mirror for Quebec's own experiences.⁷⁸ These works are replete with implicit and explicit political references.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Jason King, "The Genealogy of Famine Diary in Ireland and Quebec: Ireland's Famine Migration in Historical Fiction, Historiography, and Memory," *Éire-Ireland: A Journal of Irish Studies* vol. 47, no. 1-2 (Spring-Summer 2012): 45-69; Jason, King "Remembering Famine Orphans"; Jason King, "Staging Famine Irish Memories of Migration and National Performance in Ireland and Québec," *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* vol. 18, no. 4 (2016).

⁷⁵ Linda Cardinal, Simon Jolivet and Isabelle Matte, "Les études irlandais-québécoises," 7.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁷⁷ Mary Haslam, "La période pré-rébellion: l'imaginaire irlandais au Québec, 1822-1837," in Linda Cardinal, Simon Jolivet and Isabelle Matte, editors, *Le Québec et l'Irlande. Culture, histoire, identité* (Sillery : Les Éditions du Septentrion, 2014), 252-253.

⁷⁸ Linda Cardinal, Simon Jolivet and Isabelle Matte, "Les études irlandais-québécoises," 14.

⁷⁹ One of the main characters of André Forcier's film *Je me souviens* is a voluntary political exile from Ireland named Liam Hennessy. The film also contains implicit social commentary on Quebec issues such as the mistreatment of the famed Duplessis orphans by both the Quebec government and the Catholic Church (Isabelle Matte, "La revanche de Némésis," 150, 155). The two main maternal characters of Gilles Carle's film *La vraie nature de Bernadette* and of Neil Jordan's film *The Butcher Boy* are also symbols for Quebec and Ireland, respectively. "Mme

Ireland and Quebec: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on History, Culture and Society, edited by Margaret Kelleher and Michael Kenneally, is structured similarly to *Le Québec et l'Irlande*, insofar as the first section deals directly with political parallels between Lower Canada and Ireland. The editors acknowledge that the “manner in which [Irish Catholic and Protestant Anglo-Irish] public figures...engaged in political debates in Lower Canada was significantly determined by their experience of, and perspective on, Irish historical and contemporary politics.”⁸⁰ However the essays dealing with other issues - namely language, identity and culture - are less permeated by political matters than their counterparts in *Le Québec et l'Irlande*. This lesser political emphasis is notably evident in the chapters on language by Margaret Kelleher and Vera Regan, in Rhona Richman Kenneally's chapter on Maura Laverty's cookbooks, and in the musical chapters by Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin and Harry White.⁸¹

Nugent...offre une autre version de la figure maternelle de la patrie, celle de la bourgeoisie catholique irlandaise, héritière du pouvoir britannique et de la prospérité du Celtic Tiger. En utilisant le même symbolisme que Gilles Carle envers sa Bernadette, qui comme le souligne Christian Poirier, «s'habille en bleu (référence au drapeau québécois) et rêve d'indépendance», Jordan choisit d'habiller Mme Nugent presque exclusivement en vert” (Kester Dyer, “Miracles, mythes, cinéma: *La vraie nature de Bernadette* et *The Butcher Boy*,” in Linda Cardinal, Simon Jolivet and Isabelle Matte, editors, *Le Québec et l'Irlande. Culture, histoire, identité* (Sillery : Les Éditions du Septentrion, 2014), 182). Victor-Lévy Beaulieu's work on James Joyce suggest that, from a historical and political perspective, Quebec is currently experiencing “un XIXe siècle irlandais prolongé, sans issue” (Marc Chevrier, Marc, “Victor-Lévy Beaulieu, James Joyce, les langues et le Québec hibernien,” in Linda Cardinal, Simon Jolivet and Isabelle Matte, editors, *Le Québec et l'Irlande. Culture, histoire, identité* (Sillery : Les Éditions du Septentrion, 2014), 231). Similar examples are also to be found in the chapter by Jerry White, and in the postface by Éric Bédard.

⁸⁰ Margaret Kelleher, and Michael Kenneally, “Introduction,” in Margaret Kelleher and Michael Kenneally, editors., *Ireland and Quebec: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on History, Culture and Society* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2016), 11.

⁸¹ Margaret Kelleher, “Census, history and language in Ireland and Canada: the origins of the language question,” in Margaret Kelleher and Michael Kenneally, editors, *Ireland and Quebec: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on History, Culture and Society* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2016): 97-112; Vera Regan, “Tales of the Celtic Tiger: migrants' language use and identity,” in Margaret Kelleher and Michael Kenneally, editors, *Ireland and Quebec: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on History, Culture and Society* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2016): 113-130; Rhona Richman Kenneally, “Memory as food performance: the cookbooks of Maura Laverty,” in Margaret Kelleher and Michael Kenneally, editors, *Ireland and Quebec: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on History, Culture and Society* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2016): 166-182; Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, “The place of sound - the sound of place: Irish music and cultural memory in rural Quebec,” in Margaret Kelleher and Michael Kenneally, editors., *Ireland and Quebec: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on History, Culture and Society* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2016): 183-196; Harry White, “‘Courtyards in Delft’: identity, originality and the culture of musical practice

The very existence of *Le Québec et l'Irlande* and of *Ireland and Quebec* suggests that interest in comparative study of Ireland and Quebec exists among both French-speaking and English-speaking scholars. Because of these collections' different political emphases, it is tempting to conclude that Canada's Two Solitudes have each claimed their camp in Hiberno-Quebec historiography, with a political streak permeating Francophones' understandings and perceptions of Ireland more than those of Anglophones. The trend may crystallize and become more pronounced if, as Linda Cardinal, Simon Jolivet and Isabelle Matte suggest, Quebec-Irish studies grow as a distinct academic field.⁸²

Many recent studies of Irish Montreal have come from researchers affiliated with Concordia University's School of Irish Studies. Camille Harrigan's MA thesis traces the evolution of Saint Patrick's Basilica as a *lieu de mémoire* for the middle-class elements of Montreal's Irish community from 1847 to 2017. She notes that the Montreal Irish preserve their cultural identity by displaying symbolic ethnicity at specific events in March of each year. These displays have helped the Montreal Irish reconnect with their ethnic roots, despite their acculturation from Irish into Irish-Canadians, then to Canadian-Irish between the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries.⁸³ By partaking in these rituals - including the Saint Patrick's Day parade, and the Green Mass at the basilica - members of Montreal's Irish community "inscribe themselves within an ethnic community...that is not necessarily at the core of their everyday lives and identities."⁸⁴ Harrigan

in Quebec and Ireland," in Margaret Kelleher and Michael Kenneally, editors, *Ireland and Quebec: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on History, Culture and Society* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2016): 197-210.

⁸² Linda Cardinal, Simon Jolivet and Isabelle Matte, "Les études irlando-québécoises," 7.

⁸³ Camille Harrigan, "Storied Stones: St. Patrick's Basilica: History, Identity, and Memory in Irish Montréal, 1847-2017" (MA thesis, Concordia University, 2018), 182. The distinction between Irish-Canadian and Canadian-Irish is largely based on time and on the emphasis these people place on the Canadian dimension of their identity; the latter are further removed from Irish ancestors than the former, and identify more strongly as Canadian than as Irish, which is not the case for the former.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

also discusses the musical aspects of the celebrations of Irishness in Saint Patrick's Basilica; these have included sung performances of *Danny Boy*, instrumental harp music, and a mass in Irish organized with the help of the Montreal branch of *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann*.⁸⁵ Jessica Mills' MA thesis on Point-Saint-Charles - colloquially known as The Point - touches only briefly on the Irish presence in this working-class neighbourhood.⁸⁶ However, she rightly points out the importance of the Black Rock in the memoryscape of The Point.⁸⁷ Raymond Jess' 2013 MA thesis explores Montreal's Irish Protestant community and the construction of Canadian national identity between Confederation and the First World War. Notably, Jess contrasts the social and economic dimensions of the lives of Montreal's Irish Protestant and their Scottish and English co-religionists.⁸⁸ Simon Jolivet, whose aforementioned *Le vert et le bleu* is an extension of his 2008 PhD thesis at Concordia University, should also be counted among this slate of Concordia researchers. However another Concordian, Matthew Barlow, claims to be the only scholar to have focused specifically on the Montreal Irish in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.⁸⁹ His 2009 doctoral dissertation on Griffintown explains the decline and acculturation of this Montreal neighbourhood's working-class Irish-Catholic community, as well as this district's subsequent

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 153-154, 173-174. *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (CCÉ)* is a organization founded in 1951 that promotes Irish traditional music, dance, and culture around the world. A *CCÉ* branch was founded in Montreal in 1974. Its history will be discussed at greater length later in this thesis.

⁸⁶ Just like neighbouring Griffintown, Point-Saint-Charles has seen intense bouts of gentrification the start of the 2000s. Mills states that the "Irish memory of The Point, and the community that houses it, is in itself unique, and unfortunately beyond the scope of [her thesis]" (Jessica Mills, "What's the Point?: The Meaning of Place, Memory, and Community in Point Saint Charles, Quebec" (MA thesis, Concordia University, 2011), 26).

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 26-27. This monument was erected to commemorate the thousands of Irish immigrants who died of typhus upon arriving to Montreal in the mid-1840s. This is a pivotal *lieu de mémoire* for Montreal's Irish community; many Montrealers pay tribute to the deceased migrants in an annual Walk to the Stone, led by the Ancient Order of Hibernians.

⁸⁸ Raymond Jess, "Re-centering the Periphery: The Protestant Irish of Montreal and the Birth of Canadian National Identity" (MA thesis, Concordia University, 2013), 19.

⁸⁹ Matthew Barlow, *Griffintown: Identity and Memory in an Irish Diaspora Neighbourhood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), 8.

revival as a site of remembrance for Montreal's Irish-Catholic community more generally. Barlow's 2017 monograph *Griffintown: Identity and Memory in an Irish Diaspora Neighbourhood* extends the analysis begun in his thesis. In *Griffintown*, Barlow argues that members of the Irish-Catholic community of Griffintown have crafted a collective identity through memory work by which they "have invested particular places around their neighbourhood with their cultural memories."⁹⁰ The exact nature of this memory work has understandably changed over time, as Griffintown was transformed from a working class neighbourhood into an industrial wasteland, and later still into a trendy residential district.⁹¹ Barlow argues that Griffintown gained its current status in the minds of Montrealers as the city's quintessential Irish neighbourhood as the result of memory work by former Griffintown residents.⁹² He claims this memory work, which occurred largely through initiatives which he labels as the "Griffintown Commemorative Project," marked a phase of reassertion of Irish ethnic identity - or "re-Irishification" in Montreal.

Although Barlow rightly points out that the Montreal - and Griffintown - Irish had largely integrated the Anglo Montreal community by the 1960s, he glosses over a crucial phase of Irish acculturation: their central place in Montreal's English-Catholic community. All the while retaining their distinct ethnic and religious identities, Irish-Catholics also became part of a broader palimpsest of Montreal's English-speaking Catholics, well before the emergence of Anglo Montreal. By securing their own national parishes in the nineteenth century, the city's Irish-Catholics

⁹⁰ Ibid., 11.

⁹¹ Ibid., 21-23.

⁹² Ibid., 15, 18, 187.

set the stage for the development of the institutions that would underpin English-Catholic Montreal for much of the twentieth century: its churches, schools, and charities.⁹³ From the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century, being an English-speaking Catholic in Quebec was almost synonymous with being Irish-Catholic. However the English-Catholic group acquired greater ethnic diversity with the immigration of large numbers of non-French-speaking Catholics to Quebec in the decades after the end of World War II. Immigrants from Germany, Austria, Italy, Hungary, and Portugal featured prominently in these waves of migration.⁹⁴ Their arrival understandably altered the relative demographic weight of the Irish within English-Catholic Montreal.

Also, Barlow's discussion of the "re-Irishification" of Montreal is predicated on an overstatement of how all-encompassing Anglo Montreal was as a cultural category. Anglo Montreal did include the Irish, among other ethnic and cultural groups, but did not completely replace their ethno-cultural identities. Montreal's main Irish cultural organizations - the Saint Patrick's Society and the United Irish Societies - have remained active since their inception in 1834 and 1928, respectively. These examples, among many others, are evidence of living Irish culture at a time when, according to Barlow, "Montreal's Irish-Catholic population...had been more or less subsumed into the larger anglophone population."⁹⁵ Barlow himself affirms that the Saint Patrick's Day parade had become largely commercialized by the mid-twentieth century, but nevertheless remained a cultural lodestone for the Griffintown Irish.⁹⁶ Barlow's analysis of "re-Irishification"

⁹³ See Rosalyn Trigger, "The geopolitics of the Irish-Catholic parish in nineteenth-century Montreal," *Journal of Historical Geography* vol. 27, no. 4 (2001): 553-572, for a discussion of the impact of the struggle for distinct Irish parishes on Irish ethnic consciousness in nineteenth-century Montreal.

⁹⁴ Paul-André Linteau, René Durocher, Jean-Claude Robert, and François Ricard, *Histoire du Québec contemporain: Tome II - Le Québec depuis 1930* (Montréal: Les Éditions du Boréal, 1989), 580-581.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 103-104.

is all the more doubtful given his claim that the Irish in Montreal during the early twentieth century mediated their dual identities as Irish and Canadian through symbiosis: “each [identity] informed the other.”⁹⁷ Irish and Montreal Anglophone - and for that matter, English-Catholic - identities were by no means mutually exclusive.

Barlow attributes the decline of Irish-Catholic identity to the disintegration of Montreal’s Irish neighbourhood. He claims that middle-class Irish neighbours had disappeared long before working-class enclaves like Griffintown.⁹⁸ However, the dispersal of upwardly mobile Irish individuals throughout Montreal does not necessarily signify an outright loss of Irish culture, as Barlow appears to suggest with his use of the term “decline.” This dispersed culture may be more difficult to detect in archival documents, and thus escape historians’ scrutiny. However, it nevertheless can - and surely did - endure. As Barlow himself puts it, “[i]dentities are fluid and, like place, are best seen as processes, rather than as static facts.”⁹⁹ In light of this insight, it would be more appropriate to speak of transmutations of Irish identity in Montreal, rather than of decline and resurgence.

Furthermore, like other studies of the Irish in Quebec, Barlow’s monograph discusses music and song very sparsely, but does allude to music and song as a pillar of Irish diasporic culture. This is notably the case for the music played in Montreal’s 1907 Saint Patrick’s Day parade; the Montreal branch of the Ancient Order of Hibernians sought to impose only “Irish-themed music” in the 1907 parade to counteract the prevalence of ragtime music in previous years’ parades.¹⁰⁰ Barlow also notes that Irish songs - particular rebel ones - were sung at Saint

⁹⁷ Ibid., 64.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 85.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 12.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 32.

Patrick's Day parties in Griffintown.¹⁰¹ In his analysis of the Irish influence on Quebec identity in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries, Simon Jolivet mentions the influence of Irish traditional music on Quebecois music. However, his examples are drawn overwhelmingly from the repertoire of singers and songwriters.¹⁰² His only mention of Irish traditional instrumental music is a perfunctory reference to Irish jigs and reels recorded by one Raoul Gagnier in 1917. Even the footnote to this mention reveals little, suggesting that readers consult Library and Archives Canada for the tunes recorded by Gagnier.¹⁰³ This is perhaps understandable, as Jolivet's purpose in the relevant chapter is to illustrate the impact of the Gaelic Revival in Quebec as of the 1890s. Nevertheless Jolivet's analysis leaves instrumental music out of earshot, sacrificing this topic in favour of a more extensive and detailed treatment of songs and lyrics. Similarly, Roland Viau attests very briefly that traditional dances accompanied by fiddlers and pipers were common among Irish labourers digging the Beauharnois Canal in the nineteenth century. However, he elaborates no further, beyond a single mention of one John Flynn, a dancing master and musician.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 133-134.

¹⁰² Simon Jolivet, *Le vert et le bleu*. 111-112.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 112.

¹⁰⁴ Roland Viau, *La sueur des autres*, 110-111.

Irish Diaspora Studies

This topic of this thesis connects to two ongoing debates within Irish diaspora studies. These controversies surround, respectively, the degree of integration of Irish emigrants into their host societies, and proprietary claims on Irish culture and heritage. A substantial body of scholarship identifies overt attempts by Irish emigrants – particularly Irish Catholics – to maintain themselves as a distinct ethno-national community. Rosalyn Trigger outlines the territorial, religious and ethnic jockeying surrounding the subdivision of the Catholic parish of Notre-Dame in nineteenth-century Montreal. She describes a pan-North-American pattern of parish formation crystallizing around Irish ethno-national identity, of which Montreal is but one example. In this context, the influx of large numbers of Irish Catholics in the nineteenth century led to the creation of “[n]ational parishes, in which membership was personal rather than residential, and based upon language or national origin rather than territory.”¹⁰⁵ Simon Jolivet notes efforts by various Montreal-based institutions, such as Quebec-based branches of the Gaelic League, St. Anselm’s Academy and the St. Patrick’s Literary Institute, to promote Irish culture in the early twentieth century.¹⁰⁶ Jolivet argues:

[S]’il est clair que l’expérience irlandaise-québécoise peut parfois ressembler à celle évoquée par les historiens du Canada anglais, elle est également comparable à l’expérience des Irlandais des États-Unis, telle qu’envisagée par les historiens américains Kerby Miller et Kevin Kenny....Les Irlando-catholiques du Québec, comme ceux des États-Unis, ont pu entretenir une identité ethno-culturelle

¹⁰⁵ Rosalyn Trigger, “The geopolitics of the Irish-Catholic parish in nineteenth-century Montreal,” *Journal of Historical Geography* vol. 27, no. 4 (2001), 555.

¹⁰⁶ Simon Jolivet, *Le vert et le bleu*, 110-114. The activities of the institutions are a prime example of the impact of the Gaelic Revival outside of Ireland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

vigoureuse, même après 1900 (soit plusieurs décennies après les grandes vagues d'immigration irlandaise).¹⁰⁷

Jolivet is correct in pointing out that the Irish in Quebec found themselves in a situation of triple-minority: "...catholiques au sein d'un pays canadien à majorité protestante...catholiques au sein d'une institution cléricale canadienne-française et...anglophones au sein d'une province à majorité francophone."¹⁰⁸ However his claim that Irishness as an ethnic identity retained greater vigour for longer in Quebec than elsewhere Canada warrants careful consideration.¹⁰⁹ First, just how long ago is "bien avant"?¹¹⁰ The criteria of what constitutes an early ethnic fade are not really defined - not, it seems, could they ever be defined precisely or unanimously. Jolivet and other authors admit that little is known about the linguistic and ethnic dynamics between Francophones and Anglophones in Lower Canada in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹¹¹

Second, Jolivet exaggerates the differences between the Irish Catholic experiences in Quebec and in Ontario. He emphasizes the rapid integration of Ontario's Irish elite into an emergent mainstream Canadian society, and presents manifestations of Irish nationalism in Quebec as significantly different from those in Ontario.

¹⁰⁷ Simon Jolivet, *Le vert et le bleu* (Montréal, Québec: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2011), 19.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Linda Cardinal, Simon Jolivet and Isabelle Matte, "Les études irlando-québécoises, un nouvel objet d'étude?" in Linda Cardinal, Simon Jolivet and Isabelle Matte, editors, *Le Québec et l'Irlande. Culture, histoire, identité* (Sillery : Les Éditions du Septentrion, 2014), 8-9.

Au Québec [contrairement à l'Ontario] on démontra plus tardivement de l'intérêt pour la théorie nationale [canadienne] de [D'Arcy] McGee...[alors que] les nombreuses manifestations à savoir républicaine et les succès des mouvements nationalistes irlandais à Montréal et à Québec sont incontestables.¹¹²

Although Jolivet's comparison is well taken, he draws inappropriate corollaries from his analysis, claiming that "[e]n érigeant ce nouveau Canada, lieu supposé de tolérance et de concorde, les Ontariens d'origine irlandaise n'ont cependant d'autre choix que de laisser l'Irlande régler ses problèmes toute seule, sans leur soutien financier ou moral."¹¹³ However, the place of Ireland in the nationalism of the Ontario Irish was not as minimal as Jolivet suggests. For instance, the 1875 commemorations in Toronto of the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Daniel O'Connell were characterized by speeches "less about Catholic piety and more about the proper course of pursuing Irish self-government".¹¹⁴ Irish nationalism in Toronto was thus not only firmly embedded into the political landscape, but also existed in various configurations. Loyalty to the British empire was expected and perhaps natural in the eyes of certain second- or third-generation Irish Catholics. Mark G. McGowan is correct to state that Toronto's Irish-Catholics "submerged their overt ties to Ireland, embraced many of the values of Canadian society."¹¹⁵ However this group's Irish identity never disappeared completely. Their ongoing relationship

¹¹² Linda Cardinal and Simon Jolivet, "Nationalisme, langue et éducation: les relations entre Irlandais catholiques et Canadiens français du Québec et de l'Ontario aux XIXe et XXe siècles," In Linda Cardinal, Simon Jolivet and Isabelle Matte, editors, *Le Québec et l'Irlande. Culture, histoire, identité* (Sillery : Les Éditions du Septentrion, 2014), 86-90, 95.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 94-95.

¹¹⁴ William Jenkins, *Between Raid and Rebellion: The Irish in Buffalo and Toronto, 1867-1916* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013), 194.

¹¹⁵ Mark G. McGowan, *The Waning of the Green: Catholics, the Irish, and Identity in Toronto, 1887-1922* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 7.

with Ireland put them in the fraught position of “‘reluctant Britons’” in Canada.¹¹⁶ This position belies Jolivet’s dismissal of Ontario-based Irish nationalism. Fundamentally, the diaspora Irish integrated their host societies in myriad different ways, with varying degrees of success, for many different reasons. Although nationalism and political identities particular to their new diasporic localities gradually took root in the hearts and minds of migrants and of their descendants, “the question of Ireland’s political status did not elude their interest.”¹¹⁷

The Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) was particularly active in promoting Irish ethnic nationalism at the turn of the twentieth century. For instance, the Buffalo AOH “launched a nationwide effort to have Irish history taught in both parochial schools and public schools so that a sense of Irish ethnic identity might be transmitted to the latest cohort of American-born children.”¹¹⁸ It also sought to make poignant political statements against British imperial policies; it organized a pro-Boer meeting in January 1900, at which “[a]n ‘Irish emblem’ hung from one of the boxes, while a portrait of Paul Kruger took its place on the stage ‘under the shelter of the stars and stripes’ and a Transvaal flag, and \$800 was collected to provide an ambulance and a corps for the Boer army”¹¹⁹ This gesture was clearly designed to convey defiance of British imperial ventures and solidarity with “a fellow underdog half the world away.”¹²⁰

Although these examples suggest that the integration of members of the diaspora Irish into their host societies was bound to be difficult, examples of Irish diasporic civic nationalism highlight the extent to which the diaspora Irish integrated well into some of their North American

¹¹⁶ William Jenkins, *Between Raid and Rebellion*, 319

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 305.

¹¹⁸ William Jenkins, *Between Raid and Rebellion*, 309.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 310.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

host societies. During the time of the Fenian raids, Canadian Irish adherence to the British Empire - or at the very least, to the status quo - suggests that Irish civic nationalism in some settings could be flexible, even to the point of compatibility with some expressions of British imperialism. This reaction to the Fenian raids came not only from Canadian Orangemen, as one would have expected, but also from Irish Catholics.¹²¹ British unionist sentiment as expressed across Canada by Protestant Irish migrants and their descendants also has a place in this discussion of nationalism. Although drastically different from – and diametrically opposed to - Irish-Catholic nationalism, Irish Protestant unionism nevertheless may be interpreted as an expression of national ideology. The identity in question is admittedly a different ethno-culture than that of nineteenth-century Irish Catholics, but it is nevertheless rooted in Ireland.¹²² The evolution of Orangism in Canada illustrates perfectly the ability of Protestant Irish to integrate themselves well in certain geo-cultural settings:

While this North American counterpart to the Irish Orange Order displayed many similarities and borrowed much of the original regalia and ideology, it evolved into a distinctly Canadian organization. The “cultural baggage” brought by British troops and Irish Protestant immigrants, once deposited in the colonies, was picked up and used by Loyalists in a fashion that little resembled its original purpose. By concentrating their energies on the tenets of Protestantism and loyalty to the Crown, Canadian Orangemen embodied a defensive garrison mentality.¹²³

¹²¹ Wilf S. Neidhardt, *Fenianism in North America*, 132.

¹²² Linda Cardinal, Simon Jolivet and Isabelle Matte, “Les études irlandais-québécoises,” 16.

¹²³ Scott See, “The Fortunes of the Orange Order,” 92.

Through these displays of their political and cultural identities, the Protestant Irish in New Brunswick blended into the fabric of the colony's respectable British Protestant elites. This blending was also evident in Montreal; the McCord family stands out as a case in point.¹²⁴

Irish immigrants to Canada integrated their host societies well; evidence of successful integration is to be found in aforementioned trends of upward social mobility, and expressions of national sentiment that blended loyalty to Ireland, on the one hand, with loyalty to Canada or to the British empire, on the other. Yet one cannot help but notice that, other than the research conducted by Matthew Barlow, scholarly work tracing the integration of Irish immigrants deals overwhelmingly with the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The integration of Irish immigrants and their descendants in Canada in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries warrants further scholarly attention.

Proprietary claims on Irish culture and heritage

The question of what it means to be Irish in a diasporic setting has long plagued Irish people, their descendants, and scholars of the diaspora. Although one may be struck by modern-day stereotypical Plastic-Paddyism, the appropriation of Irish culture and heritage extends at least as far back as the nineteenth century. Indeed, at the turn of the twentieth century, the Buffalo branch of the Ancient Order of Hibernians unsuccessfully “railed against an American-style commodification of Ireland and its people.”¹²⁵ This American-style consumerism can also be found in Canada: “In 1897, the *World* reported that [Toronto's] stores ‘displayed green ties,

¹²⁴ Pamela Miller, Moira McCaffrey, Brian Young, Donald Fyson, and Donald Wright. *The McCord Family: A Passionate Vision* (Montreal: McCord Museum of Canadian History, 1992) 27-53.

¹²⁵ William Jenkins, *Between Raid and Rebellion*, 308.

green socks, green ribbons, green cloths, green boots, green everything in myriad shades.”¹²⁶

Although it is unclear whether Irish or non-Irish people were the primary consumers of this merchandise, its widespread availability and popularity foreshadowed later developments in the commercialization of Irishness.

The Irish in Us, edited by Diane Negra, outlines the global popularity of Irish culture at the turn of the twenty-first century, as well as some of the consequences of Irish culture’s meteoric rise to prominence. Chief among these consequences was giving “a number of ostensibly white Americans the ability to ethnically label themselves in an age that increasingly values and celebrates multicultural diversity.”¹²⁷ Many contributors to *The Irish in Us* discuss intentional appropriations of performative Irishness.¹²⁸ However some instances of cultural appropriation are unintended results of intercultural or interethnic contact. Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin presents precisely this type of connection in an essay comparing the Quebec tale *Ti-Jean et le Diable* with an account by Martin “Junior” Crehan of Ireland’s political and economic contexts before the passing of the Dance Halls Act in 1935.¹²⁹ Although Ó hAllmhuráin does not explicitly link the Quebec tale *Ti-Jean et le Diable* with Ireland, he nevertheless manages to showcase within these

¹²⁶ Ibid., 318.

¹²⁷ Sean Griffin, “The Wearing of the Green: Performing Irishness in the Fox Wartime Musical,” in Diane Negra, editor, *The Irish in Us: Irishness, Performativity, and Popular Culture* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2006), 71.

¹²⁸ This is notably the case for Natasha Casey, Catherine Eagan, Sean Griffin, and Diane Negra (Natasha Casey, “‘The Best Kept Secret in Retail’: Selling Irishness in Contemporary America,” in Diane Negra, editor, *The Irish in Us: Irishness, Performativity, and Popular Culture* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2006): 84-109; Catherine Eagan, “‘Still ‘Black’ and ‘Proud’’: Irish America and the Racial Politics of Hibernophilia,” in Diane Negra, editor, *The Irish in Us: Irishness, Performativity, and Popular Culture* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2006): 20-63; Sean Griffin, “The Wearing of the Green”; Negra, Diane. “The Irish in Us: Irishness, Performativity, and Popular Culture,” in *The Irish in Us: Irishness, Performativity, and Popular Culture* (Diane Negra, ed.). Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2006.

¹²⁹ Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, “Démon violoneux contre prêtres vociférants: espace musical et hégémonie morale dans les campagnes irlandaises et québécoises,” in Linda Cardinal, Simon Jolivet and Isabelle Matte, editors, *Le Québec et l’Irlande. Culture, histoire, identité* (Sillery : Les Éditions du Septentrion, 2014): 197-213.

sources a space for cultural overlap and interbleeding, a zone “d’interculturalité” between Ireland and Quebec.¹³⁰ Canada’s Ottawa Valley represents another such zone of intercultural blending. Johanne Devlin Trew emphasizes the heavy Irish cultural influence in this locality, all the while noting an eclectic blend of ethno-national cultures and traditions. The traditional music played in the Valley aptly represents this intercultural-ness:

Valley fiddlers and dancers are famous for their special affinity to perform the Irish jig...[but tunes] of Irish, Scottish, English, French-Canadian, German and Polish origin together make up the tune repertoire [and] dance steps evolved in the lumber camps are a hybrid of the ethnic groups represented among the workforce.¹³¹

The question of claims to Irish identity by members of the Protestant Irish Diaspora remains contentious. Donald MacRaild suggests that nineteenth-century Orangemen lacked the “kind of coherence that made the Catholics, who loomed large in their lives, such an impressive international community [...and that due to this] somewhat hazy position [...] Orangemen have also escaped the degree of scholarly consideration aimed at their Catholic counterparts...”¹³² Furthermore the writings of John Mitchel, among others, has cemented an abiding sense of “forced exile...[as a] defining element of the Irish community world-wide.”¹³³ This community has been implicitly treated as an Irish Catholic one, despite periodic academic calls to order, such

¹³⁰ Isabelle Matte, “La revanche de Némésis: l’Irlande comme refuge dans Je me souviens d’André Forcier,” in Linda Cardinal, Simon Jolivet and Isabelle Matte, editors, *Le Québec et l’Irlande. Culture, histoire, identité* (Sillery : Les Éditions du Septentrion, 2014), 164.

¹³¹ Johanne Devlin Trew, *Place, Culture and Community: The Irish Heritage of the Ottawa Valley* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 257.

¹³² Donald MacRaild, “Wherever Orange is Worn,” 98.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 100.

as that issued by Donald Akenson. Who, he asks, “was an Irish person? The answer is clear: anyone who lived permanently within the social system that was the island of Ireland...They were of Ireland: hence Irish.”¹³⁴

Academics studying Irish Protestants are correct in emphasizing these people’s Irishness. After all, the Orange Order is as Irish an institution as one could ask for, seeing as its “roots lay in a feuding tradition between Protestant and Catholic weavers and agrarian peasants who often competed for limited employment.”¹³⁵ Irish Protestant identity is however often collapsed, for understandable and, perhaps, evident reasons, into one form or another of British, or British imperial identity. Because of this, the Irishness of Irish Protestants’ identities must be extricated from an identity web that is often far more tangled to that of Irish Catholics. Other people’s Irishness sadly escapes recognition, even outside of academia. One might consider the failure of the organizers of The Gathering Ireland 2013 to take into account the Irish diaspora in Britain, thus leaving this part of the Irish diaspora largely invisible.¹³⁶ As Ultan Cowley notes, the Irish in Britain have expressed two principle grievances: “that the English give them so little credit for their enormous contribution to Britain’s modern infrastructure...[and] that the Irish at home show so little appreciation for their many sacrifices and achievements.”¹³⁷

In part because of the inherent malleability of culture, it is nearly impossible to enforce proprietary claims to Irish culture and heritage, and also to offer a meaningful defence against

¹³⁴ Donald Harman Akenson, *Primer*, 7.

¹³⁵ Scott See, “The Fortunes of the Orange Order,” 91.

¹³⁶ Bronwen Walter, “‘Hidden’ Diasporas? Second- and Third-Generation Irish in England and Scotland,” in Johanne Devlin Trew and Michael Pierse, editors, *Rethinking the Irish Diaspora: After the Gathering* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 208-209. The Gathering Ireland 2013 - sometimes called simply The Gathering - was a tourism initiative that encouraged people in the Irish diaspora to (re)visit Ireland during 2013. Some called this initiative a scam designed to draw American tourist dollars into Ireland (Ultan Cowley, “Placeless Patriots: The Misplaced Loyalty of ‘The Middle Nation’,” in Johanne Devlin Trew and Michael Pierse, editors, *Rethinking the Irish Diaspora: After the Gathering* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 216).

¹³⁷ Ultan Cowley, “Placeless Patriots,” 216.

rival claims to this culture and heritage. In this light, any “defence” of Irish culture is academically moot. That said, performative claims to Irish culture will likely continue as a prime focus for Irish Diaspora Studies scholars, as disciplinary specializations within the field continue to proliferate. The existence of centres and schools devoted to specific geographic theatres of the Irish diaspora are an encouraging sign of the field’s ongoing vitality; the School of Irish Studies at Montreal’s Concordia University is a case in point. Yet there is room for more guests at the metaphorical table; some scholars have suggested the development of Quebec-Irish Studies as a new field of research.¹³⁸ They justify this proposal by emphasizing a disconnect between the experience of Canadian and Quebec researchers: “si cet objet [d’étude] n’est pas tout à fait nouveau dans l’oeil du chercheur canadien, il est relativement nouveau dans celui du chercheur québécois.”¹³⁹ Although more attention could be brought to bear on Quebec's specificity without necessarily opening a new academic field, Irish Diaspora Studies are indeed a sufficiently diverse and multidisciplinary field to warrant more specialization than currently exists.

More importantly, the Irishness of non-Irish people should be given greater consideration, in a context where Irish culture is as popular among non-Irish people as it has ever been.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, communications scholar Natasha Casey has identified three categories of American consumers of Irish-themed culture - sanctioned, deviant, and ancillary consumers. Of these, the first and third warrant closer examination.¹⁴¹ Sanctioned customers include a wide range of people united by, among other factors, “their status as self-designated Irish Americans or employment

¹³⁸ Linda Cardinal, Simon Jolivet and Isabelle Matte, “Les études irlando-québécoises,” 7, 12.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 12.

¹⁴⁰ See Natasha Casey, “The Best Kept Secret in Retail.”

¹⁴¹ The second category - deviant - includes white supremacist groups who seek to capitalize on the current mainstream popularity of Irish culture in the United States (Natasha Casey, “The Best Kept Secret in Retail,” 98).

of what Elizabeth C. Hirshman has labelled ‘the emic measure of ethnicity.’”¹⁴² This measure - which centers on individuals self-reporting their ethnic identity - has been presented as the sole valid metric for ethnicity.¹⁴³ Ancillary consumers of Irish culture are people who do not necessarily claim Irish ancestry, but revel in its newfound popularity.¹⁴⁴ Casey is correct to emphasize the importance of self-reporting in ethnic identification. This framework allows for the recognition of non-Irish people’s lived experience of promoting and perpetuating Irish culture. Emic Irishness should not be cast to the wayside before receiving adequate consideration.

¹⁴² Natasha Casey, “‘The Best Kept Secret in Retail,’” 86.

¹⁴³ See Elizabeth C. Hirschman, “American Jewish Ethnicity: Its Relationship to Some Selected Aspects of Consumer Behavior,” *Journal of Marketing* vol. 45, no. 3 (Summer 1981): 102-110.

¹⁴⁴ Natasha Casey, “‘The Best Kept Secret in Retail,’” 99.

CHAPTER ONE - MUSICAL ORGANIZATIONS

Be it through bands, orchestras or broader associations, music has drawn people into organized social matrices from the earliest days of music-making. Indeed, ethnomusicological pioneer John Blacking has theorized music as “a product of the behavior of human groups, whether formal or informal: it is humanly organized sound.”¹ Irish traditional music is no exception; myriad formal groups and clubs have left their mark on the music’s history. The Irish Music Club of Chicago in the days of Francis O’Neill, *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann*, and *Na Píobairí Uilleann* notably come to mind. Without organizations such as these, Irish traditional music would certainly have stagnated.

This chapter explores some of the concerted, organized efforts in Montreal since the 1970s at fostering and showcasing Irish traditional music to local and global audiences. It argues that the institutional efforts of the Montreal branch of *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann* and of the Siamsa School of Irish Music, and broadcasting initiatives by Liam Daly and Toby Kinsella, among others, ensured stability and vitality in an otherwise precarious Irish traditional music soundscape.²

¹ John Blacking, *How Musical Is Man?* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1973), 10.

² Because of its unique format and because of Liam Daly’s exceptional status as a beacon for the promotion of Irish culture in Montreal via television broadcast, Liam’s broadcasting work is here treated as distinct from his role in the United Irish Societies of Montreal.

Ireland and the Diaspora

By the 1940s, traditional music in Ireland was in decline, and its practitioners relegated to the outskirts of respectable Irish society.³ This situation prompted concerted efforts to renew the music's veneer of respectability. In 1951, members of the Dublin Pipers' Club cast the foundation for Cumann Ceoltóirí na hÉireann, an association devoted to all traditional instruments. The success of the group's inaugural *fleadh cheoil* that same year heralded a reversal of the music's stagnation in Ireland, and the creation of the single largest organization promoting Irish traditional music. The group adopted its current name - *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann* - in 1952.⁴ Since then *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann* (CCÉ) has proliferated both in Ireland and abroad; CCÉ branches exist in 15 countries on four continents.⁵

CCÉ has been undeniably instrumental in promoting Irish traditional music and generating performance and pedagogical opportunities. Recognizing the importance of younger musicians in keeping Irish traditional music afloat, CCÉ branches have offered instrumental classes in Ireland and elsewhere.⁶ More important, the *Fleadh Cheoil* competitions organized by CCÉ every year have drawn new performers to the music, and driven the overall caliber of musician to unprecedented heights.⁷ In this way, CCÉ has provided springboards from which luminaries such

³ Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, *Pocket History*, 144-145. This decline prompted the Irish Folklore Commission to send piper Séamus Ennis to collect tunes in the West of Ireland. The significance of Ennis' work will be discussed later in this chapter.

⁴ Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, *Pocket History*, 145; Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, "History," accessed August 24, 2018, at <https://comhaltas.ie/about/history/>.

⁵ Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, "History," accessed August 24, 2018, at <https://comhaltas.ie/about/history/>.

⁶ Fintan Vallely affirms that CCÉ claims to have offered around 600 such classes in 1999 alone (Fintan Vallely, ed., *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 79-80).

⁷ *Fleadh Cheoil* means "Festival of Music."

as Paddy Glackin, Mary Bergin, and Liz Carroll have crafted professional musical careers.⁸

These musicians in turn have helped Irish traditional music shine internationally.

Yet *CCÉ* has also attracted criticism on a number of fronts. First, the renewed emphasis which the *CCÉ* leadership placed on competition dealt debilitating blows to county-based and international playing styles.⁹ Also the bureaucratic structure of *CCÉ*'s central - and unelected - leadership has alienated certain musicians and local branches. This trend in turn has “led to tensions between the local and national entities of [*CCÉ*] and between the organization and unaffiliated musicians.”¹⁰ Other musicians have felt concerned about other issues: a perceived lack of fiscal transparency, apparent contradictions of Comhaltas' official claims to political and religious neutrality, and *CCÉ*'s interference in important issues such as copyright regulations.¹¹ Regardless of individual musicians' stance on the aforementioned problems, *CCÉ* has definitely, as Rachel Fleming notes, become “an active - though perhaps unintentional - agent in stimulating debate about the old and the new in Irish traditional music.”¹²

⁸ Fintan Vallely, ed., *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music*, 79.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 80; Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, *Pocket History*, 146. Fintan Vallely notes that “[a]t the adjudication level the All-Ireland's overall results [of 1995] suggest acceptance of taste or standards *applicable in Ireland* [emphasis added] as the standard of what is to be sought for in the expression and interpretation of traditional music. While it could also indicate a prejudice against American players...it may also reflect the different level of application of musicians in Ireland” (Fintan Vallely, ed., *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music*, 80-81).

¹⁰ Rachel C. Fleming, “Resisting Cultural Standardization: Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and the Revitalization of Traditional Music in Ireland,” *Journal of Folklore Research* vol. 41 nos. 2/3 (2004), 236, 238.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 238-241.

¹² *Ibid.*, 229. It should be said that these debates also occur in non-*CCÉ* settings - notably conferences such as *Traditional Music: Whose Music?*, which occurred in 1990 in Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh, and *Crosbhealach an Cheoil* (Crossroads conference), which took place in 1996 in Dublin. All the organisers of *Crosbhealach an Cheoil* came from outside “traditional music's established organizational structures” (Fintan Vallely, ed., *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music*, 93). *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann* did not send a representative to *Traditional Music: Whose Music?* (Peter McNamee, *Traditional Music: Whose Music?*, x). Since the advent of the Internet, these debates have also taken place on Internet forums devoted to Irish traditional music.

The middle of the twentieth century saw a flurry of renewed organizational interest in the uilleann pipes. The founding of the Armagh Pipers' Club in 1966 is a prime example.¹³ This club is currently one of the largest and best-known local traditional music clubs active in Ireland today. Much like *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, Na Piobairí Uilleann* (NPU) emerged in 1968 out of a gathering of musicians - in this case, uilleann pipers - in Bettystown, Co. Louth.¹⁴ From humble beginnings, this organisation has grown into the world's foremost resource for uilleann piping. 500 pipers in Ireland and 300 pipers outside of Ireland are registered as *NPU* members; the organization promotes the playing and making of uilleann pipes through annual concert, an instrument loan program, summer schools, and *tionóil* in Ireland and abroad.¹⁵

Although large, bureaucratic associations like *Na Piobairí Uilleann* and *CCÉ*, and other, smaller, homegrown groups have survived since their inception, other associations have not. Chicago musicians formed the Irish Musicians' Association of America in 1956. This organization grew to the point of having twenty-two distinct branches across the United States, but had largely dissolved by 1964. The Chicago branch survived, and aligned itself with *CCÉ*.¹⁶ The Walderstown Uilleann Pipers' Club, which was formed in 1943 in Co. Westmeath, also merged with a local *CCÉ* branch less than a decade after its creation.¹⁷ This suggests that small, homegrown musical associations and branches of larger such bodies are ever at risk of collapse. Indeed, the history of Irish traditional music in Montreal - notably marked by the Siamsa School of Irish Music's eclipsing of the city's *CCÉ* branch - provides ample proof of these organizations' inherent

¹³ Fintan Vallely, ed., *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music*, 9.

¹⁴ Perhaps ironically, Labhrás Ó Murchú, representing *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann*, urged the nascent uilleann piping association to disband, and for its erstwhile members to instead "promote piping as individual members of *CCÉ* branches" (Fintan Vallely, ed., *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music*, 299). Ó Murchú's proposal was ultimately rejected.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 299-300. *Tionóil* is the plural of *tionól*, which means "assembly," or "gathering", in Irish.

¹⁶ Lawrence E. McCullough, "Irish Music in Chicago," 43-44.

¹⁷ Fintan Vallely, ed., *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music*, 424.

frailty. It also marks a rare instance in which a homegrown organization has overshadowed a *CCÉ* branch, rather than the other way around.

The Montreal Scene

On returning to Montreal from an epiphany-inducing trip to Co. Kerry in 1973, Chris Crilly contacted the *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann* head office in Dublin, telling them he was “all on fire with the music again” and keen to set up a local *Comhaltas* branch in Montreal.¹⁸ He never received a reply, but found out about a year later that Connemara-born accordion player Pat Conroy had already founded such a branch. Conroy - who had emigrated to Montreal in 1947 - had read one day in 1974 a story in the AOH newsletter about a *CCÉ* concert tour in the United States. He phoned the tour’s coordinator Bill McEvoy, and with the help of Joe Mell, brought a *CCÉ* tour to Canada for the first time that same year.¹⁹ The first *CCÉ* concert in Montreal - and likely in Canada - took place on October 5, 1974, at Leo’s Boys Club on Ash Avenue, in Point-Saint-Charles.²⁰

¹⁸ Chris Crilly, interview, 26 January 2018.

¹⁹ Joe Mell acquired legendary status as a community figure in working-class Point-Saint-Charles, and also in the broader Montreal Irish community. He died in 2018. Chief among his accomplishments were the founding of Leo’s Boys, a sports association that put “thousands of children in hockey, football, baseball and boxing programs without charging their families a dime...[and the creation of] the Waseskun Healing Centre...[which] uses traditional healing methods to help foster the re-entry of Indigenous prisoners into their communities” (Christopher Curtis, “Point-St-Charles loses its ‘heart and soul’ with death of Joe Mell,” *Montreal Gazette* 26 June, 2018. Accessed August 28, 2018, at <https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/pointe-st-charles-loses-its-heart-and-soul-with-death-of-joe-mell>). He also was involved in the Montreal *CCÉ* branch, notably as Concert Chairman (Kenneally, “Letter to J.J. Mell”).

²⁰ Comhrá, “Reflection: Stories from Montreal’s Irish community,” N.d. N.p.

Pat Conroy remained involved in both official and unofficial capacities with the Montreal *CCÉ* branch until the 2000s.²¹ Throughout this time, the branch's members promoted Irish music by bringing *CCÉ* concerts tours to Canada and by organizing local sessions and *céilithe*.²² By the 1980s, sessions and other musical events served to raise funds for the Montreal *CCÉ* branch. Jean Duval recalls Pat Short collecting money from people entering the Old Dublin Pub to listen to a session in 1981. He is fairly certain the funds were destined to the Montreal *CCÉ* branch.²³ Members of the branch also performed at events for Montreal's Irish cultural associations; Pat Conroy and his Conroy Family Shamrock Ceili band performed at various UIS events.²⁴ (United Irish Societies of Montreal, "Newsletter," 5). Montreal musicians also organized trips to North American *CCÉ* conventions, where members of the executive of various *CCÉ* branches attended

²¹ Pat Conroy left the Montreal *CCÉ* branch in 1977. This may be inferred from a letter indicating that because Conroy was "no longer a member of our organization", Brian Walsh would take his place as Comhaltas delegate to the United Irish Societies of Montreal (Patrick Short, "Letter to United Irish Societies Inc," 21 October 1977, United Irish Societies Archives). However, Conroy rejoined the organization later. By 1991, he was once again at the head of the Montreal Comhaltas branch (Pat Conroy, "Letter to D. W. McNaughton," 21 January 1991, Concordia University Archives). He served as the branch's leader until a few years before 2011 (Oireachtas Gaeilge Cheanada, "Pádraic Ó Conaire," accessed September 13, 2018, at <http://www.oireachtas.ca/Uachtaran-bea.shtml>). His contributions to Irish culture and music in Montreal have been substantial, and earned him the well-deserved honour of being *Uachtaráin* - or President - of the 2014 *Oireachtas Gaeilge Cheanada* festival (Ottawa Irish Arts, "Ottawa Irish Arts: March 2014," accessed September 13, 2018, at <http://ottawacomhaltas.blogspot.com/2014/03/>). I spoke with Pat Conroy in February 2018, hoping to interview him for this thesis. He agreed to meet with me, but various events prevented us from finding a mutually convenient date to meet. In August 2018, I found out from a friend's social media post that Pat Conroy's health had taken a turn for the worse. I therefore opted to draw on archival and other written records for my discussion of his role in Montreal's Irish music scene.

²² Until the late 1980s or early 1990s, the Montreal *CCÉ* branch typically invited musicians from Ottawa or Toronto to provide the music for their *céilithe*. This changed when Galway-born Willie Fahey, an avid *céili*-goer and dancer, convinced the local *CCÉ* leadership to hire local musicians, including Steve Jones, Jean Duval, and banjo player Bob Cussen. This newly formed Montreal *Céili* Band provided the music for the big Friday night *céili* during the 1992 *CCÉ* North American convention in Montreal. Steve Jones recalls feeling honoured to play for untold hundreds of people at this *céili* in the Queen Elizabeth Hotel; he also recalls that "a very experienced accordion player from Toronto called Ena O'Brien [had been brought in] to sit on stage with [the Montreal Ceili Band] and make sure [they] didn't screw up" (Steve Jones, interview, 17 January 2018).

²³ Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018. Pat Short is Bernadette Short's husband. Jean Duval does not remember the exact amounts collected, but affirms that they were small, representing a symbolic contribution (Jean Duval, interview, January 31, 2018).

²⁴ United Irish Societies of Montreal, "Newsletter," March 1974, United Irish Societies Archives.

administrative meetings, and where other musicians would “stay in a hotel, play sessions until three in the morning, and then have a few hours’ sleep, get up and play more.”²⁵

A significant amount of Irish traditional music-making in Montreal also occurred beyond the scope of *CCÉ*. The popular house sessions hosted by David Papazian and Gilles Losier, among others, are a prime example. Some musicians were unaware of the branch’s existence, as local *CCÉ* events in the 1980s principally occurred outside the scope of the pub sessions.²⁶ Despite his initial urge to found a *CCÉ* branch, Chris Crilly had, as he puts it, “very little to do with [members of the branch]...not on purpose, it’s just that [he] never crossed paths with them.”²⁷ This cleavage was exacerbated by a generational disconnect between, on the one hand, older Irish immigrants such as Pat Conroy, who were involved in the local *CCÉ* branch, and on the other, younger non-Irish people whose music-making occurred principally on a distinct circuit.²⁸ The local *CCÉ* branch’s activities thus did not overlap much with other elements of Montreal’s Irish traditional music soundscape.

In the early 1990s the Montreal *CCÉ* branch seemed more preoccupied with organizing and attending the North American *Comhaltas* conventions than with organizing music lessons.²⁹ Indeed the local *CCÉ* branch placed more emphasis on sessions, *céilithe* and concerts. Pedagogical efforts - if they existed - were secondary to other objectives.³⁰ It may be that members of the

²⁵ Steve Jones, interview, 17 January 2018.

²⁶ Paul Legrand, interview, 27 October 2017.

²⁷ Chris Crilly, interview, 26 January 2018.

²⁸ As Paul Legrand puts it: “la communauté irlandaise, ses organismes comme ça [the local *CCÉ* branch], mais nous on ignorait complètement” (Paul Legrand, interview, 27 October 2017). This should not be interpreted as purposeful ignoring, but rather as a lack of awareness or knowledge.

²⁹ Steve Jones, interview, 17 January 2018.

³⁰ This may be deduced from a letter from Pat Conroy to Michael Kenneally, then Chairman of the Saint Patrick’s Society Cultural Committee, in which the former writes: “Our organization [the Montreal *CCÉ* branch] seeks to continue the traditional presentation of our historical cultural activities by encouraging Seisúins [sic], Ceilís[sic] and annual concerts of visiting entertainers from Ireland. Each year the tour of the Champion performers from Ireland is

Montreal *CCÉ* branch expected newcomers to learn Irish traditional music in a so-called traditional manner: orally, through individual efforts and some guidance from parents, friends or other musical mentors. Formal, organized music lessons might have seemed unnecessary.³¹

In the wake of the 1992 *Comhaltas* convention in Montreal, which took place at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel on April 24, 25, and 26 of that year, Brendan and Bernadette Walsh began seeking out fiddle teachers; they had been struggling to learn the fiddle on their own.³² They recruited David Papazian to teach group fiddle classes, and also “recruited Nancy Lyon and Philippe Longval to teach tin whistle and bodhran [sic], respectively.”³³ The Siamsa School of Irish Music eventually blossomed; efforts were made to introduce guitar and mandolin lessons, and to bring instructors from as far as New York and Toronto for instrumental music workshops.³⁴ By 1996, the School was offering classes in “Irish fiddle, tin whistle, bodhràn[sic], mandolin, ceili[sic] dancing and singing.”³⁵ The School had also begun an Irish theatre program, started a weekly session, and was hosting four to five *céilithe* yearly at the Royal Canadian Legion in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce.³⁶

the highlight of our efforts” (Pat Conroy, “Letter to Michael Kenneally,” September 14 1990, Concordia University Archives). Although teaching and tune transmission may have occurred informally at some of these events, there is no indication here of formal music pedagogy.

³¹ This marks a sharp contrast with the pedagogical ethos evident in *CCÉ* in the twenty-first century. The *CCÉ* website showcases an extensive list of educational programmes in the Irish language and in Irish traditional music. These music classes are organized by the local *CCÉ* branches, with some branches even offering instrument rentals or loans (Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, “Education,” accessed August 28, 2018, at <https://comhaltas.ie/education/>).

³² Siamsa School of Irish Music, “About Us,” accessed June 7, 2018, at <http://www.siamsa.org/en/about-us/about-us-2>).

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Sheila Sullivan Brown, “Letter to Michael Kenneally,” July 28, 1994, Concordia University; Brendan Walsh, “Letter to Michael Kenneally,” 4 October 1995, Concordia University Archives.

³⁵ Brendan Walsh, “Letter to Michael Kenneally,” 25 September 1996, Concordia University Archives.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Just a few years after its inception, the Siamsa School of Irish Music was receiving more funding from the Saint Patrick's Society than did the Montreal *Comhaltas* branch. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the annual Saint Patrick's Society grants to the Montreal *CCÉ* branch in the early 1990s were typically \$500.³⁷ Although the Siamsa School only received \$250 or \$350 in its earlier years, the yearly amounts had reached \$950 by 1993. This amount stayed constant until 1997, when it was increased to \$1,100.

Over the years the Siamsa School has offered lessons on a wide range of instruments, including harp, fiddle, guitar, flute, *bodhrán*, accordion, banjo, and mandolin. It has also offered set dancing and *céilí* dancing classes, and seen the creation of a choir known as the Siamsa Singers. There has also been discussion of offering uilleann piping lessons, however there has not generally been a sufficient number of people wanting to learn the pipes at the same time to warrant hiring a teacher. Most uilleann piping tuition in Montreal has occurred privately, beyond the scope of the Siamsa School.³⁸ The plethora of classes offered and the inclusive, friendly settings in which the lessons take place continually draw new people into Montreal's Irish music community. In this way, the School contributes to keeping this musical tradition alive. Furthermore the Siamsa Montreal *Céilí* Band, which evolved from the Montreal *Céilí* Band that first performed at the 1992 *Comhaltas* convention in Montreal, performs regularly at the School's *céilithe* and other

³⁷ Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal, "Proposed Budget: Cultural Committee," 1993-1994, Concordia University Archives; Michael Kenneally, "Letter to J. J. Mell," 28 November 1990, Concordia University Archives.

³⁸ I know this from having myself learned the uilleann pipes from Alan Jones, starting in 2003. At that time he was perhaps the only local uilleann piper from whom I could take lessons. I taught the tin whistle at the Siamsa School of Irish Music in 2012 and 2013. During this time I tried to gauge the feasibility of formal uilleann pipe lessons at the school. It seems there are too few committed uilleann piping students at any given time to warrant anything more than private lessons.

events.³⁹ Many past and current teachers of the School play in this *céili* band, which offers performance opportunities for some of Montreal’s more experienced performers of Irish music.

The development of the Siamsa School is not unanimously understood as a positive development. For some, the School’s existence perpetuates an environment that discourages beginner musicians from expanding their musical comfort zones and developing their skill.⁴⁰ Indeed the social environment of the School is marked by such friendliness that some people become reluctant to leave it. This means they might make a point of attending Siamsa sessions with other players of a comparable skill level, but might not try sessions that are more musically challenging, but less welcoming. In other cases, some professional musicians object to Siamsa students forming sessions, believing it deprives them of work opportunities. In particular, Aindriú MacGabhann believes that amateur musicians more generally should attend sessions hosted by paid musicians, instead of starting their own sessions elsewhere.⁴¹

These criticisms aside, Philippe Murphy maintains that the School plays a fundamental role in keeping Irish music alive in Montreal:

Pour être capable de prendre assez d’expérience et d’assurance pour sortir de son petit cocon et aller se greffer à d’autres musiciens et jouer avec eux autres, ça prend une rampe de lancement ...une certaine forme d’encouragement, ça prend de l’expérience...sans Siamsa, il va toujours y avoir des gens qui vont être

³⁹ The Siamsa School’s website lists some of the many local musicians who have played with the *céili* band over the years. Most notably in recent memory, the band has also performed with Irish band Comas, and virtuoso fiddler Martin Hayes at the Montreal traditional music festival *La Grande Rencontre* (Siamsa School of Irish Music, “Ceili Band,” accessed September 6, 2018, at <http://www.siamsa.org/en/ceilis/ceili-band>).

⁴⁰ These criticisms are remarkably close to those levelled by some musicians against formal schools of Irish traditional music in 1960s Chicago. Lawrence McCullough notes that Chicago musicians in the 1960s and 1970s felt that formal music schools perpetuated standardized versions of Irish traditional music, thereby instilling “only a superficial understanding of the idiom...in an undistinguished, mediocre manner” (McCullough, 321).

⁴¹ Aindriú MacGabhann, interview, 11 January 2018. A Siamsa-affiliated session currently takes place on Monday evenings at Hurley’s Irish Pub, where MacGabhann also hosts afternoon sessions three Saturdays every month.

intéressés, mais des familles de musiciens de père en fils...irlandais à Montréal...ça je ne le vois pas. Puis il y a tellement de monde de différents horizons, de différents backgrounds qui se ramassent dans les sessions de Siamsa. C'est sûr que ça stagnerait, ça finirait par stagner.⁴²

The Montreal *CCÉ* branch remains in existence, though it has lost much of its importance. There were attempts in the 2010s to revive it; singer and *bodhrán* player Donna-Marie Sullivan was at the heart of these efforts.⁴³ However, these attempts have fizzled out, and the branch is nowhere near as active as it once was.⁴⁴ The branch's current state of semi-dormancy should in no way overshadow its past accomplishments. Like other organized music-makers, both the Montreal *CCÉ* branch and the Siamsa School of Irish Music have injected vitality in the city's Irish traditional music soundscape in the decades since 1970.

⁴² Philippe Murphy, interview, 20 December 2017. Interestingly, McCullough noted a similar trend for 1970s Chicago: "Though it is true that a larger quantity of musicians does not necessarily ensure a rise in the quality of musical performance standards, the schools of Irish music [in Chicago] have done much to disperse the tradition among a greater number of people than would have been possible if the individual, informal approach were exclusively followed" (McCullough, 321).

⁴³ Steve Jones, interview, 17 January 2018.

⁴⁴ Many players of Irish traditional music in Montreal believe the city's *CCÉ* branch to be defunct, and view the Siamsa School as the sole active organization promoting Irish music in Montreal. Some musicians attribute the branch's decline to the onerous financial obligations on the branch leadership to send money to the *CCÉ* headquarters in Dublin (Philippe Murphy, interview, 20 December 2017; Steve Jones, interview, January 17, 2018). However, there may yet be hope. Facebook posts in September 2018 by the Siamsa School of Irish Music, the Saint Patrick's Society and the United Irish Societies announced that the Montreal branch of *CCÉ* would have a meeting on Friday September 21, 2018, at the Royal Canadian Legion in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce. I was one of six people present at this meeting. There, I learned that the branch had enjoyed precious little local momentum after the end of Donna-Marie Sullivan's involvement with the branch in the early 2010s. Between that time and before the start of his illness, Pat Conroy had continued attending *CCÉ* conferences and events outside of Quebec, but had organized no events in Montreal proper. In fact, the meeting had been called to determine whether the branch would continue to exist at all; the bulk of the remaining executive members resigned at this September 21, 2018, meeting for personal and health reasons. However, two people at this meeting volunteered as new executive members of the Montreal *CCÉ* branch. Their efforts may yet revive the branch.

Broadcasters

Since the advent of recording and radio technology, broadcasters have joined musicians and collectors on the front lines of disseminating Irish traditional music.⁴⁵ Many of the first artists to record Irish traditional music in the early-twentieth-century United States were non-Irish, and played “bland, unornamented versions of Irish dance tunes, taken directly from published transcriptions.”⁴⁶ These early efforts nevertheless bolstered the US recording industry, which later attracted such illustrious tradition-bearers as accordionist Petie Conlon and fiddlers Paddy Killoran and Michael Coleman.⁴⁷ In some cases, these tradition-bearers were not themselves players of traditional music; Ciarán MacMathúna sang in musicals in his youth, but is remembered as broadcaster of radio and television programs and broadcasts - namely *A Job of Journey-work*, *The Humours of Donnybrook*, *Reels of Memory*, and *Mo Cheol Thú* - which demonstrated in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s that Irish traditional music “could sustain continuity, community and exceptional practice in the modern age.”⁴⁸ In others, they wore all three mantles - practitioner, collector, and broadcaster - at some point or other of their lives. Uilleann piper Séamus Ennis is perhaps the best example. By 1947, Ennis was already well known for his collection and transcription work in the West of Ireland. That year he began collecting tunes intended for broadcast by Radio Éireann. He joined the BBC in 1951 to work on similar collection and broadcasting projects.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Much of this dissemination has helped preserve Irish traditional tunes from oblivion. However, the wind-up gramophones of the 1920s, much like later *fleadhanna cheoil*, would be detrimental to regional playing styles. Some musicians in Ireland felt so threatened by the quality of the playing on American or English 78rpm recordings that they quit playing altogether (Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, *Pocket History*, 123-124, 129).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 117-118.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁴⁸ Fintan Vallely, ed., *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music*, 221.

⁴⁹ Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, *Pocket History*, 138-140.

Radio has played a pivotal role in disseminating Irish traditional music in the Irish diaspora. This has notably been the case for the United States, where Irish radio shows based in large American cities have been broadcasting Irish music - traditional and otherwise - since the 1920s.⁵⁰ As Mick Moloney puts it, these shows have become “a powerful vehicle for cultural reinforcement and validation particularly in multicultural environments.”⁵¹ Mainstream radio and television stations in Quebec and Canada occasionally produce shows featuring Irish traditional music. Alan Jones recalls performing for myriad such shows for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), Radio-Canada, the BBC, various American public radio stations, Global TV, and CTV, among many others.⁵² However, two broadcasting platforms have played noteworthy roles in broadcasting Irish traditional music in Montreal in the 1980s and 1990s: the Irish Show, hosted by Toby Kinsella on Radio Centre-Ville, and the Montreal Irish show, hosted by Liam Daly on Cable 9.

In addition to his role as a performer in Montreal’s traditional music sessions and with the band Barde, Toby Kinsella actively disseminated Irish traditional music via the Irish show on Radio Centre-Ville. This station was established in 1972 as a multilingual and multicultural community radio station, and was for a long time the only community radio station in Quebec.⁵³ By 1975, it was emitting broadcasts in five languages: French, English, Greek, Portuguese, and Spanish.⁵⁴ By the 1990s, Toby Kinsella was working at a producer of the station’s English-language content. He hosted and managed the station’s Irish Show, on which players of traditional

⁵⁰ Michael Moloney, “Irish Music in America,” 544-553.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 553.

⁵² Alan Jones, personal conversation, 13 December, 2017.

⁵³ Maureen Cooney, “Letter to Michael Kenneally,” October 3 1996, Concordia University Archives.

⁵⁴ Radio Centre-Ville, “Historique,” accessed September 12, 2018, at <http://radiocentreville.com/wp/information/historique/>.

Irish music would sometimes perform. Aindriú MacGabhann recalls meeting Toby during the Fêtes irlandaises during Montreal's 350th anniversary celebrations. Toby interviewed MacGabhann during this festival and had him bring his guitar and sing a few songs on air.⁵⁵

The Irish Show was one among other similar Montreal radio shows celebrating specific cultural or ethnic groups. The Scottish Voice, hosted by Janet Stubbert, stands in counterpoint. Nevertheless, the Irish Show became a prime platform for the diffusion of Irish culture: it featured "information and interviews with all the Irish Associations in [Montreal and promoted] traditional and contemporary music, theatre, and the arts from Quebec, Canada and Ireland."⁵⁶ In the 1990s the show received modest, but regular funding from the Saint Patrick's Society, and undertook special broadcasts from important Irish cultural events such as the Irish Fêtes in 1992, and the Ville-Marie Feis.⁵⁷ Given Radio Centre-Ville's status as the only non-profit broadcasting organization in Quebec at the time, the Irish Show's producers were regularly faced with tight budgets, and feared having to cancel the show for lack of funding.⁵⁸ The Saint Patrick's Society's contributions likely helped ease some of this financial stress.

Steve Jones listened to the Irish show on Radio-Centre Ville occasionally, and says he may even have been a musical guest on the show at some point. He also recalls playing on a different radio show with Brendan Walsh:

⁵⁵ Aindriú MacGabhann, interview, 11 January 2018. This marked the start of a friendship between MacGabhann and Toby Kinsella. The two would later play gigs in and around Montreal as a duet, calling themselves the Blarney Pilgrims, after the famous Irish jig (Aindriú MacGabhann, interview, 11 January 2018).

⁵⁶ Maureen Cooney, "Letter to Michael Kenneally."

⁵⁷ Maureen Cooney, "Letter to Michael Kenneally," Appendix D; Aindriú MacGabhann, interview, 11 January 2018.

⁵⁸ Maureen Cooney, "Letter to Michael Kenneally."

It was a commercial radio station...it was 92 something FM. And it was sponsored by a friend of Brendan's who had a chicken wings restaurant. And he was the sponsor of the show, because it was a commercial radio show, so he was the main sponsor and we had to sort of talk about chicken wings several times during the hour. And we had this co-host, who was a guy who knew nothing about Irish music. We had to suffer him, but we got to play the music that we liked for a while, until they closed us down. So it was kind of fun.⁵⁹

In addition to the aforementioned radio stations, Liam Daly's Montreal Irish show on Cable 9 served as a television platform for Irish traditional music, and for content of interest to the Montreal Irish community more generally.⁶⁰ Each episode contained multiple segments: interviews, book readings, entertainment and banter between the hosts and guests. Evocative Irish landscapes appeared on camera between each segment, with traditional Irish tunes on the accordion or the fiddle serving as background music. During the show's 1983 Christmas edition, an uilleann pipe recording accompanied a storyteller.⁶¹ The show's entertainment segments regularly showcased Irish traditional music and dance. Harpist and singer Janice Maloney was a regular guest on the show; she performed on various occasions with uilleann piper Pat Hutchinson, guitarist Earl Sullivan, and a bouzouki player named Golo, to name but a few.⁶² She also recounted a trip to Ireland for the Fleadh Cheoil, where she represented North America in *sean-nós*

⁵⁹ Steve Jones, interview, 17 January 2018.

⁶⁰ The show began around 1969 or 1970. This may be inferred from a comment by Liam Daly during an episode in the fall of 1984. He said he believed that particular episode brought the show to its fifteenth year (The Montreal Irish Show, Series 84/85, Show 1, Concordia University Archives).

⁶¹ The Montreal Irish Show, Series 83/84, Show 3, Concordia University Archives.

⁶² Ibid.; The Montreal Irish Show, Series 83/84, Show 7, Concordia University Archives. Golo is the stage name and nickname used by Reinhard Goerner. He is most commonly known as Golo in traditional music circles.

singing. Local Irish traditional band Shenanigans, which included Paul Legrand on fiddle, “Banjo” Bob Cussen on banjo and mandolin, Golo on guitar and a percussionist named Philippe, once took up the bulk of that particular program’s hour with four different instrumental medleys.⁶³ Other acts on the Montreal Irish show included a duet consisting of Alan Jones on uilleann pipes and Alain Leroux on fiddle; a duet consisting of Alan Jones on tin whistle and Joanne Saint-Laurent on harp, a folk band called the McNamee Brothers and the band Swaggering Boney, which consisted of a guitarist, a fiddler and a *bodhrán* player.⁶⁴ Steve Jones and Jean Duval also performed on the show as part of a group who Liam Daly simply called “the Comhaltas group.”⁶⁵

Liam Daly and his co-hosts readily gave individuals and community groups the opportunity to share news about upcoming and past events, and praised their ongoing efforts. While promoting a community group known as *Cairde an Amhráin* - Friends of the Song - on the show, Liam Daly noted that “Janice Maloney [the group coordinator]’s efforts to boost Irish tradition in Montreal have not gone unnoticed. The magazine of *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí, Treoir*, proudly acknowledged her work. So let us do the same. Put your vocal chords in training, and take that old instrument out of the cupboard, dust it up, give Janice a call.”⁶⁶ In another instance, Janice Maloney, who was also chairperson of the Montreal Comhaltas branch in the early 1980s, spoke of the Comhaltas sessions which took place every second Tuesday night. She also promoted

⁶³ The Montreal Irish Show, Series 84/85, Show 2, Concordia University Archives. The band members’ names were gleaned from my interview with Paul Legrand (Paul Legrand, interview, 27 October 2017).

⁶⁴ The Montreal Irish Show, Series 83/84, Show 4, Concordia University Archives; The Montreal Irish Show, Series 84/85, Show 4, Concordia University Archives; The Montreal Irish Show, Series 85/86, Show 3, Concordia University Archives.

⁶⁵ The Montreal Irish Show, Series 89/90, Show 3, Concordia University Archives.

⁶⁶ The Montreal Irish Show, Series 83/84, Show 4, Concordia University Archives.

CCÉ céilithe, which took place at the Atelier d'éducation populaire, on Boucher Street.⁶⁷ Pat Short sometimes appeared on the show to promote the *CCÉ* branch and the North American Comhaltas tour. Pat Short also claimed that 15 musicians - including some visiting from Prince Edward Island - had played at the latest Comhaltas session he had attended.⁶⁸ On other occasions, the show featured non-traditional groups performing traditional airs; the St. Gabriel's School Choir, directed by Terry Clahane, once performed *Wearing of the Green* on xylophones and percussion instruments.⁶⁹ In these varied ways, the Montreal Irish Show brought Irish traditional music to its viewers' ears.

For Ireland I'd Not Tell Her Name⁷⁰

Although many of the people referred to by name in this chapter are men, women have also left indelible imprints on Montreal's Irish traditional music soundscape. Jean Duval remembers many women among active session-goers and performers from the 1980s onwards. These women include, among others, Geneviève Delawney, Joanne Saint-Laurent, Caroline Dupuis - who was one of Jean Carignan's fiddle students - Erin Cassidy, Debbie Quigley, Kate Crossin, Carmen Guérard, Noreen Kevill, Sine McKenna, Linda Dowker, Judy Cullins, and Ena O'Brien. Some of these performers came from Montreal, others were from Ontario or further afield.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Some traditional musicians accompanied Janice on this particular show: an uilleann piper, a guitarist, two fiddlers, and a bouzouki player. Liam Daly asked if all the musicians were Comhaltas members; Janice replied that they were, but that their memberships were not all paid up. Liam quipped that the musicians would not be allowed to leave the studio until they had paid up their dues. The musicians chuckled and grinned awkwardly at the joke (The Montreal Irish Show, series 83/84, show 7).

⁶⁸ The Montreal Irish Show, Series 83/84, Show 9, Concordia University Archives.

⁶⁹ The Montreal Irish Show, Series 84/85, Show 8, Concordia University Archives.

⁷⁰ This is the English title of the Irish song *Ar Éirinn, Ní Nósfainn Cé hÍ*.

⁷¹ Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018.

Some women involved in the soundscape were part of spousal teams; this is the case notably for Bernadette and Pat Short, and for Bernadette and Brendan Walsh. Although Bernadette Short has been more directly involved in traditional dancing than in traditional music, her impact on the latter in Montreal cannot be overstated.⁷² Through her leading role in the Irish dancing community in Quebec, Bernadette Short has provided myriad performance opportunities for players of Irish music. These opportunities include informal performances at dance practices, formal ones at dance shows and contests, and *From Galway to Grosse-Ile*, a show of dance and music which told the tale of “the results of the potato blight in Ireland; the emigration of the poor and sick; the arrival at the Canadian Quarantine Station at Grosse-Ile [sic], and the joining of the survivors into Québec and Ottawa Valley culture.”⁷³ Jean Duval recalls serving as musical director for this production.⁷⁴ Brendan Walsh’s name appears in early Siamsa documents more frequently than that of his wife, but Bernadette Walsh is rightly recognized on the Siamsa website as a pioneer in the school’s ongoing journey. By 1994, Sheila Sullivan Brown was writing official correspondence on behalf of the Siamsa School of Irish Music.⁷⁵ Patricia Burns once served on the executive committee of the Siamsa School of Irish Music, April O’Donoghue has organized the Montreal International Celtic Festival and the Celtic Harmonies International Festival and *bodhrán* player and singer Donna-Marie Sullivan was the most recent musician to attempt reviving the Montreal *CCÉ* branch.

Drawing on the ethnomusicological fieldwork she conducted in Ireland in the 1990s, ethnomusicologist Helen O’Shea has argued that an overwhelmingly male ethos has developed in

⁷² See Chapters 2 and 3.

⁷³ Saint Patrick’s Society of Montreal, “*Nuacht* Bulletin,” Christmas 1997, Concordia University Archives.

⁷⁴ Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018.

⁷⁵ Sheila Sullivan Brown, “Letter to Michael Kenneally.”

Irish traditional music. She rightly notes that “women’s musical participation in Ireland historically has been predominantly as singers and dancers, rather than as instrumentalists.”⁷⁶ Furthermore, female players of Irish traditional music in the twenty-first century are sometimes at pains to stake their claim to perform - and even to be - in the traditionally masculine spaces of the pub and the traditional music session.⁷⁷ O’Shea also notes that although some female superstars of Irish traditional music do exist - namely accordionist Sharon Shannon and fiddler Liz Carroll - the bulk of the best-known Irish traditional musicians are men. Indeed, an awareness campaign was launched in early 2018 under the name FairPlé. This campaign’s goal is “to achieve gender balance in the production, performance, promotion, and development of Irish traditional and folk music. We advocate for equal opportunity and balanced representation for all.”⁷⁸ Although this campaign is still in its infancy; its very existence is most certainly a step in the right direction.⁷⁹

Observation of traditional music sessions in Montreal reveals certain trends: women are most certainly active in traditional music bands and sessions, but they are usually outnumbered by their male counterparts. Female and male performers both start sets of tunes during sessions, sometimes of their own accord, and sometimes at the invitation of the person standing in as session leader. For the most part women gravitate towards the fiddle, tin whistle, and *bodhrán*, which are also the three most common instruments in Montreal sessions, even for male performers. The harp and the uilleann pipes are played by very few people; the latter principally, though

⁷⁶ Helen O’Shea, Helen, *The Making of Irish Traditional Music* (Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 2008), 114.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁷⁸ FairPlé, “Gender Balance in Irish Traditional & Folk Music,” accessed June 15, 2018, at <https://www.fairple.com/>.

⁷⁹ The first FairPlé day was held June 9, 2018. FairPlé advocates and supporters were encouraged on this day to host sessions, concerts and other events, and to start conversations about women in Irish traditional and folk music. The movement has burgeoned since its inception, with luminaries such as fiddlers Martin Hayes and Liz Carroll, and flautist Sarah Allen, among many others, publicly supporting the initiative (Facebook, “FairPlé,” 10 March, 2018, accessed September 17, 2018, at <https://www.facebook.com/FairPleMusic/>).

not exclusively, by men, and the former principally, though not exclusively, by women. Other than for these two instruments, no firm association exists between choice of instrument and the player's gender.⁸⁰ Bands such as Corsaire, Cats in the Kitchen, Solstice, and Swift Years each have just one female performer alongside two or three men. Bands such as *Dragún Bán*, with three women and two men, or *Búmarang*, with two women and one man, are notable exceptions to this rule. In Montreal, paid session leaders, or hosts of Irish traditional music sessions, are overwhelmingly men. One notable exception is *bodhrán* player and singer Donna-Marie Sullivan, who as President of Montreal's *CCE* branch at the turn of the 2010s hosted Comhaltas sessions at Finnegan's Irish Pub on Queen Mary Road. Women feature more regularly as leaders in Montreal's sessions of Québécois traditional music; this is likely due to there simply being more men and women generally playing Québécois music than Irish music in Montreal.

This dimension of Montreal's Irish traditional music soundscape is an outcome of the ongoing struggle for women's rights in Quebec. Part of this struggle has centered on women's claim to a legitimate presence in public spaces. Indeed, the Front de libération des femmes du Québec - which formed in 1969 - initially set about laying claim to Montreal to protest against the systemic oppression Quebec women faced. Its members did so by "[plastering] "Québécoises deboutte" stickers around Montreal and [occupying] taverns that did not permit the entry of women."⁸¹ Just as women entered then-traditionally male spaces such as boardrooms and universities in the 1970s, "more and more women encountered discrimination and became aware of the inequities they were experiencing, not only in the world of work but within the family, and of

⁸⁰ This situation represents a contrast with the situation in Ireland until the mid-twentieth century. Once the aristocratic preserve of male musicians, the harp became associated with femininity during the nineteenth century. Although the Irish flute and the uilleann pipes were long associated with masculinity, the concertina has often been considered a feminine instrument (Erick Falc'her-Poyroux, *Histoire sociale de la musique irlandaise*, 207-209).

⁸¹ Sean Mills, *The Empire Within*, 128.

their exclusion from the corridors of power.”⁸² This awareness in turn re-energized the Quebec feminist movement, which managed in the ensuing decades to secure for women “greater access to all levels of education, to meaningful jobs, to the professions, and to leadership positions in almost every area of activity.”⁸³ That said, greater access did not translate into full equality. Quebec women are still underrepresented in leadership roles in major government and private sector organizations.⁸⁴ That said, Quebec society has come a long way from the time when musicians might have noticed a “Bienvenue aux femmes” sign on a tavern’s front door.⁸⁵

Given the small number of players of Irish traditional music in Montreal, the entry of just one woman - or man - into the soundscape can alter its gender ratios in a noticeable way. The same applies to men or women leaving the soundscape. Yet women in Quebec - and elsewhere in Canada - are facing increased pressure because of professional and domestic responsibilities. This situation leads them to enjoy, on average, fewer hours of leisure time than men.⁸⁶ These pressures on leisure time in turn make it difficult to maintain an active role in traditional music sessions. This is no different from the situation in Ireland, where women who play Irish traditional music have sometimes struggled to balance family responsibilities and musical endeavours.⁸⁷ The choices musicians make about their own level of engagement with their local Irish traditional music scene are first and foremost their own. However, one cannot completely discount the influence of family and career pressures on these individual decisions.

⁸² Denyse Baillargeon, *A Brief History of Women in Quebec*, translated by W. Donald Wilson (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2014), 173.

⁸³ Peter Gossage and J.I. Little, *An Illustrated History of Quebec : Tradition and Modernity* (Don Mills, ON : Oxford University Press, 2012), 299-300.

⁸⁴ Denyse Baillargeon, *A Brief History of Women in Quebec*, 200-201.

⁸⁵ Chris Crilly, interview, 26 January 2018.

⁸⁶ Statistics Canada, “Time use: Total work burden, unpaid work, and leisure,” accessed September 18, 2018, at <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/54931-eng.htm>.

⁸⁷ Helen O’Shea, *The Making of Irish Traditional Music*, 109.

Conclusion

Although Irish traditional music in Montreal is often equated with informal music-making in pub sessions, organized and purposeful initiatives have been instrumental in maintaining the soundscape's vitality since the 1970s. People of diverse identities - Irish and non-Irish, Francophones and Anglophones, men and women, young and old, musicians and broadcasters - have contributed to this maintenance by organizing *céilithe* and concerts, broadcasting television and radio shows featuring Irish traditional music, and imparting tunes and techniques to new generations of performers. The Siamsa School of Irish Music's eclipsing of *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann* is an oddity in the Irish traditional music soundscapes of North America. It also serves as a reminder of the importance of pedagogy in keeping communities of practice alive. Although Montreal's Irish music community has acquired a self-perpetuating nucleus, much of this community's ethos remains firmly amateur and volunteer.⁸⁸ Many of this community's activities take place informally, in places that are not necessarily connected to Montreal's Irish community.

⁸⁸ Even teachers at the Siamsa School of Irish Music are volunteers, according to the school's constitution. In practice, however, they are paid for their instruction (Philippe Murphy, interview, 20 December 2017).

CHAPTER TWO - SPACE-PLACE

Like all traditional musics, Irish traditional music is grounded in a subjective sense of space or locality. Ciarán Carson's translation of the Old Irish epic *Táin Bó Cúailgne* stresses the importance of place in grounding, rooting and flavouring Irish culture, including Irish traditional music. In the introduction to this translation of the *Táin*, Carson recounts a car journey with Fermanagh poet, singer and storyteller Paddy Tunney, in which Tunney "would relate [the] history [of the places they passed], lilt an accompanying reel or jig, or sing snatches of the songs that sprang from that source, and tell stories of the remarkable characters who once dwelt there."¹ Here Tunney's songs, stories and lirts do not exist as stand-alone cultural sounds, but rather are inextricably linked to the local landscape and the lives of the people who once inhabited it. This intimate rooting of a soundscape to various places is of course altered by changes in setting, especially in the case of diasporic movement.

Montreal may be interpreted as both place and space. It is a place because it has distinct boundaries, a known and acknowledged name and history framed over centuries of interaction between men and women of various origins. Yet Montreal also fits with Doreen Massey's definition of space: "the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality; as the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist..."² Montreal's multicultural make-up is a prime example of this contemporaneous plurality. This fact of the city exists beyond the rhetoric and politics of multiculturalism; as separate from and yet also influenced

¹ Ciarán Carson, trans., *The Táin: A New Translation of the Táin Bó Cúailgne* (London : Penguin Classics, 2008), xvi.

² Doreen Massey, *For Space* (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2005), 9.

by the Canadian mosaic and the civic strain of Quebec nationalism. One must after all make allowance for the impact of state policies on cultural space. In settings of musical performance, however, this space is co-constituted by two separate, yet overlapping publics:

[The] spatiality of performance and sonic co-presence, and...the space of circulation and of affective contagion...are produced by two types of musical public-making...the co-present publics assembled by performance or site, and by the virtual or stranger alliances and collectivities generated by the mediated circulation of music and sound.³

This chapter will consider the specific places where the first of these two publics has gathered since the 1970s to play and to listen to Irish traditional music. The Irish traditional music soundscape of Montreal expanded initially in tandem with the city's Irish spaces, before bursting its banks into places and spaces not exclusively or necessarily linked to the city's Irish community. Two main factors explain this historic trend: the intense crosspollination of diasporic cultures in twentieth-century Montreal, and the interplay of powerful centrifugal and centripetal forces dictating population movements across and beyond North America.

In the early nineteenth century, Irish-Catholic immigrants to Montreal found themselves in a city in which they constituted a double-minority: a Catholic minority within the predominantly Protestant English-speaking population, and an English-speaking minority in the mainly French-speaking Catholic population.⁴ This situation perhaps explains why the Irish settled throughout Montreal without necessarily forming enclaves in which they constituted a majority. By 1881,

³ Ibid., 35.

⁴ Ronald Rudin, *The Forgotten Quebecers*, 109-110.

the Irish made up more than 50% of a given district's population in just a handful of areas in Montreal.⁵

The imagined spatiality of diaspora is where “identity negotiation takes place, the result being the production of hybrid cultural forms. These forms express both the linkages and the distinctiveness of the settler/origin groups stretched over this imagined geography.”⁶ Referring to the cementing of an Irish presence in Canada's Ottawa Valley region, Johanne Devlin Trew states that “[m]aking or claiming the valley as an Irish place through the transfer of old-world traditions has been fundamental to the maintenance of Irish identity because in practice their history is being imagined or reconstructed in the present.”⁷ The Irish claimed Montreal just as they did the Ottawa Valley. Much of this claiming was done through the expression of identity values in - and through - the sonic occupation of public spaces within Montreal: “Montrealers sang their way to heaven, sang their way to jail, sang in the streets and meeting halls, on the midnight snowshoe tramp, and on the rafts of lumber rounding the bend at the Point. In their parlours and kitchens they sang and fiddled and danced...Singing brought people together and set them apart.”⁸ Indeed, music accompanied both celebrations of identity and cultural teeth-baring. In one recorded instance in 1877, the funeral procession for Thomas Hackett, a murdered Orangeman, took on a political tinge when “the band abandoned the funeral march and struck up party airs, such as ‘The Boyne Water’ and ‘The Protestant Boys.’”⁹

⁵ Sherry Olson and Patricia Thornton, *Peopling the North American City*, 55. The settlement pattern at even this early date showed French Catholics and English-speaking Protestants as occupying enclaves on the eastern and western sides, respectively, of a divide formed by St-Laurent Boulevard.

⁶ Johanne Devlin Trew, “Diasporic Legacies: Place, Politics, and Music among the Ottawa Valley Irish,” in Philip V. Bohlman and Martin Stokes, editors, *Celtic Modern: Music at the Global Fringe* (Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 2003), 97.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 97-98.

⁸ Sherry Olson and Patricia Thornton, *Peopling the North American City*, 344-345.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 332.

In a context of ethnic boundary-crafting and political upheaval in the lead-up to the Rebellions of 1837-38, some of Montreal's prominent Irishmen founded the Saint Patrick's Society, the city's first ethno-national organization.¹⁰ Members of this association regularly expressed their class and ethnic identities through public political spectacles:

instead of serving as occasions for the manifestation of ethnic chauvinism, [saint's days and the associated parades] could provide a fulcrum for broader social interaction...groups of competing political dispositions used pageantry and parades as forms of political spectacles, as ceremonies of commemoration skillfully and colourfully combined martial and carnival ethos with displays of ethnic and civic fidelity. The parades also provided instruments by which the middle-class participants, by spilling out in to the public squares and streets, asserted their place in the public sphere.¹¹

With a purported consecutive run of 196 years as of March 2019, Montreal's Saint Patrick's Day parade is one of the longest continuously-running parade of its kind in North America. a surviving pamphlet of the 1914 Saint Patrick's Day parade "Official Route of Procession" highlights the importance of musical representation for the various parish-based marching units. Eighteen distinct groups, parishes or organizations were organized into 13 sections, each headed by a band and a banner. In only three of the 13 section did a band and a banner precede a unit made up of more than one group, association or congregation (Saint Patrick's Society 1-2).¹² Alt-

¹⁰ The Saint Patrick's Society, which took a conservative tinge in the lead-up to the Rebellions of 1837-38, would later be followed by similar societies for Welsh, Scottish, and German immigrants (Kevin James, "Dynamics of Ethnic Associational Culture," 48), and by other Irish associations. These societies will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 5.

¹¹ Kevin James, "Dynamics of Ethnic Associational Culture in a Nineteenth-Century City: Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal, 1834-56," *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* vol. 26, no. 1 (2000: 53-54).

¹² Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal, "St. Patrick's Day 1914, Official Route of Procession," March 1914, Concordia Archives, 1-2.

hough the parade route has changed noticeably over the years, the choice of route in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was dictated partly by religious ritual, and partly by space-claiming.

In the 1860s the procession began to move towards a system that alternated annually between “western” and “eastern” routes through the city. Doing so represented a logical adaptation to the growing territory covered by the city and to the dispersion of Irish-Catholic residences. The western route passed through Griffintown, a working-class and largely Irish neighbourhood, and passed St. Ann’s Roman Catholic Church, while the eastern route, which usually went down St. Lawrence Main Street, was an attempt to reach out to the substantial Irish community in the city’s east end.”¹³

Through their choice of routes, it is clear that It is clear that by using these geographically dispersed routes, the Montreal Irish were “staking their claim to the city, its economy, and its culture, declaring their right to claim Montreal as their own.”¹⁴ Parading as an Irish space-claiming tactic transcended class divisions; Montreal Irish labourers in dire poverty used similar tactics to their middle-class counterparts. A fife band led a procession of striking Irish canal workers in 1843 as they marched into the heart of Montreal to meet with civic leaders of the city’s Irish community.¹⁵ Although archival sources are largely silent about the musical dimension - if any - of these parades in the early twentieth century, it is more than likely that music of some kind did feature in the parades.¹⁶

¹³ Rosalyn Trigger, “Irish Politics on Parade,” 172.

¹⁴ Matthew Barlow, *Griffintown*, 38.

¹⁵ Dan Horner, “Solemn Procession and Terrifying Violence,” 42.

¹⁶ As Sherry Olson and Patricia Thornton attest, “[d]ependence on written sources makes it difficult to harken to the shout, the marching tune, and the lullaby” (Sherry Olson and Patricia Thornton, *Peopling the North American City*, 318).

Then as now, spectators would have returned home with the music still ringing in their ears and minds. In this way this music would have been transmitted far beyond both its immediate sonic range and its native ethnoscape. However the tunes - at least in the nineteenth century - would for the most part have been played in the service of one form or other of Irishness. They were not performed as a distinct idiom or art form beyond an ethnic context - either staged or authentic.

The music's bursting of its established ethnic boundaries began with the fading and displacement of Irish spaces in both Montreal and in Quebec more generally in the decades after 1867. This process was accelerated by what Matthew Barlow describes as a "breakdown of a separate Irish-Catholic identity and culture in Montreal in the mid-twentieth century, as St. Patrick's Day became less about Irishness and celebrating a unique Irish identity in Montréal [sic] as it became a major social event."¹⁷ Internal migration dictated by changing economic circumstances in some areas of rural Quebec also pushed an increasing number of Quebec Irish either out of the province, towards Montreal, or towards other urban centres in Quebec. This movement bolstered the growth of Montreal's Irish population between 1871 and 1941.¹⁸ However this exodus only exacerbated the impact of a trend beginning shortly after Confederation, which saw the number of Irish immigrants to Quebec significantly reduced.¹⁹ Furthermore the oft-acclaimed in-

¹⁷ Barlow, "The House of the Irish," 202. Barlow is correct to note the evolving nature of Saint Patrick's Day parades, though his use of the term "breakdown" may not be appropriate here. After all the parades continued year after year, and Montreal's various Irish societies did not disband during this period.

¹⁸ Ronald Rudin, *The Forgotten Quebecers*, 158.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 155-157.

termarriage of Irish Quebecers with their French-Canadian co-religionists in the nineteenth century marked the start of the Irish ethnic decline in Quebec.²⁰ The merging of some Irish into the French-Canadian population heralded the acculturation which other Quebec Irish - especially in Montreal - would experience in the mid-to-late twentieth century into the Montreal Anglophone population.²¹

Contrary to the conventional narrative of Anglo-Montreal lore, the election of the Parti Québécois in 1976 did not mark the start of an outflow of English-speakers from Quebec. Rather it accelerated a prior trend of Anglophones leaving the province in large numbers: “By the 1960s...English-speaking Quebecers were leaving Quebec for other provinces faster than they could be replaced, and at the same time the British-born population [of Quebec] was in absolute decline.”²² By the same token, this reduction of Irish people in Quebec’s population in both relative and absolute numbers reduced the likelihood of players of Irish traditional music constituting a significant part of this residual Irish population. Nevertheless, the Saint Patrick’s Day parade continued to be held in or close to the downtown core in an annual celebration which, like Canadian, Quebec and Montreal society, became increasingly multicultural.

Unsurprisingly, Irish traditional music first came to Montreal with Irish migrants to Quebec. From the earliest days of the music’s presence in Montreal, it shaped a sonic space with

²⁰ Ibid., 158-159. Ronald Rudin rightly notes that in situations where “an Irish woman married a French man, the offspring were counted by the census taker as being of French origin, the Irish links thus becoming invisible to the historian” (Ronald Rudin, *The Forgotten Quebecers*, 158).

²¹ In the last quarter of the twentieth century, Montreal’s Irish-Catholic community weathered the social tensions of rising Québécois nationalism by throwing in its lot, for the most part, with the descendants of English and Scottish immigrants to Quebec. In this way Montreal’s Irish community integrated into the broader Anglophone community, all the while retaining its distinct cultural identity. See Matthew Barlow, *Griffintown: Identity and Memory in an Irish Diaspora Neighbourhood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017) for a detailed discussion of these cultural shifts.

²² Ronald Rudin, *The Forgotten Quebecers*, 163.

tunes and musicians of varied origins. Though little can be known with certainty about the music's early history in Montreal, it is widely accepted that the coexistence of musicians and traditions led to tune sharing and to the crosspollination of ethno-national traditional repertoires. This blending - and the difficulty of tracing the music's evolution accurately in the nineteenth century - are both alluded to in recent Irish traditional music publications. In one writer's pseudo-romantic quip, Connemara piper Fiachra O'Regan, currently living in Quebec, was perhaps "able to take to [musical partner and spouse] Sophie [Lavoie]'s music and vice-versa because of a past mixing that had lived on."²³

This mixing, nevertheless, foreshadows in many ways the multiplicity of traditions constituting the Irish traditional music soundscape in present-day Montreal. As traditional musician and ethnomusicologist Jean Duval notes: "Le répertoire des musiciens traditionnels [du Québec] s'est nourri de plusieurs influences, nommément celles des répertoires écossais, irlandais, américain et peut-être même anglais, mais on ignore la source de la plupart des airs" (58). This mosaic of tune origins corresponds to a geographical patchwork born of immigrant mobility across Quebec. For Jean Duval, this patchwork is the result of a disjuncture between the geographic origins of composers working within the traditional Irish, Scottish and Québécois idioms, and the homelands of the traditions to which these composers claim to belong:

Comme la corrélation entre le territoire géographique dans lequel le compositeur habite et la tradition auquel il dit appartenir est souvent imparfaite, je propose la notion de «territoire compositionnel» qui permettrait de définir l'étendue des intentions musicales de chacun.²⁴

²³ The Irish Pipers' Club, *The Pipers' Review*, vol. XXX, no 1 (Winter 2011), 14.

²⁴ Jean Duval, "Singularités et similarités," 236.

This disjuncture is at the heart of the evolution of Irish traditional music in Montreal in the latter part of the twentieth century. Chaotic criss-crossing is a key element of Irish soundscapes in diasporic settings. Rachel Fleming notes that “[t]raditional music has been characterized by its development over time as a form of social communication in relatively isolated localities.”²⁵ It is crucial to note that the “isolated localities” Fleming mentions were invariably small agricultural or fishing communities. Indeed Irish traditional music is stereotypically thought of as rural music:

the social class 99.99 per cent of the performers [whose songs were collected by early folklorists in Ireland] tended to be rural, farm labourers and small farmers...[yet] we know from historical research that *something like this music* [emphasis added]...that the same melodies were used in an urban situation in the last century and the century before that.”²⁶

Corcoran’s words highlight two important points, First, it is methodologically difficult, if not impossible, to trace back sound in the days before audio recording. Second, and most importantly, cities altered traditional music by bringing musicians from different areas or with different repertoires into contact with each other. Paddy Glackin notes the role of cities as cultural melting pots. “I think it may come, but I don’t think you could say there is a particular Dublin style, Belfast or Cork style.”²⁷

Glackin’s point is well taken. The principle styles of Irish traditional music - Clare, Donegal and Sliabh Luachra - are named for counties or rural regions, not for cities. This taxonomy

²⁵ Rachel C. Fleming, “Resisting Cultural Standardization,” 227-228.

²⁶ Seán Corcoran, in Peter McNamee, *Traditional Music: Whose Music?*, 5.

²⁷ Peter McNamee, *Traditional Music: Whose Music?*, 49.

highlights the chaotic blending of musical styles in urban centres, and suggests that cities are destinations for traditional music, rather points of origin. Yet, despite cities' lack of direct relevance to the origins of traditional music, music played in cities nevertheless absorbs these cities' essence, or *zeitgeist*.²⁸ Writing about the emplacement of wisdom in Apache landscapes, Keith Basso expounds that “[f]or any sense of place, the pivotal question is not where it comes from, or even how it gets formed, but what, so to speak, it is made with.”²⁹ Similarly, an understanding of the Irish traditional music soundscape of Montreal requires acquaintance with the places that sustain it. I have categorized these place-types according to their ease of social access, which in turn dictates the form the music will take, and hence its affective impact on the audience and performers. To borrow and adapt Keith Basso's framework, the music sits in private, semi-private, semi-public, and fully public places.³⁰

²⁸ The existence of tune titles such as *The Humours of Tulla* and *The Humours of Ballyloughlin*, to name just these two, attests to the strength of this essential bond between music and place.

²⁹ Keith H Basso, “Wisdom Sits in Places: Notes on a Western Apache Landscape,” in Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso, editors, *Senses of Place* (Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press, 1996), 84.

³⁰ In this framework instances of the music played at home for the musicians' own enjoyment and sessions hosted by someone in their home, would constitute examples of the music in private places. Semi-private spaces are locii of performance in private dwellings, community halls or other non-commercial buildings in which the music may reach an audience that does not include the performers. In this definition I include *céilithe*, and so-called Porchfest performances. Given the habitually open, or non-event-specific nature of commercial establishments like bars, cafés and pubs, I would describe sessions held regularly in commercial venues as happening in semi-public places. Finally public spaces like city parks, the open streets, or Montreal's subway (metro) system constitute the fourth dimension of this framework. Furthermore only the homegrown dimension of the Montreal Irish music soundscape will be discussed here. Discussion of international bands or festivals and their impact in Montreal will be forthcoming in a later chapter.

Private spaces

In its original settings in Ireland, Irish traditional music was played primarily in people's homes and the music's enduring social aspect has maintained people's homes as an important performance setting. Because news about music sessions often spreads through word of mouth, accounts of sessions rarely appear in archival letters, diaries, and other private documents.³¹ Oral history is therefore essential in piecing together private soundscapes.

In the 1970s and 1980s, most players of Irish traditional music gathered in various locations across the city, namely at la Brasserie des Pins, la Taverne St-Laurent, and the Montreal Folk Club, to name just a few.³² These sessions' locations changed every few months or years, namely when the musicians were asked to leave the venues.³³ These changes sometimes forced relocations to private homes. As of the late 1980s fiddler David Papazian regularly invited musicians to sessions at his apartment on Saint-Laurent Boulevard near Sherbrooke Street.³⁴ For at least a decade, until Papazian moved away from Montreal in 1997, this apartment was the site of memorable weekly sessions. In fact the apartment became for a while the de facto Mecca of Montreal's Irish traditional music community. "[S]o you had these fancy sort of mafioso type restaurants and antique shops, and then there was this little door and you'd go up into this other world, this little apartment above, on St-Laurent....And Dave had sessions there [every week] for...at least 10 years. I don't think we took much notice of the [recently opened] Irish pubs for a

³¹ Announcements on the Internet about sessions in public and semi-public places, namely on websites such as the-session.org, are notable exceptions. They exist in abundance.

³² These pubs and bars will be discussed at greater length later in this chapter.

³³ On one occasion, musicians left a pub because the pub's new owner refused to give them discounts on beer (Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018).

³⁴ Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018.

while.”³⁵ The intensity of the experience at Papazian’s apartment explains its appeal; musicians played in cramped quarters with barely enough room to sound their instrument. Chris Crilly recounts first meeting another fiddler, Laurence Beaudry, while “digging her in the ribs with [his] bowing” at a session in Papazian’s apartment.³⁶ These cramped quarters forced musicians to find creative solutions:

C’était des piles de journaux, c’était le bordel là-dedans...Tout le monde se cherchait une petite place, il se faisait une session principale à l’avant qui donnait sur la rue, des fois il s’en faisait une à l’arrière, des fois il s’en faisait une sur la galerie en arrière, pis des fois même au deuxième...il y a des fois, les plus gros partys, tu pouvais avoir deux, trois, quatre sessions en même temps avec plein de musiciens, plein de discussion...David c’était le centre de tout ça.³⁷

After David Papazian moved away from Montreal the session stopped, and the Irish music soundscape veered away from this private haven into the semi-public spaces of the Irish pubs that began opening in Montreal’s downtown core at the start of the 1990s. People continued playing the music in their own homes or in those of friends, but these home sessions typically involved small numbers of musicians and were kept private affairs. Large and popular home sessions such as those at David Papazian’s apartment were exceptional, insofar as few musicians would willingly host throngs of people in their home on a weekly basis. During the 1980s, fiddler and pianist Gilles Losier was known to host eclectic musical parties at his apartment on

³⁵ Steve Jones, interview, 17 January 2018.

³⁶ Chris Crilly, interview, 26 January 2018.

³⁷ Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018.

Sainte-Famille Street between Milton Street and Avenue Des Pins; the repertoire fluctuated between traditional music of all stripes and jazz.³⁸ In the 2000s, other musicians such as concertina player Robin Beech hosted sessions at their house at specific moments of the year. Robin began hosting sessions at his residence in Beaconsfield in the early 2000s, and continued this practice after he moved to Longueuil in 2010. At this point, Robin instituted a tradition of hosting two large traditional music session parties per year, “one in the summer for [his] birthday, and one in the winter for [his partner] Laurence’s birthday.”³⁹

Smaller-scale events continue to occur throughout the year. These events include private sessions to which close friends are invited to share tunes. On occasion, bands will also be hired for these small events: “Cats in the Kitchen did a gig a few years ago...for Patti McCurdy. At her place. Irish party. So we played, and then we had a session afterwards. People would come to the birthday party and play.”⁴⁰

Irish traditional music is a fundamentally social music. Indeed the sociability surrounding the music is one of its most popular dimensions. It is in large part as a result of this aspect that the music has attracted new players and sustained their interest.⁴¹ Yet, many players also advocate for the music’s meditative, perhaps therapeutic forms of solo playing. They emphasize the importance of desiring to play the music on their own, for the music’s own sake. “[A well-known concertina player] told us one time...‘it’s important to...just enjoy playing at home, you know, rather than the idea of having to go play with other people or be in a band.’ So it’s more important to enjoy just doing it because you like it.”⁴²

³⁸ Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018.

³⁹ Robin Beech, interview, 8 January 2018.

⁴⁰ Richard Morgan, interview, 28 June 2017.

⁴¹ Philippe Murphy, interview, 20 December 2017.

⁴² Rae Shepp, interview, May 29, 2017.

Semi-private spaces

Concertina player Rae Shepp first heard Irish traditional music through an acquaintance who brought her to a *céilí* at the hall of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 024 / 106 in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce.⁴³ She recalled: “A friend that I’d known for quite a while...his roommate said one day ‘Do you want to go to a *céilí*’ and I said ‘What’s that?’...and I went to the *céilí*. And that’s the first time I heard Irish traditional music. I’m pretty sure it was sometime around 1990 I’m guessing...It was at the Legion in NDG, with Siamsa.”⁴⁴

Dance halls and community centres have been the principal semi-private spaces for Irish traditional music in Montreal since the 1970s.⁴⁵ Indeed these places are often the launch pad from which members of this community begin musical journeys that become a mainstay of their lives. As the music broke its ethnic moorings from the 1970s onwards, these geographic settings shifted.

The area of Montreal east of Saint-Laurent Boulevard was for a long time a relative void for Irish traditional music. Indeed musicians were astonished when Bernadette Short, who had emigrated from Dublin to Montreal in 1974 and founded the Bernadette Short School of Irish Dancing, organized a *céilí* at some point in the 1980s in a community hall on Saint-Denis Street near Avenue Laurier. Jean Duval remembers that she “en avait organisé un [*céilí*] qui s’est tenu

⁴³ This hall is colloquially known by members of the Irish traditional music community in Montreal as “the NDG Legion.”

⁴⁴ Rae Shepp, interview, May 29, 2017.

⁴⁵ In 1867 the Saint Patrick’s Society of Montreal owned and operated a hall where concerts and dances were held. However, given that Irish traditional music in the nineteenth century was firmly associated with Irish rural life and with poverty, the music played in this hall was classical music or opera. This situation is similar to the German soundscape of late nineteenth- and early-twentieth century Waterloo County, Ontario, where “lovers of classical music...saw in [German folk singing] festivals a stepping stone to performing the choral works of the great masters” (Barbara Lorenzkowski, *Sounds of Ethnicity: Listening to German North America, 1850-1914* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2010), 154). The hall of the Saint Patrick’s Society of Montreal was destroyed by a fire in 1872.

dans l'est de la ville...c'était quand même pas osé mais presque, parce qu'il y avait tendance à...ce qui était organisé par *les Irlandais* [emphasis original] ça avait tendance à être Pointe-Saint-Charles, West Island...c'était là, pis dans l'est on n'allait pas voir."⁴⁶ This *céili* highlights the homegrown cultural bisection of Montreal along Boulevard Saint-Laurent into an eastern francophone enclave and an anglophone western one. The divide did dictate the choice of cultural venues for events involving Irish traditional music. However this divide, then as now, as far from ironclad. In the late 1970s members of Barde performed in francophone CEGEPs east of Saint-Laurent Boulevard, such as Collège de Maisonneuve, where Jean Duval noticed band members Chris Crilly and Pierre Guérin giving extracurricular music lessons.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, the bulk of Irish musical events in semi-private locales have occurred west of Saint-Laurent Boulevard and near the city's downtown core, in places like Saint Patrick's Basilica, or Korrigans on Clark Street near the corner of Dorchester Boulevard in Montreal's downtown core.⁴⁸ Bernadette Short also hosted *céilithe* at Saint-Augustine's Church in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce at various times during the 1980s.⁴⁹ One of the more striking Irish music events of the early 1990s was the 1992 *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann* convention, which took place at Queen Elizabeth Hotel in downtown Montreal.⁵⁰ The Siamsa School of Irish Music, which has been active since 1991, has consistently held its *céilithe* and end-of-term recitals in west-central venues,

⁴⁶ Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018.

⁴⁷ Ibid. The acronym CEGEP stands for *Collège d'éducation générale et professionnelle*. CEGEPs are colleges unique to Quebec that offer pre-university and technical trade programs.

⁴⁸ In 1987, Dorchester Boulevard was renamed René-Lévesque Boulevard, in honour of the province's first Parti Québécois premier. However one section of this boulevard - in anglophone Westmount - has retained the original name. Dorchester Boulevard originally had been named for Guy Carleton, 1st Baron Dorchester, an Irish-born military officer who served as one of the early British governors of Quebec in the mid-eighteenth century.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

principally the hall of the Royal Canadian Legion branch 024/106 in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce.⁵¹

This geographic positioning is reflected also in the Siamsa School of Irish Music's choice of venues for its lessons. With the recent exception of certain courses given exclusively online via Skype, the School's lessons have taken place in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce at Wesley United Church, or in Westmount at Marianopolis College.⁵²

As of the mid-2010s, Irish traditional music has been featured in Porchfest performances. These usually occur on the front porches or balconies of people's homes; in this way the performances serve to bridge the gap between public and private places and to broaden the music's potential reach. The first Porchfest event was hosted in Ithaca, New York, in 2007, and inspired citizens in other towns and cities to host their own yearly Porchfests.⁵³ The first Montreal-based Porchfest event took place in 2015.⁵⁴ Traditional music of all stripes was very soon featured as part of the event. Since 2015 various practitioners of Irish traditional music have hosted Porchfest groups in their homes. In some cases musicians participate in Porchfest performances without even knowing the names of their hosts.⁵⁵ In 2017 a group of Siamsa-affiliated musicians did not have access to someone's house for Porchfest, and so played at a seniors' residence where one of the musicians worked.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Philippe Murphy, interview, 20 December 2017. Siamsa *céilithe* have also been held at the Centre Culturel Georges-Vanier, in Little Burgundy.

⁵² This CEGEP was once situated on Côte-des-Neiges Road in Montreal just outside of Westmount, but moved to its current location in 2007.

⁵³ Porchfest, "Porchfest - Ithaca, New York - Since 2007," accessed March 2, 2018, at <http://www.porchfest.org> ; Porchfest NDG, "About Porchfest," accessed March 2, 2018, at <http://www.porchfestndg.com/infos-pour-musiciens.html>.

⁵⁴ This may be deduced from the fact that the 2017 NDG Porchfest website claims that it was the third such event in Montreal (Porchfest NDG, "About Porchfest," accessed March 2, 2018, at <http://www.porchfestndg.com/infos-pour-musiciens.html>).

⁵⁵ Richard Morgan, interview, 28 June 2017.

⁵⁶ Rae Shepp, interview, 29 May 2017.

Festivals devoted to either Celtic culture or to traditional music more generally have also been important sites of performance for Irish traditional musicians. Two of these festivals have taken place on the vast grassy grounds of the Douglas Mental Health University Institute - formerly known as the Douglas Hospital - in Verdun: the Montreal International Celtic Festival, and the Montreal Highland Games. Although the Montreal Highland Games are primarily a celebration of Scottish culture, this festival has regularly featured an Irish music tent, where performances and sessions of Irish music have occurred in close proximity to Highland pipe band competitions. Highland piper and tin whistle player Kenneth MacKenzie, one-time housemate of David Papazian, has been one of the principal hosts of this Irish music tent where famed fiddler Jean Carignan (1916-1988) used to perform regularly.⁵⁷ This Irish musical mainstay at the Highland Games does not merely highlight the historic and cultural connections between Ireland and Scotland, but also showcases a diasporic blending of Irish and Scottish musical traditions.

The choice of particular venues is dictated by convenience, availability and people's willingness to host friends and strangers alike in their homes. However one cannot help but notice the geographic positioning of these places. They are all in sections of the city that are either currently gentrifying, or firmly middle-, upper-middle or upper-class, and outside of Pointe-Saint-Charles and Griffintown, two traditionally working-class districts firmly associated with Irishness in the minds of many Montrealers. Members of the Irish community and of the Irish *music* community used some of the same semi-private spaces in some of the same areas of Montreal for their Irish cultural events. Yet the overlap is manifestly far from perfect.

⁵⁷ Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018.

Semi-public and public spaces

Chris Crilly had his love for Irish traditional music rekindled at a visit to the *Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann* in Listowel, Co. Kerry, in 1973. “I didn’t go over to go to the Fleadh,” he recalled, “I was there, and I was soaked in a lot of O’Riada, the house I was staying was full of O’Riada’s music, and Ceoltóirí Chualann, and early Chieftains’ albums...I just sort of was awash in this, not only the music but the physical environment of Kerry...I’d drive around the countryside, I was just intoxicated with the south of Ireland.”⁵⁸ On his return to Montreal, he entered a soundscape that was already thriving in various bars and pubs across the city. He soon realized he was one of just very few Irish-born musicians who were active in this scene, along with fellow Barde member, Toby Kinsella.⁵⁹ As far as most musicians remember sessions during the 1980s in Montreal did not run at the same time in different locations. Rather the key group of musicians would play in one location before either moving of their own accord or being forced by bar or pub owners to relocate. Sessions, therefore, hopped from one place to another throughout this decade. Jean Duval recounts that the monthly session at the Old Dublin pub stopped because “[l]e pub a changé de mains, il a été vendu à un propriétaire...qui voulait plus nous faire des rabais sur la bière...on a dit: “c’est correct, on s’en va.”⁶⁰ The Irish traditional music community played in sessions at the Old Dublin Pub from 1980 to 1982, before migrating to la Brasserie des Pins, near the corner of Park Avenue and Pine Avenue. Sessions were held there for about one year, in a “tavern in the old sense...they had just begun letting women into taverns, there was a sign up saying ‘Bienvenue aux femmes’...people would sing belly songs, Peter Paul and Mary songs, [there was also

⁵⁸ Chris Crilly, interview, 26 January 2018.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018.

a] bluegrass group, it was all very loose...not the way things are now.”⁶¹ The community relocated to La Ricane, where sessions occurred between 1983 and 1985. The sessions there stopped in 1985 when the owner of the café expelled the musicians, having decided to give his business a more respectable veneer.⁶² Sessions were then held at la Taverne St-Laurent, near the corner of Saint-Laurent Boulevard and Sherbrooke Street, in 1985 and 1986. Here musicians gathered weekly for sessions, instead of monthly as had been the case for earlier venues.⁶³ This bar was later sold and converted into a restaurant, at which point musicians relocated to the Saint-Laurent Steakhouse. After another two-year stint at the St-Laurent Steakhouse, between 1987 and 1989, the session musicians found themselves with no bar in which to gather and play. At this point David Papazian was hosting sessions at his apartment, thereby filling the void and ensuring the continuation of Irish music sessions in Montreal in the early years of the 1990s.

Chris Crilly believes that had there been an active Irish session at the time of the session in Papazian’s apartment, the city’s Irish music community would have certainly known about it.⁶⁴ Most other sessions, it seems, were mainly Québécois traditional music sessions where Irish music would sometimes be played.⁶⁵

Montreal’s city centre is currently home to a number of Irish pubs, which arguably form what may be termed an “Irish pub” district. Three Irish pubs are to be found on two adjacent streets in Montreal’s downtown core: McKibbins’ Irish Pub, and the Irish Embassy on Bishop Street, and Hurley’s Irish Pub on Crescent Street. These pubs have become the main venues for

⁶¹ Chris Crilly, interview, 26 January 2018.

⁶² Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Chris Crilly, interview, 26 January 2018.

⁶⁵ Chris Crilly, interview, 26 January 2018; Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018.

Irish traditional music sessions and gigs in the city. Hurley's Irish pub was the first to open in 1993; it was followed by McKibbins Irish pub, and O'Regan's, which was later renamed Fiddler's Green.⁶⁶ These Irish pubs soon began hosting sessions: "Jusqu'en 95 il y avait rien, alors que là après...c'était une épidémie l'ouverture des pubs irlandais tout d'un coup...pis là il y en a eu plein d'autres qui voulaient toute avoir une session irlandaise....ça a changé la scène parce [qu'on] commençait à avoir des musiciens payés, des hôtes de session qui étaient là pis qui demandaient aux autres de venir."⁶⁷

Beside the session scene, Montreal was home to local bands that played Irish traditional music in various locations. Musicians and groups such as Solstice, Swift Years, Belfast Andi, Squidjigger, Salty Dog and Mariner's Curse have performed regularly in Montreal's Irish pubs. In so doing they have indirectly contributed to these businesses' expression of a commercialized form of Irishness.⁶⁸

The proximity of this so-called district to the green line of Montreal's subway system further dictates the nature of the soundscape. Musicians living within easy access of Montreal's public transit network enjoy privileged access to these places: "I don't get to as many sessions as

⁶⁶ Fiddler's Green closed in 2017. McKibbin's Irish Pub opened in 1997. However the McKibbin's website does not provide a founding date for the pub itself, but rather alludes to the antiquity of the building in which the pub is located (McKibbin's Irish Pub, "Our History," accessed March 6, 2018, at <http://mckibbinsirishpub.com/about.asp>). This perhaps purposeful blending of the pub into Montreal's multilayered history is likely an attempt to establish some form of continuity with the past, in line with what historian Eric Hobsbawm might have described as an invented tradition (Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, editors, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1).

⁶⁷ Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018.

⁶⁸ The commercialization of Irishness and Irish traditional music will be discussed at greater length in a later chapter. See: Bill Grantham, "Craic in a box: Commodifying and exporting the Irish pub," *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* vol. 23, no. 2 (April 2009): 257-267 for an analysis of the place of music in modern-day business model of Irish pubs in North America.

I'd like...The main one for me has been...since I started working downtown, it's the Wednesday nights, it's kind of convenient."⁶⁹ Yet, distance has never been an issue for some musicians, even living in places like Beaconsfield and later, like Robin Beech. "I never really thought about it [the intricacies of travelling to sessions], it was just something I did."⁷⁰ The corollary is that the spatial organization of this district - which features few available parking spaces on nearby streets and heavy automobile traffic - discourages musicians who might come in from out of town by car. Some musicians however do commute weekly or monthly to certain Montreal sessions from as far away as the Eastern Townships.

Beyond the Irish pubs, a plethora of Montreal bars hire have hired musicians to play Irish traditional music, particularly for Saint Patrick's Day events. In the late 1980s, Kirk MacGeachy (1950-2006), the late lead singer of the band Orealis, organized concerts of traditional music at Cafe Campus on Prince Arthur Street.⁷¹ Since the mid-1990s and the early 2000s, an increasing number of bars east of Saint-Laurent have hired bands whose active repertoire includes Irish traditional music. Julien Després and his bands Corsaire and Cats in the Kitchen have performed at such venues as L'Barouf, on Saint-Denis Street, and l'Aquarium on Masson Street.⁷² In this way these bars have served as temporary and occasional centres for the diffusion of Irish traditional music in Montreal.

While the aforementioned pubs are currently the main sites of accessible and knowable performances of Irish traditional music, the music is also played in public settings. Hurdy-gurdy

⁶⁹ Richard Morgan, interview, 28 June 2017.

⁷⁰ Robin Beech, interview, 8 January 2018.

⁷¹ Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018.

⁷² Julien Després, interview, 27 July 2017.

player Jocelyn Patenaude has played at various metro stations since at least 2012.⁷³ Other musicians also gather in public places: “...sometimes people just, you know, go out and they’re practicing outside. We have a few friends I know, they do it all the time...they go sit in the park and they work on tunes. That’s [uilleann piper] Olivier [Craig-Dupont] and [fiddler and banjo player] Marc-Antoine [Bérubé]. They often do that.”⁷⁴ Other public settings include a commemorative stone known as the Black Rock. It was erected in 1859 on Bridge Street near the Montreal end of the Victoria Bridge in memory of the 6000 Irish immigrants who died on arriving in Montreal in 1847 and 1848, during the peak years of the Great Irish Famine. The Stone is the site of yearly commemorations by the Montreal branch of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. Players of traditional music have often accompanied the Walk to the Stone that takes place in May of each year and played at the Stone during the commemorations.⁷⁵

With the exception of Montreal’s Irish pubs, few of the aforementioned places are linked in any firm way to Montreal’s Irish community. Indeed Montreal’s important Irish spaces are devoid of traditional music for most of the year. Traditional Irish music may echo within the walls of Saint Patrick’s Basilica during Christmas concerts.⁷⁶ However the Basilica is understandably more often home to hymns and requiems than to jigs and reels. It is also doubtful that traditional music is played at the Black Rock at moments other than the Walk to the Stone. If musicians have gathered there at other times to play tunes in honour of the deceased migrants, they have done so privately, and their tunes have remained unheard by mortal ears.⁷⁷

⁷³ Jocelyn Patenaude, personal conversation, 28 October, 2012.

⁷⁴ Rae Shepp, interview, 29 May 2017.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018.

⁷⁷ The site is located in the median of a major thoroughfare across from a Costco store. It is therefore not an optimal site for music, nor for pedestrians generally.

Centripetal attraction

As with all large urban centres, people travel or migrate to Montreal for diverse reasons.

Olson and Thornton propose that a “powerful motive for many geographic moves was the ambition to move up. As people headed for the city or moved their goods from one house to another in the spring of the year...[w]hat undergirded urbanization and its demographic sequels was the perception of opportunity in the city.”⁷⁸ Music has invariably played a role in some of these decisions, and indeed encompasses a entire category of sought-after opportunities that has both drawn people to Montreal, or compelled them to seek out far-off places.

Philippe Murphy, the current Director of the Siamsa School of Irish Music, has witnessed first-hand Montreal’s quasi-magnetic pull. He believes, “Plus souvent qu’autrement mon expérience ça a été surtout au CÉGEP et à l’université que les gens me demandaient d’où je venais. Je disais: “Je viens de Montréal.” J’étais comme le seul dans ma gang. Tsé, il y avait du monde de Rimouski, Abitibi, Joliette, la Rive-Sud. Mais quelqu’un qui venait de Montréal, qui habitait à Montréal et qui étudiait à Montréal, c’était comme: “Ah bien t’es la minorité.”⁷⁹ Just as Philippe’s friends in his student days presumably converged on Montreal for their studies, musicians who come to Montreal for purposes not directly linked to Irish traditional music do find themselves perpetuating it nevertheless. This is the case notably for Kate Bevan-Baker, who came to Montreal to study at McGill University and found herself a few years later playing the fiddle in the Celtic folk band Solstice and teaching at the Siamsa School of Irish Music.⁸⁰ Although musicians passing through the city on business of all sorts invariably pay visits to sessions, few people are drawn to Montreal on a long-term basis specifically for Irish traditional

⁷⁸ Sherry Olson and Patricia Thornton, *Peopling the North American City*, 66-67.

⁷⁹ Philippe Murphy, interview, 20 December 2017.

⁸⁰ Kate Bevan-Baker, interview, 27 July 2017.

music.⁸¹ This make sense given that Quebec, very simply, is not Ireland: “[J]e pense que s’il y a des musiciens étrangers qui viennent à Montréal...oui ils vont jouer dans les sessions...mais ils veulent apprendre la musique [québécoise] locale.”⁸²

Musicians from nearby cities have been regularly attendees in Montreal’s sessions. Jean Duval recalls some of the musicians who graced Montreal sessions with their presence during the 1980s:

On avait des visiteurs, de la gang de Joliette, des visiteurs de Joliette, les frères Laporte, Rémi et Pierre Laporte, Jean Cantin, Normand Miron...il y avait d’autres gens des Maritimes, Sigrid Rolfe une flûtiste, Paul MacDonald un guitariste qui a étudié à Montréal à McGill, qui venait, Kim Vincent brillant violoneux, John Goodman un joueur de cornemuse...Après ça il y avait la gang d’Ottawa aussi qui pouvait débarquer, James Steven violon surtout, Erin Cassidy une flûtiste, Nathan Curry, Pierre Schryer... Après ça, la gang de Toronto, Debbie Quigley, Kate Crossin, Lee Cadieux...pis Nicholas Williams.⁸³

That some of these musicians would come from Joliette, a longstanding Mecca of Québécois traditional music, and from as far away as Ottawa, Toronto, and the Maritimes, attests to Montreal’s status as a pivotal site of impromptu sessions. Various people and groups have also keenly encouraged out-of-province musicians to come to Montreal for both pedagogical and performance reasons. In 1964, the United Irish Societies of Montreal raised funds to pay for the Balmoral Girls’ Pipe Band to travel from Nova Scotia to perform in Montreal’s Saint Patrick’s Day

⁸¹ This excludes musicians based within a few hours’ drive of Montreal who occasionally make the trip to sessions, even if it means staying overnight at a hotel or with friends.

⁸² Philippe Murphy, interview, 20 December 2017.

⁸³ Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018.

parade (United Irish Societies of Montreal).⁸⁴ The Siamsa School of Irish Music has hosted concerts and workshops featuring such luminaries as fiddler Gerry O'Connor. Montreal has also featured on the tour route of various traditional bands since the 1970s, from the Chieftains to Lúnasa. These bands perform in the cities' various concert venues, such as Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier in the Place des Arts de Montréal, or the Salle Bourgie of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Many musicians have constructed a network of friends and acquaintances through Irish traditional music. Some of them have tapped into their network to foster a thriving traditional music scene in Montreal. Alan Jones discovered the Château Ramezay through his harp-playing friend Joanne St-Laurent after their band Agincourt were asked to play Irish music at the Château for Saint Patrick's Day.⁸⁵ Alan "discovered this wonderful building and the found out that [he could] hire [sic] one of the halls and put on...concerts."⁸⁶ Over the years he has brought in many great names from the uilleann piping world, including Paddy Keenan, Jerry O'Sullivan, and David Power. Although he does not organize concerts and events as actively and regularly as he once did, Jones rightly affirms he has been a catalyst for bringing people together through Irish traditional music: "I put people in touch with one another...as a person who has this natural tendency to be a catalyst to bring people together, I like to be able to go around and be on good terms with people."⁸⁷

⁸⁴ United Irish Societies of Montreal, "Form letter from Director of Organization thanking recipients for their assistance with the Balmoral Girls' Pipe Band from Stellerton, NS," 1964, United Irish Societies Archives.

⁸⁵ The Château Ramezay was initially built as a private residence, and currently serves as a museum of Montreal history. It was also recognized as a National Historic Site of Canada in 1949, and as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2010 (Château Ramezay Historic Site and and Museum of Montréal, accessed March 1, 2018, at <https://www.chateauramezay.qc.ca/en/>; Canadian Encyclopedia, "Château Ramezay," Accessed March 1, 2018, at <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/le-chateau-ramezay/>).

⁸⁶ Alan Jones, interview, 13 December 2017.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Centrifugal propulsion

For all of Montreal's centripetal appeal, the city also serves as an outbound terminal for players of Irish traditional music, a springboard towards far-flung musical opportunities. Some Montreal-based bands and artists perform on a geographically dispersed circuit that includes gigs in various Ontario locales and beyond. Local folk band Swift Years, for instance, which plays Irish traditional tunes as part of an eclectic repertoire, occasionally performs across the Quebec-Ontario border in Vankleek Hill. In some cases bands travel as far away as the Canadian Prairies or overseas to perform. This has been the case notably for Solstice. The furthest the band has driven for a gig is about three hours from Montreal, but it has flown as far as Saskatchewan for gigs and was invited to perform in Germany. "Someone...heard us play at Hurley's and flew us over for their wedding...I guess if they like it enough they'll bring it to the party...Yeah that was cool, so we made a little tour of it. We went to Belgium and France too."⁸⁸

For all his role as a catalyst for Irish music events in Montreal, Alan Jones has not hesitated to venture beyond the city for musical reasons, once even driving 21 hours round-trip in one day from Montreal to Fredericton, New Brunswick, to buy pipe chanters from someone who had driven from Cape Breton to meet him and carry out the transaction.⁸⁹ He also chose an out-of-province - even out-of-country - site for the North American Northumbrian Pipers' Convention, which he established and ran for more than a decade in North Hero, Vermont. "Well," he recalled, "in the early 80s, I was travelling down to Burlington, Vermont...I discovered this little village on North Hero Island, on the shores of Lake Champlain, fell in love with it...And I was

⁸⁸ Kate Bevan-Baker, interview, 27 July 2017.

⁸⁹ Alan Jones, interview, 13 December 2017.

missing the pipes...and I said: ‘Well if I can’t go to the pipes I’ll bring the pipes to me.’”⁹⁰ In 1985, he proceeded to organize a Northumbrian pipers’ convention. The convention was held for 13 years in North Hero, and one year in Essex, New York, and gradually shifted away from a strict Northumbrian focus to include other types of bagpipes, namely the uilleann pipes. Among the highlights of Jones’ time as the convention’s director and main organizer was the 1991 convention in which uilleann pipers Jerry O’Sullivan and Paddy Keenan constituted the event’s main attraction.⁹¹

For Jones, North Americans’ willingness to travel great distances may simply be part of the continent’s geographic culture. He proposes:

Interestingly, North Americans don’t view distance in the same way. Like for, say, a person in Britain or wherever. I hardly ever went to London. My God, London? It’s 120 miles away. My God it’s so far. But when I came here I find North America...North Americans just move around and travel hundreds of miles and get on a plane and fly and move. Back home, people basically stayed in their communities and didn’t travel as much. I mean of course we’ve progressed with communication and travel and people are travelling more, but really even now, they don’t think like the North Americans who readily travel five...you know I would have people come to my convention in Vermont, they’d come from California, they’d come from Seattle. They’d come from Philadelphia, they drive and say: “Ah that’s only a nine- or a ten-hour drive.”⁹²

Many musicians undertake similar musical pilgrimages over the course of their life. Many feel compelled to go to Ireland, to the roots of their beloved music. Some musicians make music

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

the principle goal of their journey, rather than an incidental on a business or pleasure trip. Many Montreal musicians over the years have travelled far and wide to North American Comhaltas conventions, though they are generally more drawn to the informal sessions that occur in the margins of the conventions' main meetings than to the administrative meetings per se.⁹³ Jean Duval has travelled to Ireland twelve times; many of these trips were undertaken specifically to play and learn Irish tunes and styles.⁹⁴ A more recent example is the travels of Alexis Kelly, a young Québécois who lived in Ireland for at least a year to study the craft of uilleann pipe-making. For many older musicians, Alexis and others like him embody a *relève* well worth maintaining in Montreal to ensure the music's continued vitality.⁹⁵

Conclusion

According to Matthew Barlow, Montreal's Irish-Catholic community "sought to reclaim its place within the history of the city" during the 1990s and early 2000s.⁹⁶ They did so through the symbolic appropriation of public spaces, which culminated in the recasting of Griffintown as a *lieu de mémoire par excellence* of Montreal's Irish community. At precisely the same time the Montreal Irish music soundscape was undergoing significant changes, as newly-opened Irish pubs provided new semi-public settings for the music's performance. Yet already by the 1970s

⁹³ Robin Beech, interview, 8 January 2018; Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018; Steve Jones, interview, 17 January 2018; Rae Shepp, interview, 29 May 2017.

⁹⁴ Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018.

⁹⁵ Chris Crilly, interview, 26 January 2018; Alan Jones, interview, 13 December 2017. Given the small number of uilleann pipers in Quebec, every player of uilleann pipes in the province either meets or hears about every other uilleann piper fairly quickly. I actually met with Alexis prior to his departure and gave him my old reed-making equipment, which I had only used once and had vowed not to use again after making a mess of my first attempted chanter reed.

⁹⁶ Matthew Barlow, *Griffintown*, 156.

the music's principle practitioners in Montreal were non-Irish. It is clear from the aforementioned accounts by Steve Jones and Jean Duval, among others, that these practitioners included many francophone Québécois. Some, like Jean Duval, invested significant time and energy in studying and playing Irish traditional music. Others dabbled in Irish music, perhaps because of its proximity to - and overlap with - Québécois traditional music.

As Ian McKay notes, middle-class Nova Scotians in the 1920s and 1930s flocked in droves to parts of rural Nova Scotia in a quest for a purportedly simple, rural, and culturally authentic “Folk.” This quest was a “romantic antithesis to everything [urban cultural producers] disliked about modern urban and industrial life.”⁹⁷ Although McKay's focus of interwar Nova Scotia might seem far removed from post 1970s Montreal, this insight aptly describes a drive for authenticity which characterized Quebec society in the 1970s and 1980s. During the 1970s and 1980s, many Quebec musicians were part of a “lyric generation”, to borrow François Ricard's phrase. They who “came of age during the late 1960s, contributing new creative energy, new ideas, and a new spirit of social and political activism to virtually every field of endeavour.”⁹⁸ This generation perpetuated a uniquely Québécois tradition of artistic and musical performance over the following decades.⁹⁹ Crucially, they did so in a countercultural context that emphasized “authentic” engagement with tradition.¹⁰⁰ Given the aforementioned rooting of traditional music in an imagined rural past, traditional music - be it Irish, Québécois, or other - had a stronger appeal than other music genres for Montrealers seeking a slice of Folk authenticity. This situation

⁹⁷ Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 4.

⁹⁸ Peter Gossage and J.I. Little, *An Illustrated History of Quebec*, 249.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 308.

¹⁰⁰ David Berthiaume, “Les Veillées d'automne à Montréal (1975),” *Bulletin Mnémo*, vol. 10, no. 1 (Printemps 2006), accessed March 7, 2019, at <http://mnemo.qc.ca/bulletin-mnemo/article/les-veillees-d-automne-a-montreal>.

likely drew many non-Irish musicians, consciously or not, to Irish traditional music.¹⁰¹ Just as in San Francisco after 1978, non-Irish individuals in Montreal ended up saving Irish music from the “musical lethargy of its former ethnic trustees.”¹⁰² Steve Jones notes:

In the late 80s, you still had people like John McDonagh’s dad and Willie Fahey, and Pat Conroy who were immigrants from Ireland...but they were getting old, and because I think the language shift in the 1970s with the Parti Québécois and all the rest of it, there was no rising generation. There were no more Irish immigrants. So they gradually got older and became sort of isolated...this generation just got orphaned, I suppose. The vacuum, if there was one, was filled by people like us who had been turned on to Irish music by the Bothy Band, basically.¹⁰³

The generations of musicians since the 1970s have then adopted Irish traditional music as their own, and in perpetuating it have recast parts of Irish tradition in a typical Montreal mould. In so doing they have drawn on various forms of memory, and inscribed themselves and their music into both the global Irish musical tradition, and into the fabric of Montreal and Quebec history.

¹⁰¹ Philippe Murphy claims he was initially drawn to Irish rebel songs, in part because of stereotypical forms of Irishness that emphasize violence and heavy drinking. He later - fortunately, in his view - gravitated away from rebel songs towards Irish traditional instrumental music (Philippe Murphy, interview, 20 December 2017).

¹⁰² Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, “Old Age Pipers,” 123-125.

¹⁰³ Steve Jones, interview, 17 January 2018.

CHAPTER THREE – MEMORY

Writing about West Virginian Appalachian communities left to their own devices after the American coal industry's exploitation of the land and its people, Kathleen Stewart states that "houses, like people and things, circulate until they become abstracted into moving forms, that it is their movements and re-memberings that seem to matter most."¹ This circulation of abstracted forms corresponds quite closely with the patterns of circulation of music, sound, experience, and memory one would expect to find in the Irish traditional music soundscape of Montreal. The forms may be musical, like tunes or songs, or more fleeting and notional like *craic*, hearty laughs and camaraderie. The lingerings echoes of these sonic forms correspond closely to the concept of *mama*, articulated by the Kaluli people of Papua New Guinea. "Like the fading sharpness of a mirror image, *mama* is the trace of audio memory, fragmentary sonic remembrances as they reverberate...[it] instantly simulates feeling-ful memories."² The concept of *mama* may help explain the lasting impact ephemeral strains of music have on people's minds. After all, these strains in turn spark moments of poignant musical epiphany strong enough to impel musicians to learn and master new musical idioms. In this way, memory "plays a seminal role in the construction of identity and the fissured politics of remembrance."³ The interplay of memory and identity in Montreal's Irish music soundscape is coloured by both the diasporic nature of the city's Irish population and by the fact that the bulk of the city's Irish traditional musicians are not themselves Irish. As Matthew Barlow explains:

¹ Kathleen C. Stewart, "An Occupied Place," in Steven Feld and Keith Basso, editors, *Senses of Place* (Santa Fe: School of American Research, 1996), 143.

² Steven Feld, "Waterfalls of Song: An Acoustemology of Place Resounding in Mosavi, Papua New Guinea," in Steven Feld and Keith Basso, *Senses of Place* (Santa Fe: School of American Research, 1996), 99.

³ Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, *Flowing Tides: History and Memory in an Irish Soundscape* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 241.

diasporic communities are bound together through a collective memory and “re-memory”, or memory work, which is forged through the quotidian. They do not abandon their sociocultural values, behaviours, and national allegiances after resettlement and establishment in their new country; rather, they become imbued with new customs and loyalties, which are then layered over the old.⁴

Although performers of Irish traditional music in Montreal generally draw upon a different stock of memories than the city’s Irish community *per se*, they nevertheless construct their collective identity through the same process of memory-layering. This chapter explores the role of memory in its myriad forms in the crafting of identities of performers of Irish traditional music in Montreal. I will argue that these performers express their identities through a community of practice supported by three pillars: a blend of repertorial and archival elements; the interplay between Irish traditional music and Québécois traditional music; and a highly social and heterodox approach to the playing of traditional music.

Archive and repertoire

The interplay of different forms of memory is a pillar of the history of Irish traditional music. Performance scholar Diana Taylor argues that a rift exists across cultures between “the archive of supposedly enduring material (i.e., texts, documents, buildings, bones) and the so-called repertoire of embodied practice/knowledge (i.e., spoken language, dance, sports, ritual).”⁵ Taylor is primarily concerned with the expression and transmission of memory and the recasting

⁴ Matthew Barlow, *Griffintown*, 10.

⁵ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 19.

of preconceived notions of the Americas as a geocultural entity.⁶ However her insights aptly describe the historical dynamics of Irish traditional music, both in Ireland and abroad. The pre-eighteenth-century Irish harp tradition was transmitted and taught orally. Yet Edward Bunting's transcription of old Irish harp tunes - notably the tunes played by the competitors at the Belfast Harp Festival of 1792 - marked the transmutation of a repertorial tradition into an archival record in the form of sheet music. Despite these transcriptions' dubious accuracy, Bunting's sheet music has played an important role in preserving these tunes from oblivion, all the while uprooting them to non-traditional performance settings.⁷ In the Irish diaspora, Francis O'Neill's collection work in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Chicago was also undertaken out of concern for the music's disappearance. His popular collections were marred by issues of accuracy, just like Bunting's transcriptions. Yet they also broadened Irish music's accessibility to musicians around the world.⁸ Twentieth-century collection projects have followed similar patterns. The Irish Folklore Commission, which hired Séamus Ennis to collect tunes in the West of Ireland in 1942, had been created in 1935 out of fear for the cultural impact of widespread poverty and emigration.⁹ Breandán Breathnach began his collection in the 1950s when "[y]oung people [in Ireland], in urban areas especially...were in need of published collections of dance music...The classic collections of Francis O'Neill...had...long been out of print..."¹⁰

Although myriad other collectors could be named and their exploits described here, a common thread emerges. Despite its originally aural nature, Irish traditional music has at times been

⁶ Ibid., 50-51.

⁷ Fintan Vallely, ed., *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music*, 46.

⁸ Nicolas Carolan, *A Harvest Saved*, 41-45.

⁹ Séamus Ennis, *Going to the Well for Water: the Séamus Ennis Field Diary 1942-1946*, ed. and trans. Ríonach úí Ógáin (Cork : Cork University Press, 2009), 2.

¹⁰ Breandán Breathnach, *Ceol Rince na hÉireann*, 4 (Dublin: An Gum, 1996), xi.

committed to archival form when sociocultural circumstances seemed to warrant it. This interweaving of archive and repertoire in the evolution of Irish traditional music has continued in Irish diasporic locations such as Montreal.

Irish traditional music is characterised by profound emotional investment and a sense of collective ownership of the music by those who play it. Flute player Desi Wilkinson expressed this eloquently at the 1993 Co-operation North conference in Enniskillen, which aimed to debate issues surrounding the music's metaphorical ownership:

I thought we were talking about traditional dance music and who it belongs to? It belongs to anybody who wishes to play it. It's accessible to anybody who wishes to play it and listen to it...If people want to march up and down and people want to do what they like, or they think they are expressing their nationalism by playing a traditional tune, that is fair enough! Everybody plays for different reasons.¹¹

As Wilkinson points out, the music “belongs” to any who choose to play it. Musicians who choose to do so, regardless of attachment or connection to Ireland, can become fully-fledged members of what educational theorist Étienne Wenger would describe as “communities of practice.”¹² These groups are the result of “both the pursuit of our enterprises and the attendant social relations. These practices are thus the property of a kind of community created over time by the

¹¹ Peter McNamee, *Traditional Music: Whose Music?*, 93.

¹² As it turns out, most Montreal practitioners of Irish traditional music do feel a sense of attachment to Ireland. This attachment will be discussed at greater length later in this chapter.

sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise.”¹³ Wenger specifies that merely “doing” is not sufficient. “The concept of practice connotes doing, but not just doing in and of itself. It is doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do.”¹⁴ Involvement in communities of practice, then, requires the pursuit of a common goal in line with a specific socio-historical context. The multiplicity of experiences of Montreal performers of Irish traditional music showcases precisely this kind of community.

The Montreal Irish music community maintains itself as all soundscapes do through the perpetuation of a common musical habitus. Among the repertoire side of this lore are the tunes, traditional or not, played in sessions and elsewhere. The many stories and anecdotes that give the community its distinctive identity are also part of this shared culture. The original compositions of certain Montreal-based musicians also constitute part of this distinctive culture. Flute player and fiddler Jean Duval is widely acknowledged as the most prolific Quebec-based composer of tunes in the Irish traditional idiom.¹⁵ One tune in particular has earned him a place in the global Irish music *firmament*.¹⁶ Jean Duval met Mike Rafferty, a flute player from Galway then living in New England, as a Comhaltas convention held in 1991 in Secaucus, New Jersey. Jean composed a tune for Mike Rafferty, and on the advice of his roommate Steve Jones, named it *The*

¹³ Etienne Wenger, *Communities of practice*, 45.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁵ Chris Crilly, interview, 26 January 2018; Steve Jones, interview, 17 January 2018.

¹⁶ Jean Duval was active in the Montreal soundscape from the time he was a student at Collège de Maisonneuve. He travelled regularly to Montreal to play music even after he moved to the countryside. On some occasions in 1996 and 1997 he would leave his home at 2pm, drive one hour to get to Montreal, play a session at Hurley’s Irish Pub from 3pm to 6pm, then proceed to a session at McKibbins Irish Pub on Bishop Street from 6pm to 9pm, and then play in a third pub near what is now the Berri-UQAM metro station from 9pm to midnight (Jean Duval, interview, January 31, 2018).

Caucus at Secaucus.¹⁷ Rafferty made a few adjustments to the tune, renamed it *The Caucus Reel*, and recorded it. It has since featured on at least a dozen albums.¹⁸

There has been sufficient compositional momentum in Quebec to warrant an album of original tunes spanning various compositional idioms. In 2005 multi-instrumentalist Kerri Brown recorded Montreal musicians playing their own compositions. Using her personal laptop, she produced an album called *Composium*, featuring tunes by Gino Beaupré, Christophe Comte, Jean Duval, Steve Jones, Pascal Gemme, Jeremy Keddy, and David Boulanger, among others.¹⁹ The tunes on the album represent a mix of tunes in the Irish and Québécois traditions, with the Québécois tradition featuring more prominently than the Irish one; most of the tunes were composed by musicians operating principally in the Québécois musical tradition.²⁰ Although *Composium* was never circulated widely, it is a prime example of a thriving multi-traditional music community in Montreal.

Though secondary in importance to the repertoire, archival repositories of this cultural memory also exist, namely in the form of recordings such as *Composium*, and online collections of tunes and sets such as the Montreal Session Tunebook. This website is maintained by guitarist and singer Gord Fisch and concertina player Robin Beech. It provides sheet music and ABC transcriptions of tunes played in Montreal sessions, as well as tunes from various other sources including Francis O'Neill's collections and the Northumbrian Minstrelsy.²¹ The tunes on this site are organized by category, by composer, and in alphabetical order by the first letter of the title

¹⁷ Steve Jones, interview, 17 January 2018; The Session, "The Caucus Reel," accessed March 12, 2018 at <https://thesession.org/tunes/2764>. Under the username *Stiamh*, Steve Jones noted down this anecdote on the session.org, currently one of the most popular online forums for discussions of Irish traditional music.

¹⁸ The Session, "The Caucus Reel," Accessed March 12, 2018 at <https://thesession.org/tunes/2764/recordings>.

¹⁹ See Appendix B for a complete list of the tunes and the performers/composers.

²⁰ Steve Jones, interview, 17 January 2018.

²¹ Montreal Session Tunebook, "Home," accessed March 14, 2018 at <http://montrealsession.mine.nu/index.php>.

(Montreal Session Tunebook, “Categories,” “All Tunes,” “Composers”).²² Steve Jones has also self-published *Recollections of a Donegal Man*, recounting the life of Donegal singer and storyteller Packie Manus Byrne in the man’s own words. By doing this, Jones sought to preserve a small part of Irish traditional music lore *in Ireland* from oblivion. A moment of illness for Packie prompted Jones to self-publish the book lest Packie die. It turns out he need not have worried; Packie lived for 25 years afterwards.²³

This interplay between repertorial and archival repositories of memory is essential to save any tradition from dying out:

S’il y a pas de passeurs de tradition, la tradition meurt parce que c’est une tradition orale. Oui, c’est écrit dans les livres, et c’est de plus en plus facile avec Internet...il y a de plus en plus de médias pour garder ça vivant, tsé. Mais à la base, si t’as pas un passeur de tradition, si t’as pas quelqu’un qui connaît les histoires, ...tsé, mettons telle toune, on la jouait tout le temps avec telle autre toune. Pourquoi? Ça c’est parce que dans le temps, Normand Pipon, il y a commencé ça, et on a joué ça pendant des années. Puis moi maintenant quand je joue ces deux tonnes là ensemble, je pense à Normand. C’est devenu la tradition.²⁴

The intensity of musicians engaging with Irish traditional music makes sense if one considers the hurdles some had to overcome. Musicians who began playing Irish traditional music in the 1970s and 1980s often began their quest by seeking out records, instruments and perfor-

²² Montreal Session Tunebook, “All Tunes,” accessed March 14, 2018 at <http://montrealsession.mine.nu/com-plete.php>; Montreal Session Tunebook, “Categories,” accessed March 14, 2018 at <http://montrealsession.mine.nu/categories.php>; Montreal Session Tunebook, “Composers,” accessed March 14, 2018 at <http://montrealsession.mine.nu/composers.php>.

²³ Steve Jones, interview, 17 January 2018.

²⁴ Philippe Murphy, interview, 20 December 2017.

mance opportunities far from home. Paul Legrand recalls hitchhiking to Paris from his home village 100 kilometers away to search for Irish traditional music recordings. His initial blind searches in records shops nevertheless helped him secure albums by the Bothy Band, Planxty and the Chieftains.²⁵ Alan Jones managed to secure his first set of Northumbrian pipes after a lengthy investigation and much correspondence with members of the Northumbrian Pipers Society in England. Even then, he could not simply wander down to his local music shop and buy a set pipes; he had to wait a full year before a Northumbrian pipe maker could make him an instrument.²⁶ Steve Jones did not have to travel far to get his hands on Irish music records in the late 1970s. Fortunately his housemate at the time owned “all the Planxty records and all the Bothy Band records that existed...[he] was listening to all kinds of folk music but then these records kind of wormed their way in to [his] consciousness.”²⁷ Still he undertook weekly trips one hour away to London to listen to - and later play in - the city’s many Irish sessions. These cathartic musical pilgrimages magnified the intensity to these musicians’ experience. The extra travel and trouble required for them to secure records, instruments and playing opportunities helped foster an understanding that these kinds of long and difficult pilgrimages in time and space are necessary milestones in any quest to become proficient players of Irish traditional music.

Some musicians view it as their duty to perfect their playing, be it through acquiring a particular style, learning new tunes, or becoming more technically proficient at their instrument. However these goals are not easily met. In fact, musicians find that although there are many

²⁵ Paul Legrand, interview, 27 October 2017.

²⁶ Alan Jones, interview, 13 December 2017.

²⁷ Steve Jones, interview, 17 January 2018.

strong performers in Montreal, just a handful of these musicians are of truly inspirational calibre.²⁸ Variations in musicians' skill level is to be expected; as Chris Crilly puts it, there is bound to be "a lot of mediocrity, as will always be the case."²⁹ These variations in musicians' skill level have crystallized since the 2000s into a divide between sessions attended by more advanced performers, and others that are designated "slow sessions."³⁰ Players at these latter sessions generally play fairly easy tunes at slow tempos, and permit the use of sheetmusic. They thus offer a more suitable environment for musicians just beginning to learn Irish music.³¹ However, the divide is far from ironclad; some musicians gladly attend "slow sessions" and "faster" ones equally, if their playing ability permits. Others might abandon one type of session as their playing develops. Aindriú MacGabhann recounts that some musicians who used to frequent the sessions he hosted beginning in the mid-1990s and early 2000s never returned after they acquired some confidence and playing experience.³² Others still might withdraw from active session-going completely if they do not feel sufficiently challenged from a musical standpoint, or if they decide to give precedence to other life projects.³³ Over time the popularity of sessions in certain pubs might also wax and wane based on the calibre of the musicians who attend. This has been the case notably for the session at the now-defunct O'Regan's/Fiddler's Green. It began in 2003

²⁸ Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018.

²⁹ Chris Crilly, interview, 26 January 2018.

³⁰ The only explicitly "slow" session takes place at the Old Orchard Pub on Prince Arthur Street on Saturday afternoons. The Siamsa session, which meets on Monday evenings at Hurley's Irish Pub, is not officially considered a slow session though the playing there is at times slower than other sessions.

³¹ Interestingly Jean Duval has noticed that throughout his decades of playing Irish music, beginner sessions such as these have showcased an important element of continuity. Musicians first initiating themselves to Irish traditional music have typically begun with the same types of tunes, such as The Butterfly and Morrison's Jig. "[C]'est parce que c'est des belles tounes de débutants... [peu importe l'époque] on commence avec le même genre de tounes... Là quand tu progresses ben c'est sûr que tu veux découvrir d'autre chose" (Jean Duval, interview, January 31, 2018).

³² Aindriú MacGabhann, interview, 11 January 2018.

³³ Julien Després, interview, 27 July 2017; Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018.

as a gathering point for students of the Siamsa School of Irish Music, and by 2009 had become the site of large, lively and fast-paced sessions.³⁴ Regardless of individual musicians' skill or preference for session venues, Montreal's slow sessions serve as welcoming sites for the transmission the repertorial aspects of Irish traditional music in Montreal. Indeed this openness - and with acceptance of moderate performance ability as its corollary - is essential in maintaining a community tradition in the absence of direct guardianship by the city's Irish community.

Irish O'Québec³⁵

Few players of Irish traditional music in Montreal since the 1970s were - and are - originally from Ireland. Those musicians born in Ireland first encountered traditional music through family or acquaintances, and were invariably bitten by "the bug". For some the music crept back into their lives every time they devoted themselves to other projects.³⁶ Others could not resist the opportunity of earning their living doing something they loved.³⁷ Others still took up Irish traditional music after emigrating as a way of rediscovering their ethnic roots. This is the case for one of Kate Bevan-Baker's fiddle students. This student emigrated from Ireland at a young age, and took up the fiddle later in life to add to her already considerable Irish cultural baggage. She also represents an oddity in Montreal's soundscape, insofar as most musicians become acquainted with other dimensions of Irish culture after learning to play Irish traditional music, rather than the other way around.³⁸

³⁴ Robin Beech, interview, 8 January 2018; Montreal Session Tunebook, "Sessions in Montreal," accessed March 14, 2018 at <http://montrealsession.mine.nu/sessions.php>.

³⁵ This was the title of a 2009-2010 exhibit at Montreal's McCord Museum on the Irish in Quebec. It plays on the phonetic similarities between the French for "Irish in Quebec" and the "O" which found in many Irish surnames.

³⁶ Chris Crilly, interview, 26 January 2018.

³⁷ Aindriú MacGabhann, interview, 11 January 2018.

³⁸ Kate Bevan-Baker, interview, 27 July 2017.

Those musicians without an Irish ancestral connection often enter the world of Irish traditional music through moments of musical epiphany. This pattern is in keeping with the joint anti-modernist and authentic appeal of traditional music that developed in the 1960s and 1970s in Quebec and elsewhere.³⁹ In this context, moments of musical epiphany facilitate the “suturing of oneself into the experiences and history of one’s diasporic culture.”⁴⁰ Welsh-born Alan Jones recounts how he first encountered Irish traditional music. “I heard somebody playing some Irish jigs on a...or maybe some reels as well, on a banjo and a mandolin. And I said: ‘Oh I like that, that’s happy music’...Then I got talking and then I learnt that the folk music was being broadcast, it was a weekly folk music show on the radio. And on one of the broadcasts I heard the great travelling piper Finbar Furey. On the radio, on BBC radio. It was called, Folk on Two, or something folk. It was folk music radio program. And when I heard this, the sound of the instrument and the playing blew me away. ‘Wow. My God, whatever’s that incredible instrument what an amazing set. I want one of those, I want to play that, I want to know more about it.’”⁴¹ The music’s irresistible appeal which Alan Jones describes is a common theme to most musicians’ experience.⁴² Whether they first encountered Irish music in their local folk club scene in England or Wales, in a Montreal *céili*, or in the film *Last of the Mohicans*, these musicians then felt impelled to learn more about the music they heard, seek out instruments, sessions, teachers and

³⁹ David Berthiaume, “Les Veillées d’automne.”

⁴⁰ Matthew Barlow, *Griffintown*, 15.

⁴¹ Alan Jones, interview, 13 December 2017.

⁴² As Michael Moloney noted in his doctoral thesis on Irish traditional music in America, even a single instance of exposure to Irish traditional music can bring about “a fundamental change in life style [sic] on the part of the individual concerned” (Michael Moloney, “Irish Music in America,” 423).

tunes.⁴³ For some, Irish traditional music filled a cultural void. This is notably the case for musicians like Philippe Murphy, whose nationalism and attachment to traditional Québec culture were not particularly deep in their early years.

[J]e veux dire j'ai grandi en français. Oui j'ai les références culturelles d'un Québécois francophone. Mais sinon ...ma blonde dans ce temps là quand j'avais 16, 18 ans, son père était nationaliste, drapeau du Québec, poster du référendum, puis tout ça. Chez nous...il n'y avait pas de culture traditionnelle, tout ça. Faque, dans ce sens là j'étais vraiment dans le générique.⁴⁴

The traditional music soundscape of Montreal was pluralistic from the earliest days of the 1970s, with blends of Irish, Scottish, Québécois and other traditional musics being played in the same sessions as bluegrass and folk songs. Irish traditional music nevertheless dominated in certain players' repertoire and in certain sessions. At La Taverne St-Laurent, where sessions were held in the mid-1980s, session convener and percussionist Guy Berniquet "introduced this system whereby one Wednesday it would be Irish music, the next Wednesday it would be Québécois music until 10:30, and then it was free-for-all which meant basically Irish music."⁴⁵ This predominance of Irish traditional music suited some musicians just fine, but alienated others: "I suppose that people who wanted to play Québécois music, they might have liked Irish music but they didn't want Québécois music to get completely submerged, which was what was happening."⁴⁶ This understandable element of musical protectionism sparked a wave of

⁴³ The English folk scene club of the 1960s and 1970s was a particularly rich zone of intercultural music-making. A number of English musicians now living in Montreal first encountered Irish traditional music through this scene (Robin Beech, interview, 8 January 2018; Alan Jones, interview, 13 December 2017; Steve Jones, interview, 17 January 2018).

⁴⁴ Philippe Murphy, interview, 20 December 2017.

⁴⁵ Steve Jones, interview, 17 January 2018.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Québécois sessions across Montreal in distinct locations and with different repertoire than their Irish counterparts. Although he pursued Irish music with a passion for decades, Jean Duval followed a similar path and returned to his ethnic musical roots in the 1990s: “[À] un moment donné, je pense que c’est pour des raisons identitaires un peu, je me suis dit : ‘Bien là, il faut que je m’intéresse à ma musique.’ Puis ma musique, ce n’est pas la musique irlandaise.”⁴⁷

The popularity of Irish music in the 1970s and 1980s must be understood in the context of the positive connotations which Ireland had acquired in Québécois culture. Les Veillées d’automne, a traditional music festival took place in Montreal’s Plateau Hall, from November 17th to 21st, 1975, illustrates these connotations through its two main themes: first, tradition as “une source permettant la prise de conscience profonde de l’identité collective du peuple [québécois] afin de lui faire retrouver sa dignité” and, second, connections between the Québécois people “et les liens qu’il a avec les peuples qui lui ressemblent.”⁴⁸ These brother-people of the Québécois, according to the festival organizers, were also minorities struggling to maintain their own cultures: Acadians, Bretons, Cajuns, and Irish. These people’s traditional musics were showcased on different days of the festival: Québécois groups and musicians like Jean Carignan, Les Ruines-babines, and Le Rêve du Diable performed over the course of the entire festival, while groups representing Acadia, Louisiana, Ireland and Brittany were showcased on specific days.⁴⁹ Taken together, the performances at the Veillées d’automne amounted simultaneously to a celebration of revitalized traditions, and to a musical, counter-cultural critique of the oppression

⁴⁷ Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018.

⁴⁸ David Berthiaume, “Les Veillées d’automne.”

⁴⁹ Les soeurs Myers, Johnny Comeau, and Gilles Losier, representing Acadia, performed on Monday 17 November. The next day saw Breton performances by les frères Conan et M. Perros, Mikael Moazan et Gweltaz Ar Fur. Louisiana was represented on Wednesday by Zachary Richard and le Bayou des mystères, and e groupe de Marc Savoy, while Irish music was performed on Thursday by John Wright and Catherine Perrier, and Barde (David Berthiaume, “Les Veillées d’automne”).

which these minorities faced.⁵⁰ The similarities between francophone Québécois, Cajuns, and Acadians are evident; all represent francophone enclaves in predominantly anglophone North America. The comparison between Quebec and Brittany is also intuitive, given the centrality of linguistic struggles in the development Québécois nationalism and Breton nationalism. Irish culture was highlighted at the Veillées, even though Ireland had been an independent republic since 1937. The precarious state of the Irish language in the Republic of Ireland, and Northern Ireland's continued status as a British territory might have served to connect Ireland to the themes of oppressed minorities. However Ireland overall, rather than Northern Ireland specifically, was showcased in the Veillées d'automne.

The place of Irish music at this festival is better explained by a longstanding tradition of francophones in Quebec - and even in Lower Canada - of drawing parallels between their political and cultural experiences and those of Catholic Ireland. Indeed, analysis of British colonial policy in Ireland was instrumental in "la prise de conscience canadienne-française de l'expérience du colonialisme qui accompagne l'engouement pour les rébellions [de 1837 et 1838]."⁵¹ Québécois nationalists have seen their own historical aspirations reflected in the Republic of Ireland's ultimately successful secession from the British empire. This has led some scholars to posit that Ireland in a mirror, or a prism, through which to better understand Quebec's history and culture.⁵² As a result, many Québécois - both historical and contemporary - have understood Irishness as something inherently worthy and positive.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Mary Haslam, "La période pré-rébellion," 252.

⁵² Éric Bédard, "L'Irlande, les Irlandais et Nous," in Linda Cardinal, Simon Jolivet and Isabelle Matte, editors, *Le Québec et l'Irlande. Culture, histoire, identité* (Sillery : Les Éditions du Septentrion, 2014), 278-279, 284. That said the respective political struggles of Quebec nationalists and Irish nationalists in Northern Ireland have been markedly different, notably the legitimacy political of violence. See André Poulin, "L'Irlande du Nord et le Québec dans les années 1960: deux sociétés à la croisée des chemins," in Simon Jolivet, Linda Cardinal and Isabelle Matte, editors, *Le Québec et l'Irlande. Culture, histoire, identité* (Sillery : Les Éditions du Septentrion, 2014), 138.

Yet this recognition has extended far past partisan political considerations. The Irish contributions to Montreal were deemed worthy of emphasis in the 1992 celebrations of the 350th anniversary of the founding of Montreal. Montreal-based Celtic band Phenigma, of which Jean Duval and Steve Jones were members, performed regularly throughout that year for events organized by Montreal's Irish and Scottish associations.⁵³ Aindriú MacGabhann, who was visiting Montreal at the time, recalls a "big Irish festival down at [Montreal's] Old Port."⁵⁴ When he emigrated permanently to Montreal in 1996, Belfast-born MacGabhann regularly encountered Francophone musicians whose opinion of him changed for the better when he affirmed he was Irish, not English.⁵⁵

Irish traditional music is a minority tradition within Quebec, a society engaged in an ongoing perplexed dance with its own history and memory. As Jocelyn Létourneau and Sabrina Moisan point out, there is a deep-rooted sense of nostalgia and melancholy in young francophone Québécois' understanding of Quebec history. This *mal-de-vivre* is articulated around three pillars: "what unfortunately befell a community," "what that community might have become if

⁵³ Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018.

⁵⁴ Aindriú MacGabhann, interview, 11 January 2018.

⁵⁵ Ibid. Even to this day, Quebec politicians such as Denis Coderre and Thomas Mulcair are quick to point out their own Irish roots, or to let others do so in their stead (Canadian Broadcasting Company, "Sunshine and Smiles at Montreal's St. Patrick's Day parade." March 19, 2017, accessed March 12, 2018 at <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/montreal-st-patricks-day-parade-1.4031709>; John Geddes, "Smart, tough and and nasty: the definitive portrait of Thomas Mulcair," *MacLean's*, September 19, 2012, accessed on March 12, 2018 at <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/the-fights-of-his-life/>). The 2009 creation of the Johnson Chair in Québec and Canadian Irish Studies is proof of more-than-token interest on the Quebec government's part in the contributions of the Irish to Quebec. This interest is apparent in Quebec society as a whole, as "l'idée de l'irlandicité du Québec semble s'implanter dans l'imaginaire québécois contemporain" (Cardinal et al. 12). It is telling that the Siamsa School of Irish Music appears on the external resources and links page of the website of the *Société pour la promotion de la danse traditionnelle québécoise* (SPDTQ)'s website. It is the only organization not devoted explicitly to Québécois culture listed on this webpage (Société pour la promotion de la danse traditionnelle québécoise. "Ressources – Liens." Accessed March 9, 2018 at <http://espacetrad.org/ressources/>). This inclusion highlights not only the two organizations' shared interest in traditional dancing and music, but also the privileged place of the Irish in Quebec's collective mind.

only...’ ‘what that community might yet become if only.’”⁵⁶ This triad persists even though “conditions have been in place for some time for it to fade away...”⁵⁷ Létourneau and Moisan view this situation as problematic, and suggest that teachers should prioritise teaching students critical historical methodology over empirical facts to “counter the perpetuation of a historical memory with many factual discrepancies.”⁵⁸ Nevertheless, a view nevertheless persists among young Québécois that their history is marred through and through by unbanishable misfortune. These young people’s perception of their ancestors as a people that has been “pushed around, reclusive, always getting back on its feet, but also fearful of seeking fulfillment” likely colours their broader understanding of Québécois traditional culture.⁵⁹ Indeed players of Irish and Québécois traditional music in Montreal have noticed a widespread aversion among francophone Québécois to Québécois traditional music.⁶⁰ According to Philippe Murphy:

Tu penserais que les Québécois seraient fiers de leur culture, seraient fiers de leur répertoire traditionnel. Mais mon expérience c’est que tu fais jouer de la musique trad en plein milieu de l’été...peu importe que ce soit québécois, irlandais. Les gens vont rentrer dans mon bureau, ils vont faire comme: “Ah, de la musique du Jour de l’An.” ...Sauf que c’est bon à l’année de la musique comme ça, c’est pas juste au Jour de l’An. Même si la Bottine Souriante chante à propos de la tourtière, puis du Réveillon, ça reste

⁵⁶ Jocelyn Létourneau and Sabrina Moisan, “Young People’s Assimilation of a Collective Historical Memory: A Case Study of Quebeckers of French-Canadian Heritage,” in Peter Seixas, editor, *Theorizing Historical Consciousness* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 110.

⁵⁷ Ibid. The conditions represent a substantial historiography “which [has] managed to afford a much more positive, exciting representation of the experience of Quebec - and of contemporary Quebec’s rather enviable overall situation” (Ibid.)

⁵⁸ Ibid., 122.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 113.

⁶⁰ Some musicians have encountered condescending attitudes towards Irish traditional music even in Ireland. When Aindriú MacGabhann brought an electric bass and an electric guitar to a local Belfast music shop in 1982 to trade in for an acoustic guitar he was greeted with “You’re going backwards...you’re supposed to start with acoustic and then go electric, you’re doing the opposite...oh yeah you wanna learn the diddly-dee?” (Aindriú MacGabhann, interview, 11 January 2018). The Montreal Irish community’s relationship with Irish traditional music will be explored in a subsequent chapter.

que c'est pas juste bon au Jour de l'An. Tsé, le même genre de personne qui aurait pas de problème à aller au Festival Nuits d'Afrique pour écouter, je sais pas moi, des Maliens jouer de la musique, puis chanter le répertoire traditionnel du Mali. Mais pour une raison quelconque leur demander d'écouter du trad québécois en dehors du temps des Fêtes, ou de trad irlandais en dehors de la Saint-Patrick, c'est comme, "does not compute."⁶¹

This is not to say that Quebecers have completely disowned their traditional music; there can be no denying the vibrancy and health of traditional Quebec music on its home *terroir*.⁶² Yet traditional music of all stripes has been - and remains - a marginal art form in Quebec. This marginality appeals to some musicians, and in fact draws many to traditional music in the first place. Yet traditional musics' precise levels of marginality have fluctuated with the vagaries of Quebec's political and cultural history. The band Barde was formed in 1973, in a context of rising ethno-linguistic and political tensions between predominantly francophone Québécois nationalists and predominantly anglophone Canadian federalists. Montreal was the predominant site for the cultural and linguistic dimension of this confrontation during the 1970s because the English language was more visible and audible there than elsewhere in Quebec.⁶³ These tensions were part of the broader upheavals within Quebec society during the lead-up to the election of the province's first Parti Québécois government in 1976. In 1980, this government organized a referendum on *souveraineté-association*, which called for political independence for Quebec with the

⁶¹ Philippe Murphy, interview, 20 December 2017. This is a prime example of tension between tradition and modernity, a theme which some historians consider central to Quebec's history (See Peter Gossage and J.I. Little, *An Illustrated History of Quebec*). Some Quebec musicians have also commented on this tension. The song "Dégénération", by Quebec neo-traditional band Mes Aïeux, juxtaposes the stoic accomplishments of a Québécois listener's ancestors to the listeners' own social degeneracy (Mes Aïeux, "Dégénération/Le reel du fossé," *En Famille*, Les Disques Victoire, 2004).

⁶² The plethora of activities undertaken and promoted by the SPDTQ, and the global popularity of traditional Quebec bands such as Le Vent du Nord, to name just these examples, are ample proof of the tradition's vitality.

⁶³ Paul-André Linteau, *The History of Montréal*, 163-164.

maintenance of certain economic ties with the rest of Canada.⁶⁴ Chris Crilly recalls that the band members changed the name from “Bard” to “Barde” “to satisfy the political climate of the day.”⁶⁵ Barde’s manager in these early years even insisted that the musicians speak only French amongst themselves when performing in francophone CEGEPs or at Saint-Jean-Baptiste concerts, despite there being only one Francophone - Pierre Guérin - in the group. Conversely, Chris Crilly made a point of speaking as much English as possible.⁶⁶

The lead-up to the 1980 referendum was marked by cultural effervescence in popular Québécois music. Félix Leclerc and Gilles Vigneault, among others, sang their way into Quebec’s musical pantheon in part by riding a tidal wave of nationalist sentiment.⁶⁷ However, the defeat of the “Yes” campaign marked a downturn in Québécois music’s popularity and nationalist tinge. Players of traditional music have noted this “post-referendum trauma” in traditional music as well as popular music.⁶⁸ Jean Duval asserts:

Il y a eu une explosion après le mouvement nationaliste, de la musique trad, qui a fini un peu avec le référendum [de 1980] côté musique québécoise, ça a piqué du nez. On était quasiment des bibittes là, du monde qui s'intéressait à la musique traditionnelle dans les années 80 là...c'était assez marginal.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ The “No” side of the referendum won with 60 percent of the votes, as opposed to 40 percent for the “Yes” side (Peter Gossage and J.I. Little, *An Illustrated History of Quebec*, 271).

⁶⁵ Chris Crilly, interview, 26 January 2018.

⁶⁶ Ibid. Crilly affirms this choice was motivated by stubborn opposition to the manager’s authority, rather than any ethno-linguistic strife. Crilly to this day claims he is “delighted always to inform [his] Québécois friends that for the most part [he has] been speaking French longer than they have [though] perhaps not as well” (Ibid.).

⁶⁷ Scott Piroth, “Popular Music and Identity in Quebec,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* vol. 38, no. 2 (June 2008), 148.

⁶⁸ Paul Legrand, interview, 27 October 2017. This is my translation of the expression “trauma post-référendaire” used by Paul Legrand. Indeed the SPDTQ website affirms that the period between 1985 and 1995 was a void of “*patrimoine vivant*,” or living heritage. The SPDTQ claims it ensured continuity in traditional Québécois dancing during this time (Société pour la promotion de la danse traditionnelle québécoise, “Historique,” accessed March 9, 2018 at <http://espacetrad.org/historique/>).

⁶⁹ Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018. The word “bibitte” is a colloquial Québécois word meaning “bug” or “creature.”

Although traditional music remained a marginal art form in Quebec after 1980, Irish traditional music in particular underwent a resurgence at the start of the 1990s due to the Riverdance phenomenon.⁷⁰ Throughout these decades, Montreal's Irish traditional music "bibittes" continued to foster a unique Irish soundscape. They did so mainly by throwing established playing styles to the wind.

Un vent de fraîcheur

Prior to the 1950s, Irish traditional music was considered a pan-Irish art form; few distinctions were made between playing styles at this time.⁷¹ However the playing of certain musicians later came to be associated with specific region of Ireland, namely Sligo, Clare, Donegal and Sliabh Luachra.⁷² The Sligo style of fiddle-playing, as it later came to be known, was popularized by New-York-made 78 rpm recordings of Michael Coleman, Paddy Killoran and James Morrison in the 1920s and 1930s. This fast-paced style is characterized by a balance between rhythmic playing and smooth bowing and incorporates rolls as well as trebles.⁷³ In 1970s and early 1980s Montreal and elsewhere in Quebec, this style was considered to be the quintessential Irish traditional sound. This was partly due to legendary Quebec fiddler Jean Carignan's popularisation of Coleman's style via his own blending of Irish and Québécois tunes.⁷⁴ The influence of this New York-Sligo style is still felt today; many sets popularized by Michael Coleman are still

⁷⁰ The influence of the Riverdance phenomenon is discussed in Chapter 7.

⁷¹ Fintan Vallely, ed., *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music*, 387.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 125.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 50.

commonly played. “[L]es sets de Coleman qu’on joue encore; on les joue peut-être pas comme Coleman mais c’est les mêmes tounes dans le même ordre. Il y a un effet durable de ça.”⁷⁵

Around the middle of the 1980s different regional styles proliferated amongst Montreal musicians, before then declining in importance as musicians experimented beyond these styles’ confines.⁷⁶ Some musicians consciously moved away from the regional styles, preferring to trace the authenticity of their playing to the example of famous musicians rather than to a region. Indeed, some musicians question the very legitimacy of the regional styles as musical labels:

[L]e style de certains musiciens vont amener...[par exemple] Kevin Burke à jouer du Michael Coleman d’une certaine manière, et puis tu l’écoutes joué par quelqu’un d’autre, tu retrouves la musique de Michael Coleman, mais pourtant [les musiciens] ont chacun leur style...par exemple Tommy Peoples, on l’associe au Donegal style mais il a passé je crois vingt ans dans Co. Clare...maintenant je pense qu’il vit aux États-Unis.⁷⁷

In other cases, the regional styles are not consciously cast aside but ignored altogether. This approach is in keeping with a widespread understanding among Montreal players of Irish traditional music from the 1970s to the present day that traditional tunes can - and must - be expressed with a modern, personal twist:

[L]a philosophie reste traditionnelle mais la musique traditionnelle d’aujourd’hui j’ai l’impression passe par des canaux modernes, que ce soit l’amplification, que ce soit...en fait le moderne c’est un peu comme, t’as ta base de sauce à spaghetti puis tu peux l’épicer comme tu veux. Tu peux l’épicer, tu peux faire ce que tu veux avec un spaghetti, avec une base de spaghetti. Mais je pense qu’une

⁷⁵ Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Paul Legrand, interview, 27 October 2017. Tommy Peoples has since returned to his native Donegal.

base de musique traditionnelle, tu peux l'agrémenter comme tu veux.⁷⁸

This approach to traditional Irish music - drawing on a broad “palette de couleurs,” to borrow Jean Duval’s phrase - has become a trademark of Montreal’s Irish music community. It is alternatively championed and decried by different musicians. Chris Crilly recalls acerbic reflections about musicians he viewed as repertorial purists: “And if I wanted to play [a tune or a set] in a key that you don’t know, shut up for a minute and listen to it, you might learn something...but I’ve never run into [purist rigidity] in Montreal.”⁷⁹ Remarkably, Crilly encountered this kind of rigidity in a session in Clifden, Co. Galway, which he visited in 2000. After each set, a musician would write down on a notepad the tunes played in each set, the number of times each tunes was played, in what keys they were played, the playing speed, and who played what instrument for that set.⁸⁰ This rigid approach is exceptional for a session in Ireland, and would be even more out of place in a Montreal session.

On the other hand this “palette” leaves a sour taste in some musicians’ mouths. In Steve Jones’ experience this approach can hide some musicians’ lack of concern and diligence. “[Y]ou go to a session...and there’ll be 30 musicians there and there’ll be very few that you as an experienced Irish musician would actually want to sit in corner and enjoy a few tunes with...[in some cases] they don’t care whether they sound Irish or not.”⁸¹ This frustration is understandable,

⁷⁸ Julien Després, interview, 27 July 2017.

⁷⁹ Chris Crilly, interview, 26 January 2018.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Steve Jones, interview, 17 January 2018. Steve Jones’ concern with sounding as “Irish” as possible stems from a deep-rooted desire for the continuity of the repertoire and style he learned from his own traditional music mentors. “At the back of my mind there is this sense that...I’m not the heir to any particular school of traditional music or any particular tradition, but I do want to represent it properly” (Steve Jones, interview, 17 January 2018).

given certain skilled musicians' active cultivation of what they understand as an Irish sound. Steve Jones' ultimate goal was to be able to play Irish music in such a way that his ethnicity could not be guessed until he opened his mouth to speak.⁸² This worry stayed with him after he emigrated to Montreal in 1987 and encountered traditional Québécois music. He made a deliberate choice not to play too much Québécois music so as not to sound too Québécois when playing Irish music, nor too Irish when playing Québécois music.⁸³ Similarly, Jean Duval cultivated two distinct styles for his playing of Irish and Québécois music respectively. Others have seen their best efforts at fostering distinct playing styles thwarted. Robin Beech found his Québécois playing "infected" by Irish elements, and vice versa.⁸⁴

Montreal players of Irish traditional music agree that their scene is characterised by exceptional openness and friendliness. So-called Irish sessions have regularly featured a mix of Irish, Scottish, and Québécois tunes, to name just these categories: "[O]n va jouer à peu près n'importe quoi si ça swing. Je veux dire, on va jouer du Breton. Si quelqu'un décide pendant une accalmie de jouer un morceau de musique Cajun, tsé, on est tout le temps bien open pour ça. Puis c'est pas partout que tu peux tu permettre de faire ça. Il y a des places qui tu te ferais crucifier si tu commençais à jouer du Cajun."⁸⁵ This openness likely displeases purist musicians, who might interpret it as a dilution of the music's Irishness. However as previously mentioned these kinds of critics have been difficult to find in Montreal.⁸⁶ If nothing else, they likely stop attending sessions and thus disappear from the scene.

⁸² Steve Jones, interview, 17 January 2018. Steve Jones speaks with a noticeable English accent.

⁸³ Steve Jones, interview, 17 January 2018. Ironically Steve Jones is currently teaching at a traditional Quebecois music camp in the summertime.

⁸⁴ Robin Beech, interview, 8 January 2018.

⁸⁵ Philippe Murphy, interview, 20 December 2017.

⁸⁶ Chris Crilly, interview, 26 January 2018.

This contentious openness coexists alongside a sense of highly developed culture of friendliness. Montreal musicians will typically welcome newcomers very quickly into sessions and chat with them between sets. This is in keeping with a widespread understanding of Irish music as a primarily social artform, as a reason to bring people together.⁸⁷ In fact, Montreal uilleann piper and tin whistle player Sean Ferguson, also a professor at McGill University's Schulich School of Music, has theorized the Irish traditional music session as a form of "Irish group therapy."⁸⁸ Montreal musicians also export their cheerful and friendly mentality wherever they travel. When an Irish musician passed through some Montreal sessions in late 2017, he asked whether some of the musicians knew a multi-instrumentalist named Gino.⁸⁹ On hearing an affirmative response, the Irish musician confirmed that Gino was currently active in sessions in Dublin, and making a remarkable musical and social impression.⁹⁰

Gino may be an exceptional case. Yet, his exuberant cheer reflects a sociability common to Montreal traditional music sessions. This social disposition is sometimes interpreted as a display of archetypal French-Canadian *bonhomie*, in contrast to a more reserved Anglo-Canadian habitus. Jean Duval has attended sessions in Ottawa where the musicians did not talk between sets. Instead, they sat in awkward silence until someone started the next tune.⁹¹ This situation is almost unimaginable in a Montreal session. Montreal musicians have also encountered this kind of reservation in some parts of Ireland. "En Irlande c'est sérieux la musique traditionnelle. C'est

⁸⁷ Philippe Murphy, interview, 20 December 2017; Rae Shepp, interview, 29 May 2017.

⁸⁸ McGill University - Schulich School of Music, "Mini-Music 2016: Lend Us Your Ears," Accessed March 9, 2018 at <http://www.music.mcgill.ca/minimusic/schedule.htm>.

⁸⁹ Gino is known on a first-name basis in sessions in Montreal, Toronto and Dublin, to name just those places. In keeping with his aura of rambunctious friendliness, I have chosen to refer to him on a first-name basis.

⁹⁰ Robin Beech, interview, 8 January 2018.

⁹¹ Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018.

très sérieux. Au Donegal un peu moins, ça rigole plus, mais ailleurs là des fois c'est quasiment une religion là leur affaire. Moi je trouve qu'ils sont...tu peux tomber dans des sessions de puristes là pas à peu près là tsé, on dirait qu'ils sont pas là pour avoir du fun. Alors qu'à Montréal il y a toujours eu ça, il y a toujours eu un côté bon vivant, accueillant."⁹²

Conclusion

This sociability, along with the blending of Irish and Québécois music and the archival and repertorial supports of Montreal's Irish music community, has created a traditional music culture that draws its roots from Ireland and elsewhere but is nevertheless unique to Montreal. However time erodes all; forgetting, aging and migration are perpetual Swords of Damocles for this community, just as for torchbearers of all oral traditions. Members of the Irish music community in Montreal have regularly shored up their individual and collective archives and repertoires to fight the erosion of tradition. Given its ephemeral nature, the repertoire's existence - let alone its forms - can only be maintained through concerted efforts of transmission and learning. Similarly, archival records mean nothing if they are not consulted. Over the years, a number of organizations have contributed to this work of preservation and transmission by promoting Irish traditional music initiatives. The efforts of Montreal's two main Irish cultural associations - the Saint Patrick's Society, and the United Irish Societies - are especially noteworthy, and will be explored in the next chapter.

⁹² Ibid.

CHAPTER FOUR - IRISH INSTITUTIONS

Irish traditional music is perhaps one of Ireland's most recognizable cultural features on the global stage. Much of the music's history in Ireland and in Irish diasporic locations has been marked by a pattern of fluctuating fortunes. The music experienced alternating bouts of decline and effervescence in tandem with the rising or falling circumstances of the populations who played it. Efforts to revive Irish traditional music – both in Ireland and elsewhere – have generally occurred at times when the music was perceived to be in a state of decline. Given culture's centrality in the fostering of diasporic feelings of belonging, one might expect Irish associations in North American cities to have played a leading role in safeguarding this musical dimension of Irish tradition. An analysis of Montreal's Irish traditional music soundscape actually reveals a more nuanced picture.

Drawing on archival documents from the city's main Irish organizations – the Saint Patrick's Society, and the United Irish Societies – this chapter argues that although music in various forms has long been used in the expression of specific forms of Montreal-based Irishness, institutional support for Irish traditional music in Montreal has generally been indirect, and is actually a relatively recent development in the history of the city's Irish community.

History of Irish Associations in Montreal¹

Founded in 1834 as a non-denominational Irish fraternal organization, the Saint Patrick's Society was the first ethno-national society founded in Montreal.² Like other similar national societies, the Saint Patrick's Society became one of the city's bulwarks of social conservatism in a tense sectarian and political climate in the lead-up to the Rebellions of 1837 and 1838. In this context of religious and political confrontation, the Saint Patrick's Society served as an Irish expression of conservatism and commitment to civic order.³ This coherent sense of purpose lasted only until the end of the Rebellions, at which point political fault lines within the Society's leadership and membership emerged. This fragmentation, along with the influx of larger-than-usual numbers of poor immigrants from Ireland during the Famine period, left the Society incapable of providing adequate relief to Irish immigrants, thereby weakening the Society's influence even further.⁴ In 1856, the Saint Patrick's Society dissolved and its Catholic majority reorganized the Society as a strictly Irish-Catholic organization, leaving the Protestant former members of the Society to reorder themselves into the Irish Protestant Benevolent Society.⁵

¹ There are other Irish cultural associations beside the aforementioned three. These include the Ancient Order of Hibernians, Erin Sports Associations, Innisfail, and the Montreal Shamrocks Gaelic Athletic Club. These groups each have their respective focus: the Ancient Order of Hibernians emphasizes Irish history and charity; Erin Sports Association and the Shamrocks promote Irish sports; and Innisfail touches lightly on all spheres of Irish culture (Ancient Order of Hibernians Canada, "Welcome," accessed June 7, 2018, at <http://www.aoh-montreal.com/about> ; Ancient Order of Hibernians Canada, "Innisfail History Page," accessed June 7, 2018, at <http://www.aoh-montreal.com/innisinfo.htm>). These associations have been known to organize *céilithe*, and their members sometimes spontaneously produce fiddles and guitars at social events (Steve Jones, interview, 17 January 2018). However, the United Irish Societies and the Saint Patrick's Society are currently the largest and most active groups of their kind in Montreal, and they have historically provided more sustained and systematic support for Irish traditional music than the smaller societies.

² Kevin James, "Dynamics of Ethnic Associational Culture," 48.

³ Kevin James, "Dynamics of Ethnic Associational Culture," 54-55. Drawing on insights from Kevin James, Matthew Barlow affirms that the SPS was founded "so that the Irish middle classes, both Catholic and Protestant, could distance and distinguish themselves from the working class Irish-Catholic radicals who supported Louis-Joseph Papineau's Parti Patriote in Griffintown" (Barlow, "The House of the Irish," 25).

⁴ Kevin James, "Dynamics of Ethnic Associational Culture," 57-58.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 60-62.

Although this split in Montreal's Irish community has persisted to this day, the relationship between fraternal organizations was never entirely dichotomous. Other organizations existed alongside these two, forming a constellation of Irish cultural associations in Montreal. One of these was the Montreal branch of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, which emerged in the 1870s, and which soon became a pillar in the city's Irish Catholic associational life.⁶ In 1928, another group appeared in this *smorgasbord*: the United Irish Societies were designed as an umbrella organization for all of Montreal's Irish associations, and inherited from the Ancient Order of Hibernians the responsibility for organizing the annual Saint Patrick's Day parade.⁷ Members of the various societies also attended events organised by their so-called sister societies, even before the emergence of the United Irish Societies as an umbrella organization for the city's Irish associations. For instance, members of Catholic ethno-national organisations - namely the Saint Patrick's Society and the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste - regularly participated in the IPBS' annual picnics and "Fête and Games." In so doing, they helped ensure these events' success.⁸ Further evidence suggests that Edgar Andrew Collard, the author of the official history of Montreal's Irish Protestant Benevolent Society, sought funds from the Saint Patrick's Society to publish essays he had written on the Irish in Montreal.⁹ Despite the differences between the societies and

⁶ Matthew Barlow, *Griffintown*, 31. The AOH's influence became so widespread that in 1893 the Saint Patrick's Society ceded control of the organization of the Saint Patrick's Day parade to the Irish-Catholic Committee, which included "representatives of all the Irish-Catholic parishes of Montreal and the various fraternal parochial organizations, as well as the AOH" (Matthew Barlow, *Griffintown*, 32).

⁷ UIS historian Ken Quinn affirms that the UIS no longer serves an umbrella organization, but is now a stand-alone organization that has retained control of the organisation of Montreal's Saint Patrick's Day parade (Ken Quinn, personal conversation, 24 May 2018).

⁸ Edgar Andrew Collard, *The Irish Way: The History of the Irish Protestant Benevolent Society* (Montreal: Price-Patterson Ltd., 1992), 33.

⁹ Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal, "Grants Committee: Minutes of Meeting," 14 November 1990, Concordia University Archives, 3.

their respective mandates, the relationships among the city's Irish associations seem to have historically been collegial or - at the very least - cordial.¹⁰

Saint Patrick's Society (SPS)

Institutional support for Irish culture in Montreal is a relatively recent development in the history of the Irish presence in the city. Evidence of this support is essentially non-existent in the Saint Patrick's Society's archival records until the 1970s. The 1836 Constitution of the Saint Patrick's Society contains no identifiable mission statement. Rather the Society's *raison-d'être* may be gleaned from the articles about the use of Society funds. Article XIX prohibited the use of Society funds for purposes other than "charitable and benevolent purposes."¹¹ This makes sense, as in the 1830s the Society was preoccupied with social welfare issues, such as coping with the cholera epidemics that ravaged Montreal during that decade, and to which many Irish immigrants fell victim.¹² This obviated the possibility of funding musical or other artistic endeavours, even had there been the political will to do so.

Unlike the first edition of the SPS Constitution, the preamble to the 1879 / 1881 edition of the Society's constitution does contain an identifiable mission statement:

¹⁰ Indeed the United Irish Societies' historian's blog stresses how close the United Irish Societies came to marching in the 1934 Saint Jean-Baptiste parade (United Irish Societies of Montreal, "The Year the UIS Almost Participated in the St. Jean Baptiste Parade," accessed June 12, 2018, at <http://unitedirishsocieties.ca/2016/07/16/the-year-the-uis-almost-participated-in-the-st-jean-baptiste-parade/>). This 2016 blog post suggests that relationships between the French-Canadian or Québécois Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste and Montreal's Irish associations were more tense than the relationships of the Irish associations with each other. This situation is certainly plausible, given the cohesion of the various communities of Anglophone Montreal throughout the twentieth century (Matthew Barlow, *Griffintown*, 144).

¹¹ Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal, "1836 Constitution," Article XIX, Concordia University Archives.

¹² Historian Michael Quigley affirms that Irish people made up the bulk of the victims of the cholera epidemic that swept through Canada in 1832 (Michael Quigley, "Grosse Ile: Canada's Irish Famine Memorial," *Labour/Le Travail*, vol. 39 (Spring 1997), 197).

- i. To promote HARMONY and GOOD-WILL amongst Irishmen; to foster NATIONAL FEELING and LOVE OF FATHERLAND.
- ii. To render assistance when necessary to persons of Irish birth or descent, in the District of Montreal, and especially to Emigrants.
- iii. To ensure the due celebration of the FESTIVAL DAY OF THE PATRON SAINT OF IRELAND.
- iv. To represent, when circumstances require, the Irish interest in the City of Montreal and elsewhere, where the interference of this Society may be deemed proper.¹³

Elements of both continuity and change may be discerned between this preamble from the second constitution and the first constitution of the 1830s. Charity and the representation at least certain segments of Montreal's Irish community continue to be major *raison-d'être* for the Society. However, the aim of ensuring the celebration of Saint Patrick's Day highlights the paramount place of religion in the Society's activities and, by extension, in its members' identities.

The preamble of the 1914 constitution suggests a further shift in the Society's mandate. According to this preamble the Society's aims were:

- i. To promote and foster Irish tradition [emphasis added].*
- ii. To aid whenever possible persons of Irish birth or origins, and particularly, Irish immigrants.*
- iii. To speak, when necessary, on behalf of the Irish Canadian community.¹⁴*

¹³ Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal, "1881 Constitution," Preamble, Concordia University Archives.

¹⁴ Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal, "1914 Constitution," Concordia University Archives.

Finally, here is a mention of Irish tradition. However, the Society's constitution still remains mute as to what exact practices or arts constitute "Irish tradition." This new emphasis on "tradition" is likely due to the influence of the Gaelic Revival in Ireland as of the 1890s, or to the popularity of the campaign for Home Rule among the Irish diaspora. Indeed, the Society's minutes contain references to receipts being sent to the Saint Patrick's Society for remittances to the Irish Parliamentary Party, and to petitions being signed for the release of "Irish political prisoners in British prisons."¹⁵ Furthermore, the change in the very label for the people the SPS claimed to represent - from "the Irish interest in the City of Montreal" in 1881, to the Irish Canadian community in 1914 - is clear evidence of long-term acculturation.¹⁶ Certain segments of Montreal's Irish population were manifestly concerned about ethnic fade as early as the turn of the twentieth century.¹⁷ In a 1909 letter to J. P. Tansey, then Secretary of the Saint Patrick's Society, one J. J. Connolly of Guelph, Ontario, lamented that "[w]ith regards to your last question Irishmen here

¹⁵ Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal, "Meeting Minutes," 2 October 1893, Concordia University Archives; Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal, "Meeting Minutes," 4 May 1896, Concordia University Archives.

¹⁶ Acculturation refers to the process whereby descendants of immigrants adapt to their host society over successive generations, by adopting elements of the host society's culture. As Matthew Barlow notes, the Irish in Griffintown had indeed become increasingly Canadian by the early decades of the twentieth century (Barlow, "The House of the Irish," 115, 136). According to Mark G. McGowan, this trend was no pronounced among the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Irish-Catholics of Toronto that "by the end of the First World War [the ethnic] subgroups of English-speaking Catholicism in Toronto were generally indistinguishable" (Mark G. McGowan, *The Waning of the Green*, 7).

¹⁷ Irish emigrants' concern about ethnic fade has even extended into the realm of music. Captain Francis O'Neill wrote of one James Carbray, "who [was] a florist in the employ of the West Park Commissioners, Chicago, love[d] to dally with the Irish pipes, but his execution thereon is not at all comparable to his mastery of the violin, *though he never saw Ireland or the sky over it, being a native of Quebec, Canada, to which his parents had emigrated from the county of Tyrone in the fifties of the [nineteenth] century* [emphasis added]" (Francis O'Neill, *Irish Minstrels and Musicians, with numerous dissertations on related subjects* (Cork and Dublin: The Mercier Press, 1913), 166). The corollary to this statement would be the clearly erroneous assumption that distance from Ireland in time and space might dilute Irish musicians' skill.

[in Guelph] especially Catholics, being in the 3rd and 4th generation from the early settlers, have pretty well lost their Irish characteristics, however regrettable this may appear.”¹⁸

Year after year, the Saint Patrick’s Society has insisted on musical representation in the Saint Patrick’s Parade and at other events. Indeed, most discussions of music and bands in the Society’s meeting minutes in the nineteenth century center on hiring a band for the parade at the cheapest possible cost (Saint Patrick’s Society of Montreal, “Record of meetings held 1865”; “Meeting Minutes,” 5 February 1894; “Meeting Minutes” 4 March 1895; “Meeting Minutes,” 1 June 1896).¹⁹ In 1964, a Saint Patrick’s Society pipe band under the leadership of Pipe Major George Grant was formed. Wearing uniforms purchased thanks to fundraising activities, the band performed at various functions between 1965 and 1967.²⁰ This evidence suggests that the prestige garnered by the sonic occupation of public spaces remained important to the Society, despite the associated costs.

The Saint Patrick’s Society began promoting Irish arts more systematically in the 1960s. This was initially done under the auspices of the Society’s Irish Heritage Committee, which

¹⁸ J. J. Connolly, “Letter to J. P. Tansey,” 28 November 1909, Concordia University Archives. No copy of J.P. Tansey’s original letter could be found in the Saint Patrick’s Society’s archival records. It is thus impossible to determine with any certainty what his initial question actually was, nor what characteristics J. J. Connolly of Guelph would have considered Irish. In either case the Society’s meeting minutes are largely silent about the Gaelic Revival’s potential influence on Irish traditional music in Montreal. This may be due to the “privilege given to literary production over other aesthetic forms in the articulation of [Irish] culture [during the Gaelic Revival]” (Martin Dowling, “Traditional Music in the Irish Revival,” in Mark Fitzgerald and John O’Flynn, editors, *Music and Identity in Ireland and Beyond*, (Farnham, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014), 40).

¹⁹ Saint Patrick’s Society of Montreal, “Record of meetings held 1865,” Compilation of Minutes of Meetings 1864-1911, March 1914, Concordia University Archives; Saint Patrick’s Society of Montreal, “Meeting Minutes,” 5 February 1894, Concordia University Archives; Saint Patrick’s Society of Montreal, “Meeting Minutes,” 4 March 1895, Concordia University Archives; Saint Patrick’s Society of Montreal, “Meeting Minutes,” 1 June 1896, Concordia University Archives.

²⁰ Saint Patrick’s Society of Montreal, “President’s Report,” June 1964, Concordia University Archives; Saint Patrick’s Society of Montreal, “Annual Report & Financial Statements,” April 1, 1966 to March 31, 1967, Concordia University Archives. The members of this Saint Patrick’s Society Pipe Band were drawn from the City of Montreal Pipe Band in February and March of each year. See Scott Williams, *Pipers of Nova Scotia: Biographical Sketches 1773 to 2000* (Antigonish, Nova Scotia: Scott Williams Publishing, 2000), 58.

formed in 1965 and was “aimed particularly at Expo,”²¹ and later through the Society’s Cultural Committee which was active as of the late 1970s.²² Since that time, the Saint Patrick’s Society’s Cultural Committee has funded many Irish cultural initiatives, including - crucially - the local branch of *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann*, the Ville-Marie Feis, and the Siamsa School of Irish Music.²³ The Montreal branch of *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann* (CCÉ), established in 1974, was receiving grants from the Saint Patrick’s Society Cultural Committee by the early 1990s. The amounts were typically \$500.²⁴ However, in the lead-up the 1992 celebrations of the 350th anniversary of the founding of Montreal, the Saint Patrick’s Society donated an exceptional \$5000 to the Montreal CCÉ branch. These funds were presumably used to organize the 1992 *Comhaltas* convention in Montreal, which marked the start of the split between the Montreal CCÉ branch and what later became the Siamsa School of Irish Music.²⁵

²¹ Saint Patrick’s Society of Montreal, “Newsletter,” 23 November 1965, Concordia University Archives. The International and Universal Exposition held in Montreal in 1967 - colloquially known as Expo 67 - was a pivotal event of the 1960s. It drew unprecedented numbers of tourists to Montreal over a six-month period and was designed to herald an “energetic commitment to transnational urban modernism” (Sean Mills, *The Empire Within*, 38). However the event’s displays also concealed social tensions and economic inequalities simmering within Montreal and Quebec as a whole. These tensions and inequalities would culminate in violent and non-violent political activism in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Sean Mills, *The Empire Within*, 22, 38; Peter Gossage and J.I. Little, *An Illustrated History of Quebec*, 259-269).

²² The box listings of the Saint Patrick’s Society archival fonds actually indicate the existence of a so-called “cultural committee” in 1922. However, the archives contain no subsequent reference to this committee until 1978, at which point the records are more complete and systematic, with cultural committee files available for 1978, 1979, 1984, 1985, 1990, 1991, 1992, and 1993 (Tania Franco, “P026. - St. Patrick’s Society of Montreal fonds,” Concordia University Records Management and Archives: Box Listing - Historical Archives (February 2012), 12).

²³ Saint Patrick’s Society of Montreal, “Proposed Budget: Cultural Committee.” This list does not include various charities and institutions which the Society’s Grants committee - which should not be confused with the Society’s Cultural Committee - has funded over the years: these include, among many others, the Benedict Labre House, Camp Caritas, and the Montreal Children’s Hospital (Saint Patrick’s Society - Grants Committee, “Minutes of Meeting - November 10th, 1989 - Teleglobe Canada Inc.,” 2).

²⁴ Saint Patrick’s Society of Montreal, “Proposed Budget: Cultural Committee.”; Michael Kenneally, “Letter to J. J. Mell.”

²⁵ Saint Patrick’s Society of Montreal, “Cultural Committee Budget: 1992-1993,” 1992-1993, Concordia University Archives; Pat Conroy, “Letter to D. W. McNaughton.”

The Society's funding of Irish musical activities has continued until today, in the form of an annual grant to the Siamsa School of Irish Music. The School emerged from the efforts of Brendan Walsh to learn Irish traditional music and to make teachers of this music available to prospective students in Montreal. He organized the "Montreal Irish Fiddle Workshop," which took place May 19 and 20, 1990. In a letter thanking the Saint Patrick's Society for their donation of \$250 towards the associated expenses, Walsh affirmed: "All attendees were most appreciative of the calibre of playing and teaching [fiddler and instructor] Matt Cranitch brought here. The only disappointing moment was when Matt didn't speak or play at [a] dance on Saturday evening."²⁶ Walsh received \$350 from the Society the following year.²⁷ The Montreal Irish Fiddle Workshop morphed into the Siamsa School of Irish Music in 1992; the School continued - as it has until today - to receive funds from the Saint Patrick's Society.²⁸ Current Siamsa director Philippe Murphy indicates that in the twenty-first century, contributions from the Saint Patrick's Society to the Siamsa School have typically represented between two-and-a-half and five percent of the School's total budget.²⁹ This contribution is not much, but it does allow the maintenance of classes the School otherwise could not afford to offer. As Philippe Murphy puts it:

²⁶ Brendan Walsh, "Letter to Michael Kenneally," 4 June 1990, Concordia University Archives.

²⁷ Michael Kenneally, "Letter to Brendan Walsh," 27 November 1991, Concordia University Archives.

²⁸ The Saint Patrick's Society's Cultural Committee Budget for 1992-1993 does not list Siamsa, but rather a \$500 donation to a "Music Workshop" (Saint Patrick's Society, "Cultural Committee Budget," 1992-1993). However an outlay of the Society's grants allocations between 1992 and 1995 indicate that the Siamsa School of Irish Music received \$500 for 1992-1993, and \$950 for 1993-1994 (Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal, "Grants Committee Allocations - Cultural Committee Grants," n.d., Concordia University Archives; Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal, "Proposed Budget: Cultural Committee."). In 2018, the Siamsa School of Irish Music's website indicates that the Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal has been their "chief patron throughout the years" (Siamsa School of Irish Music, "About Us").

²⁹ Philippe Murphy, interview, 20 December 2017.

C'est qu'on est capable de faire des activités sans se soucier que ce soit profitable pour l'école. Des ateliers où il y a juste trois personnes qui se pointent, puis qu'on perd de l'argent, bien tsé, tu peux t'en permettre deux ou trois dans l'année. Tu peux te permettre, mettons, le cours de harpe. Tu sais que t'auras jamais six personnes qui vont prendre des leçons de harpe à Siamsa. Mais ça peut te permettre d'assumer le salaire de ton professeur pendant une session.³⁰

United Irish Societies (UIS)

Just as for the Saint Patrick's Society, Irish traditional music appears relatively late in the archival records of the United Irish Societies. Beginning in the 1940s, documents from the archives of the United Irish Societies of Montreal reveal yearly expenses for bands and orchestras for the Saint Patrick's Day parade and United Irish Societies' annual banquet, respectively.³¹ Some of these bands were presumably local. Others came from outside Montreal; this is notably the case for the St. Patrick's Band of Ottawa.³² However, the bands are for the most part pipe bands or military brass bands.³³ References to Irish traditional music first appear in 1960, when

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ United Irish Societies of Montreal, "Statement of Receipts and and Expenditures for year 1940," United Irish Societies Archives; United Irish Societies of Montreal, "Annual Banquet - Expenses," 1940, United Irish Societies Archives; United Irish Societies of Montreal, "Statement of Receipts and and Expenditures for 1941," United Irish Societies Archives; United Irish Societies of Montreal, "Programme," 1944, United Irish Societies Archives; United Irish Societies of Montreal, "Souvenir - Sunday, March 17th, 1957," United Irish Societies Archives.

³² United Irish Societies of Montreal, "Untitled photograph," United Irish Societies Archives. The reverse of the photograph lists the name of the pipe band, and the date of the Montreal Saint Patrick's Day parade in which it marched participated: March 20, 1955. The musicians are wearing Irish-style monochrome kilts, and the bass drum positioned at the front and centre of the photograph says "Saint Patrick's College" (United Irish Societies, "Untitled photograph").

³³ United Irish Societies of Montreal, "St. Patrick's Day Celebration - Montreal Sunday March 15th, 1959," United Irish Societies Archives.

one Johnny Pickering wrote to Gerry Carroll, the UIS Corresponding Secretary, inquiring about the possibility of bringing his Co. Tyrone-based *céili* band to Canada.³⁴

After 1960 Irish traditional music became more prominent in the activities of the United Irish Societies. In 1976, the United Irish Societies donated \$50 each to three troupes of Irish dancers - the Shamrock Dancers, the O'Connor dancers, and the McKeown Dancers - for various shows throughout that year.³⁵ By 1977, the Montreal branch of *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann* had a delegate to the United Irish Societies.³⁶ Traditional music was also performed at the UIS Parade Queen's Pageant in 1983.³⁷ By donating funds to the Ville-Marie Feis in 1985, the United Irish Societies also indirectly supported the performance of Irish traditional music.

Another prominent contribution of the United Irish Societies to displays of Irish music came in 1992, with the 350th anniversary of the founding of Montreal. Collectively dubbed Célébrations 1992, these events featured an average of "50 different activities per day between May 15 and October 12."³⁸ Events were held in myriad iconic locations throughout the city, including Mount Royal, Old Montreal, the Old Port, and the Notre-Dame Basilica.³⁹ These events included a ten-day series of Irish cultural celebrations - from June 10 to June 20 - called the Fêtes irlandaises Montréal 1992. An official program describes these Fêtes as "[a] cultural festival, evening

³⁴ Johnny Pickering, "Letter to Gerry Carroll," 8 March 1960, United Irish Societies Archives.

No further records of the correspondence exist in the UIS archives; Pickering may or may not have actually brought his *céili* band to Canada in the end.

³⁵ United Irish Societies of Montreal, "Entertainment Budget," 1976, United Irish Societies Archives.

³⁶ Patrick Short, "Letter to United Irish Societies Inc." This delegate was named Brian Walsh. As far as I can tell, he is not related to the aforementioned Brendan Walsh.

³⁷ This is an inference, given that the evening's entertainment featured, among others, the folkily-named Happy Tones, the Shamrock Dancers under the direction of Pat and Bernadette Short, and a harpist named Monique Thibault (United Irish Societies of Montreal, "Welcome to The 29th Annual Queen's Pageant," 11 February 1983, United Irish Societies Archives).

³⁸ Montréal Let's Celebrate, "Special Preview Edition," 1992, United Irish Societies Archives, 2.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

of music, and rugby tournament, all in tribute to the people of Ireland.”⁴⁰ The Fêtes’ organizing committee included prominent members of the Montreal Irish community: Leo L. Delaney, Dr. Michael Kenneally, Joe Mell, Pat Conroy, Lynn Doyle, and Bernadette Short.⁴¹ The United Irish Societies sponsored these Fêtes with a \$2,000 donation.⁴²

Irish folk band The Fureys performed at Club Soda on June 3, before the official start of the Irish Fêtes.⁴³ The official events included an opening ceremony followed by a dinner where Irish dishes were served, a production of Hugh Leonard’s *A Life* at the Centaur Theatre, historical and artistic exhibitions at Montreal’s *Centre de commerce mondial*, and numerous other events. Crucially, the Chieftains - who had been officially named Ireland’s musical ambassadors in 1989 - performed at the Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier, in Montreal’s Place des Arts, on June 15 and 16. They were accompanied during the concerts by Kate and Anna McGarrigle, a duet of sisters of Irish-Canadian and French-Canadian descent, who had been mainstays in the Quebec folk

⁴⁰ Ibid., 7.

⁴¹ Irish Celebrations / Célébrations irlandaises - Montréal 1992, “Calendrier des événements,” United Irish Societies Archives.

⁴² The Saint Patrick’s Society also featured among the sponsors: it donated \$5,000. See Appendix C for a list of the sponsors and the amounts donated. The \$5,000 contribution by Montreal’s Irish Protestant Benevolent Society marks a rare instance of the IPBS supporting Irish traditional music, albeit very indirectly. Although the IPBS organized concerts in the nineteenth century where Irish airs were performed, and traditional music might have been performed at the IPBS’ annual picnic fundraisers, IPBS concerts and social events purportedly ceased after World War I (Collard 31-33 95-97). Music nevertheless continued to be featured at IPBS annual dinners. The programme from the IPBS’ centennial dinner in 1956 indicates that one Ken McAdam performed as a soloist, and that an orchestra directed by one Markowsky performed Irish airs during the evening (Irish Protestant Benevolent Society of Montreal, “Archives,” accessed May 24, 2018, at <http://www.irishpbs.ca/archives.html>). Fifty years later, in 2006, the IPBS’ sesquicentennial dinner saw performances by “Belfast Andy [sic]” - Aindriú MacGabhann’s stage name - and the Celtic Grace Irish Dancers (Irish Protestant Benevolent Society of Montreal, “Archives,” accessed May 24, 2018, at <http://www.irishpbs.ca/archives.html>). The recordings used by the dance troupe, and the tunes and songs played by MacGabhann and any players who accompanied that evening, brought Irish traditional music to the audience’s ears.

⁴³ Irish Celebrations / Célébrations irlandaises - Montréal 1992, “Calendrier des événements.”

scene since the 1960s. Both concerts were reportedly sold out; the official Final Report of the Fêtes irlandaises indicates that 4,000 people attend these concerts.⁴⁴

The 1992 Feis marked a musical culmination to the Irish Fêtes. More than 1,500 competitors performed across all categories of music and dancing, on eleven distinct stages. Professional bands - notably Barlee Bree, from Amherst, Nova Scotia - performed on a stage set aside specifically for their use. Well-known traditional Québécois music and dancing ensembles showcased the similarities between Québécois and Irish traditional music, and presented a “drame dansé...[ayant] pour thème l’arrivée des premiers immigrants irlandais au Québec, leur assimilation à la vie québécoise et l’influence de leur musique sur la culture du Québec.”⁴⁵ An estimated 8,000 - 10,000 people attended the Feis in the Old Port.⁴⁶ In the end, the Fêtes incurred a deficit of \$25,345.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the organizing committee affirmed that it had “met its objectives [for the Celebration Montreal 1992 festivities] by sharing the history and development of Montreal with the general public at large.”⁴⁸

In 2004, the United Irish Societies instituted an award recognizing contributions to Irish culture through the arts. This award was named for Liam Daly, a longtime member and holder of

⁴⁴ Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018; Irish Activities Montreal 1992 / Fêtes irlandaises Montréal 1992, “Celebrations Montreal 1992 - Final Report,” United Irish Societies Archives, 2.

⁴⁵ Irish Celebrations / Célébrations irlandaises - Montréal 1992, “Calendrier des événements.” The Fêtes’ program and final report make no mention of these famous Québécois ensembles’ names (Irish Celebrations / Célébrations irlandaises - Montréal 1992, “Calendrier des événements.”; Irish Activities Montreal 1992 / Fêtes irlandaises Montréal 1992, “Celebrations Montreal 1992 - Final Report,” 4). The exact groups had perhaps not yet been confirmed by the time of the program’s publication. Alternatively, the organisers might have wished to generate suspense and anticipation about the Feis by withholding this information.

⁴⁶ Irish Activities Montreal 1992 / Fêtes irlandaises Montréal 1992, “Celebrations Montreal 1992 - Final Report,” 4. Although it was not officially part of the Celebration Montreal 1992 festivities, a *Comhaltas Ceoltóiri Éireann* conference was held in the city in April 1992; this conference will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter. It purportedly generated \$900,000 in tourist dollars (Irish Activities Montreal 1992 / Fêtes irlandaises Montréal 1992, “Celebrations Montreal 1992 - Final Report,” 5).

⁴⁷ Irish Activities Montreal 1992 Inc, “Financial Statements,” August 31, 1992, United Irish Societies Archives.

⁴⁸ Irish Activities Montreal 1992 / Fêtes irlandaises Montréal 1992, “Celebrations Montreal 1992 - Final Report,” 1.

various executive positions in the United Irish Societies of Montreal, who died in 2003.⁴⁹ This award is granted “to a worthy candidate who exemplifies Liam’s love of his heritage and who promotes the Irish heritage through the arts.”⁵⁰ Since 2004, winners of this award include the following people and groups:

| | |
|------|------------------------------|
| 2004 | April Donoghue [sic] |
| 2005 | Lynn Lonergan Doyle |
| 2006 | Patricia Burns |
| 2007 | St. Patrick’s Society |
| 2008 | Elizabeth Quinn |
| 2009 | Lisa Forget |
| 2010 | Donald Pidgeon |
| 2011 | Kathleen McAuliffe |
| 2012 | Jeffrey Charles McCarthy, CD |
| 2013 | Andriù [sic] MacGabhann |
| 2014 | John Gilroy |
| 2015 | Siamsa School of Irish Music |
| 2016 | Montreal Shamrocks GAC |
| 2017 | Richard “Ricky” Clahane |
| 2018 | Alan Jones ⁵¹ |

⁴⁹ Liam Daly was an active member of the Montreal Irish community. Most notably, he produced and hosted the Montreal Irish television show, and was Grand Marshall of the 166th St. Patrick’s Day parade in 1990 (United Irish Societies of Montreal, “166th Annual St. Patrick’s Day Parade 1990, United Irish Societies Archives.”). Liam Daly’s role in broadcasting Irish culture - including Irish traditional music - during his lifetime will be explored at greater length in the next chapter.

⁵⁰ United Irish Societies of Montreal, “Parade,” accessed May 31, 2018, at <http://unitedirishsocieties.ca/parade/>.

⁵¹ United Irish Societies of Montreal, “195th Annual St. Patrick’s Day Parade 2018,” United Irish Societies Archives.

Some of the award recipients had various community work and volunteer efforts recognized. This was notably the case for Lynn Lonergan Doyle, the Saint Patrick's Society, Elizabeth Quinn, Lisa Forget, Donald Pidgeon, the Montreal Shamrocks GAC.⁵² Others were recognized for musical contributions. Indeed the first recipient of the award was April O'Donoghue, organizer of the Montreal International Celtic Festival, which evolved into the Celtic Harmonies International Festival.⁵³ Although Patricia Burns' contributions were primarily literary, her past role as a member of the Siamsa School of Irish Music's executive committee was noted.⁵⁴ John Gilroy received the award in 2014 for his longstanding involvement in Montreal's Irish associations, including *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann*.⁵⁵ Kathleen McAuliffe received the award for her work in theatre and musical theatre, and it was noted that "Irish music and Irish poetry have always been especially close to her heart."⁵⁶ Similar, Richard "Ricky" Clahane was commended for his

⁵² Lynn Lonergan Doyle founded Cine Gael Montreal and established the St. Patrick's Christmas concert at Saint Patrick's Basilica (United Irish Societies of Montreal, "182nd St. Patrick's Parade 2005," United Irish Societies Archives). The Saint Patrick's Society was commended for its involvement with - and funding of - Irish cultural initiatives of all stripes, including music and dancing (United Irish Societies of Montreal, "184th St. Patrick's Parade, 2007," United Irish Societies Archives). Elizabeth Quinn's participation in various Montreal Irish organizations and involvement in myriad UIS committees was noted, along with her singing talent "with the UIS entertainment group, providing enjoyment to many seniors in various facilities throughout the island of Montreal" (United Irish Societies of Montreal, "185th St. Patrick's Parade, 2008," United Irish Societies Archives). Lisa Forget received the award for her volunteer work and fundraising efforts on behalf of the UIS and other groups, and Donald Pidgeon for his communication work and chronicling of Irish community life in Montreal as UIS historian (United Irish Societies of Montreal, "186th St. Patrick's Parade 2009," United Irish Societies Archives; United Irish Societies of Montreal, "187th St. Patrick's Parade 2010," United Irish Societies Archives). Pidgeon served in this role from 1991 to 2015. The Montreal Shamrocks Gaelic Athletic Club received the award for "its consistent presence in Montreal since 1948, [its] reintroduction of hurling to the sports [it offers], and for teaching the community's youth about Ireland's national sports" (United Irish Societies of Montreal, "193rd St. Patrick's Parade 2016," United Irish Societies Archives).

⁵³ Celtic Harmonies International Festival, "The History of the Festival," accessed June 12, 2018, at http://www.celticharmonies.ca/History_e.php.

⁵⁴ United Irish Societies of Montreal, "183rd Annual St. Patrick's Day Parade 2006," United Irish Societies Archives.

⁵⁵ United Irish Societies of Montreal - Historian's Corner, "John Gilroy," accessed June 12, 2018, at <https://montrealirishparadehistorian.wordpress.com/tag/john-gilroy/>.

⁵⁶ United Irish Societies of Montreal, "188th Annual St. Patrick's Day Parade 2011," United Irish Societies Archives.

work as an entertainer at various Irish community events.⁵⁷ Jeffrey McCarthy, a longtime Highland bagpiper who has performed at multiple events for Montreal's anglophone community, won the award in 2012.⁵⁸ Aindriú MacGabhann's efforts were recognized in 2013, as were those of the Siamsa School of Irish Music in 2015. However, MacGabhann recalls with acrimony that the award entailed no monetary compensation. He would have preferred being paid for the performance he gave at the ceremony where he formally received the award.⁵⁹ Similarly, Alan Jones was proud to receive the award in 2018, though his enthusiasm was tempered by the time it took for his efforts to be recognized. "[M]y name was put in over a number of years. I thought, well, it's very nice. I suppose it's competitive. It's nice...I think my wife Patricia was more proud than I was, but it's nice. It's nice to get a little recognition for all your efforts."⁶⁰

Four active practitioners of traditional music have been granted the Liam Daly Heritage Award since 2012: along with Aindriú MacGabhann and Alan Jones, the Siamsa School of Irish Music may be treated as a single entity, and Jeffrey McCarthy's playing of the Scottish Highland bagpipes may be considered traditional music. Of the 11 other award recipients, five were recognized - at least in part - for contributions related to music, if not specifically Irish traditional music. The prominent place of music in the life accomplishments of nine of the 15 award recipients highlights the centrality of music to Irish culture in Montreal.

⁵⁷ United Irish Societies of Montreal, "194th Annual St. Patrick's Day Parade 2017," United Irish Societies Archives.

⁵⁸ In November 2016, Jeffrey McCarthy became the centre of a media controversy when a City of Montreal police officer confiscated his *sgian dubh* - the traditional dagger which Highland pipers often carry in their hose. This incident mobilized Montreal's Celtic communities in support of McCarthy (Saint Andrew's Society of Montreal, "St. Andrew's Society," accessed June 12, 2018, at <http://www.standrews.qc.ca/jeff-mccarthy---sgian-dubh.html>). The fine he had initially received has since been cancelled.

⁵⁹ Aindriú MacGabhann, interview, 11 January 2018.

⁶⁰ Alan Jones, interview, 13 December 2017.

Uneasy neighbours

Irish traditional music, then, has featured in the mandate of the city's Irish institutions. Irish organizations in Montreal have promoted musical initiatives, provided funding and recognition to certain musicians, and have showcased players of traditional music at their events. However this trend only emerged in the 1970s. The absence of traditional music at SPS and UIS events prior to this time is understandable. The middle- and upper-middle-class membership of these societies likely sought to distance themselves from the plebeian and rural connotations which plagued Irish traditional music throughout the nineteenth century and much of the twentieth century.⁶¹ These connotations would not be shaken off - or become appealing - until the Folk Revival of the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, Michael Moloney notes a class-based aversion to traditional music in Irish communities in the United States early in the twentieth century.

[M]ajor Irish American organizations ...were reluctant to engage traditional musicians for their functions. They would instead present a more genteel image of the culture, presenting tenors, sopranos, harpers and pianists, instead of representatives of the traditional culture who were presumably considered to be of an inferior order, artistically and socially.⁶²

⁶¹ Indeed, Montreal's Irish elites have often contended with tensions between their ideals of middle- and upper-class respectability, and the ethnic identity they shared with lower-class Irish Montrealers. This is made clear in the reluctance of middle-class Irish Montrealers in the 1860s to commemorate the Famine. As Colin McMahon puts it: "Clearly some Irish Catholics, particularly those who were more established and longer settled in the city, were eager to project an image of respectability and preferred not to be pushed to recall the destitute state in which the Irish arrived in 1847" (Colin McMahon, "Montreal's Ship Fever Monument: An Irish Famine Memorial in the Making," *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* vol. 33, no. 1 (Spring 2007), 50).

⁶² Michael Moloney, "Irish Music in America," 420-421.

Yet, even since the 1970s, events for which musicians are hired have occurred infrequently throughout the year. The Irish tradition is admittedly vast and multifaceted. Given the plethora of Irish cultural outlets in Montreal, it would be impossible for all worthy initiatives to receive funding. Indeed, fluctuating economic conditions have sometimes forced Montreal's organizations to tighten their belts and attribute funds more selectively.⁶³

Nevertheless, musicians playing Irish traditional music in Montreal still perceive a disconnect between their own musical community and the established Montreal Irish community. First, few players of Irish traditional music are themselves from the Irish-Canadian - or Irish-Québécois - population represented by the city's Irish societies. Also, as many musicians see it, Irish traditional music has for the most part benefitted from only indirect stewardship by the city's Irish community. With the possible exception of Saint Patrick's Society donations that have allowed Siamsa classes with small numbers of students to remain open, Montreal's Irish traditional music soundscape is principally maintained not by the city's Irish associations, but by the musicians who play the music. Players of Irish traditional music interpret this detached guardianship alternatively as disinterest or unease:

On entend souvent que dans les années quarante, cinquante, il fallait quasiment, dans les grandes villes irlandaises, il fallait quasiment que tu te caches si tu avais un violon ou si t'avais un accordéon. Il fallait pas que le monde sache que tu jouais de la musique traditionnelle parce que c'est de la musique de paysan. C'était tourné en ridicule quasiment. Puis j'ai l'impression que cette mentalité là est restée dans les expats de la communauté irlandaise de Montréal. Je sais que j'ai beaucoup dit de mal du peu de fierté que

⁶³ This is painfully evident in a 1992 letter in which Michael Kenneally, then Chair of the Saint Patrick's Society's Cultural Committee, explained to Pat Short that no funds could be provided for the 1992 Ville-Marie Feis (Michael Kenneally, "Letter to Pat Short," 11 November 1992, Concordia University Archives).

les Québécois ont de leur musique traditionnelle mais j'ai l'impression que la communauté irlandaise a le même malaise avec leur propre tradition musicale.⁶⁴

This *malaise* could be a lingering aversion to - or disinterest in - Irish traditional music, similar to what Michael Moloney has noted in the early-twentieth-century United States. This situation is further compounded by a perceived disunity - even disarray - among the city's Irish community: "I do find in Montreal it's pretty fractured...when I go to different events...I don't find that those communities are necessarily so homogenous. You know, this community might not know what that community is doing. Although they're all part of the Montreal Irish community."⁶⁵ This perception is admittedly not universal; other musicians find Montreal's Irish community and associations to be close-knit and supportive of one another's initiatives.⁶⁶ Yet pockets of near-splendid isolation dot the soundscape. Jean Duval recalls going to the annual Ville-Marie Feis once or twice in the 1980s. The few session musicians who did attend went to these events out of curiosity; the music for the dancing competitions was usually, though not always, provided by out-of-town musicians.⁶⁷ Otherwise the traditional music played in Montreal's Irish sessions and the music played at the Ville-Marie Feis existed on parallel circuits.

The perception of fragmentation may be explained by the ethnic fade of successive generations of Montreal Irish. The descendants of Irish immigrants to Montreal have mostly integrated into either Canadian or Québécois culture. However, Montreal differs from other North

⁶⁴ Philippe Murphy, interview, 20 December 2017.

⁶⁵ Alan Jones, interview, 13 December 2017.

⁶⁶ Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018.

⁶⁷ Ibid. Accordionist Ena O'Brien played at a number of *céilithe* and Feis competitions in Montreal. Some Quebec-based musicians - notably Paul Legrand and Jean Duval - have also performed for the Feis competitions at different times since the 1990s (Jean Duval, interview, January 31, 2018; Paul Legrand, interview, October 27, 2017).

American metropolii insofar as it saw a reduced influx of immigrants from Ireland in the decades after 1960.⁶⁸ Irish culture as manifested by *céili* dancing, traditional music and the Irish language only acquired importance in Montreal from the 1970s onwards; the establishment of the Saint Patrick's Society Cultural Committee is perhaps the most significant sign of this development. Even then, as previously discussed, these artistic elements of Irish culture have also sparked the interest of many people with no ancestral connection to Ireland. This disconnect between many players of traditional music in Montreal and the city's Irish community is best explained by cultural differences. The Irishness expressed by principally non-Irish players of traditional music is a profound personal and communal attachment to a music that developed in Ireland. When asked to rank the terms "Irish," "traditional," and "music" in order of importance, seven respondents placed "music" first. All respondents profess a deep attachment to Irish traditional music specifically, but many placed "Irish" second or third because they are equally interested in non-Irish traditional musics.⁶⁹ Nine respondents placed "Irish" last, after "music" and "traditional." Only one respondent - Paul Legrand - placed "Irish" first, because his interest in Irish music is matched by his interest in Irish culture more generally. In this way, these musicians' Irishness is of a different form than that expressed by members of Montreal's Irish community per se.

⁶⁸ See Chapter 3 for a discussion of these immigration trends. For a discussion of San Francisco as a case study of the impact of immigration on an Irish traditional music soundscape, see Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, "Old Age Pipers," 125-126.

⁶⁹ Robin Beech, interview, 8 January 2018; Kate Bevan-Baker, interview, 27 July 2017; Chris Crilly, interview, 26 January 2018; Julien Després, interview, 27 July 2017; Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018; Alan Jones, interview, 13 December 2017; Steve Jones, interview, 17 January 2018; Paul Legrand, interview, 27 October 2017; Richard Morgan, interview, 28 June 2017; Philippe Murphy, interview, 20 December 2017; Rae Shepp, interview, 29 May 2017. For lack of time during my interview with Aindriú MacGabhann, I did not get the chance to ask him the ranking question. However his attachment to the Irish dimension of the music is clear; he views rebel songs as fundamental elements of Irish traditional music, and objects to musicians choosing to exclude rebel songs from their repertoire because these songs do not match their political views (Aindriú MacGabhann, interview, 11 January 2018).

Musicians' ranking of the terms "Irish," "Traditional," and "Music" in order of importance

| | First | Second | Third |
|-------------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| Alan Jones | Music | Traditional | Irish |
| Chris Crilly | Music | Irish | Traditional |
| Jean Duval | Traditional | Music | Irish |
| Julien Després | Traditional | Music | Irish |
| Kate Bevan-Baker | Music | Traditional | Irish |
| Paul Legrand | Irish | Music | Traditional |
| Philippe Murphy | Traditional | Music | Irish |
| Rae Sheep | Music | Traditional | Irish |
| Richard Morgan | Music | Traditional | Irish |
| Robin Beech | Music | Traditional | Irish |
| Steve Jones | Music | Traditional | Irish |

Conclusion

Since the 1970s, there has been hiring of musicians who play Irish traditional music to perform for Irish community events. However, this hiring has not been - nor perhaps could it ever be - systematic. Sustained financial support for Irish musical organizations has mainly come from the Saint Patrick's Society; financial support from the other associations has generally been piecemeal, taking the form of occasional paid concerts and performances. Grand occasions such as the Célébrations Montréal 1992 festivities represent temporary deviations from this norm, with no obvious long-term dividends. Other forms of support have been non-financial; these include recognition via the granting of the Liam Daly Heritage Award, or promotion via social media platforms. Although this support may be decisive at times, it remains indirect and partial. Very few players of Irish traditional music in Montreal try earning their living with this music; fewer still actually manage it. Indeed, these musicians' determination, even in the face of harsh economic conditions, is a tribute to their devotion to the music.

CHAPTER FIVE - COMMODIFICATION AND GLOBALIZATION

Donald Akenson attributes the success of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Irish emigrants, in part, to their financial acumen. In Akenson's own words: "[t]hey knew how money worked. These people were not the lumpenproles of the subsistence agricultural economy, but rather small farmers or the offspring of farmers who were being forced away from home...or were agricultural labourers who through prudent application had saved enough money for passage."¹ This insight highlights the linkages between the emigrant experiences and the financescapes that underpinned their migration. Unsurprisingly, Irish traditional music has evolved in the same global financescapes as the people who played it, circulating wherever Irish emigrants went. This trend accelerated in the early years of the twentieth century, with the global popularity of Francis O'Neill's first major collection of Irish traditional tunes, *O'Neill's Music of Ireland*. After it was published in 1903, its popularity among players of Irish traditional music across the world prompted O'Neill to produce a second collection. In 1907, he published *The Dance Music of Ireland*, which had many tunes in common with O'Neill's first collection, in 1907.² Similarly, the recordings of Michael Coleman, Paddy Killoran, and others popularised these performers' styles of Irish music throughout the world in the 1920s and 1930s, which accelerated the standardisation of Irish traditional music which had begun with O'Neill's collections.³ The impact of these fiddlers in Ireland, and Jean Carignan's later adoption and adaptation of Coleman's style in Quebec, confirm the increasing globalization of the Irish soundscape.

This chapter explores the global financescape that has characterized Irish traditional music from the 1960s onward, and analyzes its impact on Irish music in Montreal. It contends that the

¹ Donald Harman Akenson, *Small Differences*, 44-45.

² Nicolas Carolan, *A Harvest Saved*, 44-45.

³ Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, *Pocket History*, 128-129.

juncture of these global and local soundscapes has fostered two paradoxical situations: the spurring of Irish music to new heights of popularity and accessibility in Montreal, and a competitive environment in which professional musicians often struggle to earn a living playing this music.

Globalization

Beginning in Francis O'Neill's heyday, the globalization of Irish music reached new heights during the Folk Revival of the 1960s and 1970s. Drawing on his learning of traditional fiddle and an extensive study of classical music, Sean Ó Riada founded *Ceoltóirí Chualann* in 1960. This ensemble infused the playing of Irish traditional melodies with "classical-style arrangements, harmonies, improvisation, and dress suits - all of which helped to place [Irish traditional music] on a par with other 'socially correct' art forms in urban Ireland."⁴ Although *Ceoltóirí Chualann* broke up in 1969, another band - the Chieftains - would continue the work begun under Ó Riada. The Chieftains had existed as an ensemble since 1963, and many of its early players had also performed with *Ceoltóirí Chualann*. The Chieftains broadened the global appeal of Irish traditional music in two ways. Firstly, they continued creating harmonies and arrangements in the style of Ó Riada and *Ceoltóirí Chualann*. Secondly, they reached global audiences by matching themselves with bands and performers firmly outside the Irish tradition. By performing alongside ensembles like Fairport Convention, the Rolling Stones, Sting, and many others, the Chieftains exposed unprecedented numbers of new listeners around the world to Irish traditional music.⁵ Other bands followed their lead. In particular, Planxty and the Bothy Band,

⁴ Ibid., 148-149.

⁵ Ibid., 154-155.

formed in 1972 and 1974, exercised a powerful influence on practitioners of Irish traditional music around the world. Increasingly, Irish traditional musicians outside of Ireland sought to emulate their sound and repertoires.⁶ Supergroups such as the Bothy Band and Planxty pioneered the use of the bouzouki and of DADGAD guitar tuning, and established “a powerful rhythmic drive to the music as well as an entirely different set of harmonic colors underlying the melodies of the tunes and songs.”⁷ If Planxty and the Bothy Band ignited musical epiphanies far and wide, the *Riverdance* phenomenon turned the fire into a blaze. During the intermission of the 1994 Eurovision Song Contest, American step dancers, Jean Butler and Michael Flatley, presented a romanticized dance duet to music that combined archetypal Irish jig rhythms and asymmetrical rhythms commonly found in Bulgarian dance tunes.⁸ This performance sparked a series of touring shows, and as spin-off productions such as *Lord of the Dance*. These shows brought Irish dance steps into “a new commercial milieu of theatrical extravaganza.”⁹ In so doing, they also brought Irish dancing to unprecedented heights of popularity around the world.¹⁰

Global musical influences on Irish traditional music first became obvious in Montreal in the mid-1970s with the emergence of Barde. Emulating the arrangements and the drive of groups such as Planxty and the Bothy Band, Barde performed novel arrangements of traditional Irish and Québécois tunes, and songs in French, Irish, and English. The timing of Barde’s heyday was

⁶ In Montreal, this legacy is noticeable in the presence of many Bothy Band and Planxty tunes and sets in the repertoire played in the city’s Irish music sessions. These bands’ iconic status for listeners of Irish traditional music was evident in the intense reactions of Montreal musicians when Matt Molloy left the Bothy Band and joined the Chieftains. Montreal musicians booed this move as one might the opposing team at a sporting event; they interpreted Molloy’s departure as something akin to betrayal (Jean Duval, interview, January 31, 2018).

⁷ Sean Williams, *Focus: Irish Traditional Music*, 230.

⁸ Adrian Scahill, “*Riverdance*: Representing Irish Traditional Music,” *New Hibernia Review* vol. 13, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 70-76. Adrian Scahill affirms that this juxtaposition of Irish and non-Irish elements may be read alternately as an external influence upon Irish traditional music, or as “typical, or reflective, of innovations that take place within the tradition” (Adrian Scahill, “*Riverdance*,” 73).

⁹ Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, *Pocket History*, 177.

¹⁰ Fintan Vallely, ed., *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music*, 216-217, 319-320.

such that they were already active when other bands such as Le Rêve du Diable, a traditional Québécois band, and Spirit of the West, a British Columbia-based folk rock group, became popular. Chris Crilly, one of the fiddlers in Barde, affirms that the band did not instigate major shifts in the rendition and arrangement of traditional tunes, but that they were, perhaps, just weeks or months ahead of a trend already in motion:

We were in tune, so to speak with the ructions that were starting up at that time...if we'd been just playing jigs and reels...you know if we'd just been playing *The Maid Behind the Bar*, and *The Kid on the Mountain*, *An Phis Fliuch*, and nothing but that sort of thing, we would have been just another Irish trad band. And we did that, but we also did a certain amount of orchestration. We didn't call it that, but that's what it was. And arranging, and grafting baroque chords onto things. And we didn't call it that either. We just did it. We just, whatever came, and you know...As most musicians do. You don't call it this or call it that, necessarily. Let the critics do that.¹¹

Critics and listeners far and wide reacted warmly to Barde's spin on traditional tunes and songs. Chris Crilly recalls that an issue of Rolling Stone Magazine included "anything from Barde" on its musical wishlist, but presented no article about the band, nor any critique of one of its concerts.¹² Barde's legacy endured long after the band's break-up in 1983; many sets and tunes popularized by Barde found their way into session repertoires. One notable example is *Jack McCann*, a reel composed by Chris Crilly and named in honour of his maternal grandfather, whose fiddle he plays. On a number of occasions, Crilly has arrived at a session in Montreal and started to open his fiddle case, only to hear the other musicians start playing *Jack McCann*.¹³

¹¹ Chris Crilly, interview, 26 January 2018.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

This could only be interpreted as a musical salute or, perhaps, a musical wink, in Crilly's direction.

Montreal musicians note that in the 1990s, the *Riverdance* phenomenon sparked peaks of interest in Irish dancing, and therefore, indirectly, in Irish music. Paul Legrand and Jean Duval performed regularly for the Bernadette School of Irish Dance during this decade. Legrand recalls that lessons for children aged five or six started at 4:30 pm or 5 pm on Monday evenings. Different age groups succeeding each other in back-to-back lessons, with lessons for adults finishing around 9 pm. Legrand was struck by the sheer number of students flocking to Irish dance schools after the initial *essor* of the *Riverdance* phenomenon. “[Avant], il y avait de la difficulté à monter un set avec...peut-être au mieux sept ou huit danseurs...Avec le phénomène *Riverdance*, tout le monde voulait être Michael Flatley et Jean Butler...Et il y avait plein d'étudiants, c'était phénoménal...une quarantaine, cinquante étudiants.”¹⁴ For a while, Jean Duval's children took lessons at the Bernadette School of Irish Dance. Their father also played music for the dancing, sometimes alone, other times alongside Paul Legrand or other musicians.¹⁵

The *Riverdance* phenomenon coincided with a peak in the international popularity of Celtic music. In the 1970s, artists and bands such Loreena McKennitt, Clannad and Enya, to name just a few, marketed themselves as Celtic to broaden their international market. Some Montreal bands have also played up the Celtic connection. This has notably been the case for Phenigma, a band active between 1990 and 1996 which included Jean Duval, Steve Jones, Reinhard Goerner on guitar, Lynda Kathan on keyboards and vocalist Sine McKenna.¹⁶ Jean Duval claims that

¹⁴ Paul Legrand, interview, 27 October 2017.

¹⁵ Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018.

¹⁶ Phenigma, “New and traditional Celtic music from Ireland, Scotland and Quebec,” Accessed October 6, 2018, at <http://www.rogermillington.com/phenigma.html>.

Phenigma managed to secure many paying gigs by presenting themselves as a Celtic band, rather than as a strictly Irish traditional one.¹⁷ The popularity of Celtic music since the 1960s has - much like the *Riverdance* phenomenon - garnered undeniable recognition for Irish traditional music on the global stage. That said, some musicians eschewed the Celtic label, preferring the narrower national circumscriptions of Irish, Scottish, or Breton traditional music. Describing one such band - the Donegal-based group Altan - Jean Duval affirms: “l’irlandais pur et dur, comme Altan, ce n’était pas pour tout le monde.”¹⁸ Although they usually borrow freely from different traditions, Montreal musicians usually distinguish between Irish music and Celtic music.¹⁹

Other factors apart from musical ones contributed to a revival of Irish traditional music in Montreal in the mid-1990s. Paul Legrand remembers some of his acquaintances predicting that the recently opened Irish pubs would not last. However, Ireland was at the forefront of public awareness in Montreal - and elsewhere - during this decade. The 150th anniversary of *An Gorta Mór* - the Great Irish Famine of the 1840s - was commemorated in 1997.²⁰ A year later, the signing of the Good Friday Agreement ended the most violent episodes of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. For Paul Legrand, this convergence of historical circumstances also contributed to the renewed appeal of the music.²¹

¹⁷ Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018. Given the prominence of Quebec tunes and Donegal tunes in the band’s repertoire, it would have been even more accurate to call Phenigma a Quebec-Donnegal band.

¹⁸ Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018.

¹⁹ See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the blending of traditional music repertoires in Montreal’s traditional sessions.

²⁰ The United Irish Societies organized a memorial mass at St. Gabriel’s Church on May 7, 1997, to commemorate the “150th anniversary of the exodus from famine in Ireland and the Bridge Street tragedy of 1847” (United Irish Societies of Montreal, “Letter to Donald Pigeon,” 7 May 1997, United Irish Societies Archives). As in previous years, this mass organized by the UIS was followed by the March to the Stone, for which the AOH took responsibility.

²¹ Paul Legrand, interview, 27 October 2017.

Digital space

The development of Internet technology since the 1980s has brought traditional musics - and other musical genres - unprecedented popularity and visibility. Since this time, Irish traditional music has increasingly been mediated through the Internet, which serves as a space where communities “of similarity along selected dimensions...can easily be established at a distance; non-contiguous time-spaces of commonality.”²² Beyond the online tune archives that sustain Montreal’s Irish music community, digital resources have emerged for learning and transmitting Irish traditional music. The foremost is thesession.org. This webpage is the brainchild of Irish-born bouzouki player and website developer Jeremy Keith. Since the early 2000s, it has served as a platform for sharing sheet music and MIDI sounds files of tunes, and for discussions on online forums.²³ Another key resource is IrTrad, a computerized mailing list.²⁴ Brother Steve’s Tin Whistle Pages, a website which Steve Jones created in 2001, is another resource. Although he has not actively worked on this website for many years, Jones is aware its pedagogical impact. He recalls meeting a tin whistle player named Shu Feng at a Montreal session; Feng had come from the People’s Republic of China to study at McGill University. He told Jones that he had

²² Doreen Massey, *For Space*, 94.

²³ Although thesession.org is devoted to Irish traditional music, many of the site’s members share tunes from other traditions, and sometimes upload their own original compositions.

²⁴ Janice L. Waldron and Kari K. Veblen note that in the learning of Irish traditional music - at least as it occurs via IrTrad - “many assumptions and learning characteristics found in the [analog] transmission of Irish music remain constant. It may well be that the underlying social agenda tied to the earlier context of this music as a gift guides us to future contexts in which everyone is welcomed” (Janice L. Waldron and Kari K. Veblen, “The medium is the message: cyberspace, community, and music learning in the Irish traditional music virtual community,” *Journal of Music, Technology and Education* vol. 1, nos. 2 & 3 (November 1, 2008), 107).

learned how to play proper rolls by reading Brother Steve's Tin Whistle Page.²⁵ Jones believes there are others like Shu Feng who have used his page as a pedagogical resource.²⁶

The online availability of sheetmusic, recordings and pedagogical resources provides an alternative path to more traditional methods of learning Irish music: namely face-to-face teacher-student interaction, or learning aurally from the playing of famous musicians.²⁷ Videos of live performances posted on the Internet - particularly on Youtube - offer models for musicians who in some cases live half a world away from where these live performances occurred. This certainly helps people learn and play Irish music where no local scene exists.²⁸ Although this method is arguably closer to the traditional ideal espoused by some musicians, it raises other issues:

Youtube has changed everything. People don't really buy records anymore...when I was learning, I would go to sessions, I'd never take a tape recorder there...So you'd buy LPs...and you'd listen to them until you knew every single note and scratch on them inside out...But people don't have that depth of study now... "Oh, I want to learn *Gravel Walk*, let's go on Youtube, see which versions I can find." And they find 50 different versions. It's not as focused.²⁹

²⁵ Rolls are a common variety of ornament in Irish traditional music. They can be played on different instruments, and are typically categorized as either "long rolls" or "short rolls". Long rolls consist of sounding the melody note being ornamented, playing an upper grace note, then the melody note, then a lower grace note, and finally the melody note again. Short rolls follow the same pattern, except for the omission of the melody note at the start of the ornament (Fintan Vallely, ed., *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music*, 322-323).

²⁶ Steve Jones, interview, 17 January 2018.

²⁷ These alternative online methods often coexist alongside - and complement - the aforementioned older pathways for the music's transmission.

²⁸ Furthermore, Mason Brown notes that in Irish traditional music videos available on Youtube, "certain instruments, or combination of instruments, are visual and aural markers of ethnicity, reinforcing any such meaning present in the music...For Irish music, the harp and uilleann bagpipes have special status, but any combination of fiddle, wooden flute, tin whistle, accordion ("box"), tenor banjo, concertina and *bodhrán* (frame drum) is associated with Irish identity" (Mason Brown, "Meaning, Melody, and YouTube in Irish and Tibetan Traditional Musics," *American Music Research Center Journal* vol. 27 (2018), 8). This reinforcement would certainly apply to both Irish and non-Irish audiences of these videos.

²⁹ Steve Jones, interview, 17 January 2018.

Although certain musicians decry this lack of focus, a plethora of new material has been - and continues to be - made available by digital means. Thanks to the Internet, Irish traditional musicians in Montreal can keep an eye on musical developments across the Atlantic in Ireland. This is especially true for immigrants to Montreal, such as Richard Morgan: “I know I missed out on something huge just after I left [Britain]...apparently the middle of 2005 onwards was a huge expansion of traditional music...much of it driven by these students who had discovered it...and I know it’s bigger now there than it was when I was there...I’ve watched it from a distance, but I’m wondering whether something similar will happen here, and we just haven’t hit it yet.”³⁰ He has followed with great interest the work of a group “going around stately homes in the British Isles, and looking at private collections [of manuscript tunes...and] transcribing these into ABC [notation...and] making them available online.”³¹ As long as resources such as these continue to exist in online form, players hungry for new material will satiate their appetite for just the monthly cost of an Internet connection or a Smartphone plan.

Commodification

Nearly all aspects of Irish culture have undergone some form of commodification in the twentieth century. As early as 1908, newspapers in Buffalo, New York, were denouncing Saint Patrick’s Day consumerism, encouraging readers to steer clear of stores displaying “green whiskey, bottles, pipes, ‘paddies’ astride a pig, and so on.”³² Paradoxically, commodified forms of

³⁰ Richard Morgan, interview, 28 June 2017.

³¹ Ibid.

³² *Catholic Union and Times*, 12 March 1908, quoted in William Jenkins, *Between Raid and Rebellion*, 315.

Irishness have ranged from stereotypical leprechaun paraphernalia, to these items' anti-materialist antithesis. According to Diane Negra, "[v]irtually every form of popular culture has in one way or another, at one time or another, presented Irishness as a moral antidote to contemporary ills ranging from globalization to postmodern alienation, from crises over the meaning and practice of family values to environmental destruction."³³ This should not be surprising; as Ian McKay notes, the condition of postmodernity "intensifies and multiplies the demand for Folk images, for rustic hideaways, for rural authenticity."³⁴ Commodified forms of Irishness are replete with references to precisely these kinds of rustic, rural, and "Folk" cultural themes. North Americans' desire for authentic Irish experiences - however "authentic" is defined - has intensified in recent decades. This trend is evident in the dramatic expansion of Irish-themed shops in the United States, even at a time when "the roar of the Celtic Tiger has been reduced to a dull growl."³⁵ By the start of the twenty-first century, there were Irish-themed stores in almost every American state, with total retail sales of more than \$180 million.³⁶ This development has also manifested itself through the emergence of a commodified archetype of the Irish pub. According to the website of Diageo-Guinness USA, an Irish pub can succeed if it meets certain conditions. These include stereotypically Irish employees, an evocative, Irish-sounding name, the sale of food to bolster drink sales and, crucially, attention to the background music played and the sound system used in the pub.³⁷ Bill Grantham rightly notes that despite the existence of a thriving Irish traditional music community in the United States, this community "does not appear [from the

³³ Diane Negra, "The Irish in Us: Irishness, Performativity, and Popular Culture," in Diane Negra, editor, *The Irish in Us: Irishness, Performativity, and Popular Culture* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2006), 3.

³⁴ Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk*, 278.

³⁵ Natasha Casey, "'The Best Kept Secret in Retail,'" 84.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 88.

³⁷ Bill Grantham, "*Craic* in a box," 258-261.

corporate viewpoint of Diageo-Guinness] relevant to the mission of designing compelling - profitable - ‘musical experiences.’”³⁸

Montreal’s Irish pubs are replete with memorabilia designed to evoke Irishness to North American customers.³⁹ In both Hurley’s Irish pub and McKibbins’ Irish Pub, stained-glass panels inlaid with Celtic knots separate some of the pubs’ different sections. Signs interspersed in McKibbins laud stereotypical Irish eloquence.⁴⁰ Paintings and photos on the walls also evoke music and Irish history. In McKibbins, for instance, one can find a painting of a young girl holding a fiddle and a reproduction of a 1920 photograph of Éamon de Valera speaking at a political rally. A painting at Hurley’s, meanwhile, shows the Celtic cross at Grosse-Île surrounded by ghostly faces, evoking the nineteenth-century Irish immigrants who died there in quarantine. The pervasiveness of Irish cultural markers in these pubs corresponds closely with what Michael Moloney has observed in the late-twentieth-century United States. According to Moloney, “symbols of Irishness represent a repertoire that may be drawn upon situationally in social contexts where the presentation of ethnic identity is desirable or appropriate.”⁴¹ Irish traditional music has become one such symbol, featuring prominently in Montreal bars and pubs every year around Saint Patrick’s Day, and specifically in the city’s Irish pubs more consistently throughout the year.⁴²

³⁸ Ibid., 259.

³⁹ Although some elements of this memorabilia may be deemed more authentic than others, this point is moot in the final analysis. As Diane Nega puts it, it is preferable to “[dispense] with an absolute “truthful” version of Irishness, [and to look] instead to the many fictions that proliferate around Irish identity” (Diane Negra, “The Irish in Us,” 2).

⁴⁰ One of these signs reads: “Irish Diplomacy: The ability to tell someone to go to hell so that they will look forward to the trip.”

⁴¹ Michael Moloney, “Irish Music in America,” 20.

⁴² Musicians note that around Saint Patrick’s Day, demand for players of Irish traditional far exceeds the number of performers available for these events (Aindriú MacGabhann, interview, 11 January 2018; Philippe Murphy, interview, 20 December 2017).

Musicians' livelihood

Professional musicians who play Irish traditional music in Montreal rarely rely solely on this music as their bread and butter. Instead they usually count Irish traditional music as merely one element in their toolkit.⁴³ This is notably the case for Kate Bevan-Baker. Although Irish and Celtic traditional music represents about 75 percent of the music she plays to earn her living, the remaining 25 percent is mainly classical music. Even with a well-rounded repertoire, these musicians still recognize the importance of knowing the “right people” and maintaining a particular musical brand:

[A]s far as I know there aren't very many Celtic duos or trios doing all the pub gigs. And they seem to be booked by the same few groups all the time so you see the same names, the same faces a lot. Because the group I play with was established well before I stepped in, I don't think we face a lot of competition because they've been around for so long. That's kind of reassuring that we're not, struggling for work. If you were a new group, or relatively new to the city, yes there would be tons of competition. But if you've been doing it for a few years, I think, if people know you and you've kind of proven that you can entertain, and that you can play well, then there's much less competition.⁴⁴

Unlike Kate Bevan-Baker, Aindriú MacGabhann had found himself caught in a bramble of competing economic imperatives. In his experience, most pub managers do not understand the culture and history underpinning Irish traditional music, and only care about live music if it

⁴³ Although music pedagogy could here be treated as a distinct professional activity from music performance, it is understood here merely as the other side of the same coin. Many professional players of Irish traditional music also teach the music.

⁴⁴ Kate Bevan-Baker, interview, 27 July 2017.

serves to draw customers into their business. Shortly after MacGabhann's arrival in Montreal, the manager of McKibbins Irish Pub began prioritising cover bands over Irish music. "He started introducing top-40 bands," MacGabhann recalls, and "this changed the whole culture of Irish music in the pubs. When these guys played rock 'n roll and Elton John and all of that contemporary 70s music, the Stones and all that."⁴⁵ Pub owners and managers draw on a wide range of entertainment options, including live music and televised sporting events. Hockey games are particularly popular, given the centrality of ice hockey to certain iterations of both (Anglo-)Canadian and Québécois identities. As Julie Perrone puts it: "[l]'idée que le hockey unit le Canada tout entier est une illusion, ou peut-être un espoir, mais sans plus. Les deux solitudes s'approprient le sport mais ne s'unissent pas sous son égide. En effet, le hockey est considéré comme un véhicule d'identité dans les deux cas mais un véhicule de deux identités différentes et souvent diamétralement opposées."⁴⁶ Although the Montreal Canadiens have not won a Stanley Cup since 1993, the team's fan base remains large and loyal; fans regularly watch hockey games in bars and pubs across Montreal. This trend has affected Aindriú MacGabhann's livelihood; his sessions at Hurley's Irish Pub and McKibbins Irish Pub have sometimes been cancelled because of sporting events being televised in these pubs.

Also MacGabhann is frequently irked by bands - Irish traditional or otherwise - seeking paid gigs at the Irish pubs where he performs and hosts Irish traditional music sessions. Mac-

⁴⁵ Aindriú MacGabhann, interview, 11 January 2018. MacGabhann once quipped at the manager that he could play 70s music, and asked him which century he would like. This was a reference to the existence of tunes from the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries - and thus tunes from the 1870s and 1770s - in the Irish tradition. MacGabhann recalls the manager did not understand the joke (Aindriú MacGabhann, interview, 11 January 2018).

⁴⁶ Julie Perrone, "Le processus d'héroïsation du Rocket" (Mémoire présenté comme exigence partielle de la maîtrise en histoire, Université du Québec à Montréal, 2008), 14.

Gabhann recounts that a guitarist who was well-known in circles of Irish and Québécois traditional music once tried ousting him from one of his sessions in order to replace him as session leader. MacGabhann eventually reacquired this session.⁴⁷ These vicissitudes have led MacGabhann to develop a territorial understanding of Montreal's Irish soundscape, whereby session hosts should not tread on the turf of others. This territoriality is also reflected in the competition between various pub owners. When MacGabhann sought sponsorship for his album *All That Glitters*, some pub managers offered him extra money on the condition that he make the logo of their pub larger than those of other Irish pubs on the back of the album.⁴⁸

Since his arrival in Montreal in 1982, Paul Legrand has alternated between odd jobs and working as a musician. Sometimes, he worked night shifts at these odd jobs, which temporarily kept him away from Montreal's circuit of Irish sessions and gigs.⁴⁹ Although he has tried to earn a living playing Irish traditional music, this endeavour has been difficult at times. For instance, Paul Legrand was part of a traditional band in the 1980s, with banjo player Bob Cussen, Reinhard Goerner, and percussionist Philippe Longval. In the wake of the decline of traditional music after the Quebec referendum of 1980, the band found itself actively seeking paid gigs, with very little work coming their way.⁵⁰ This downturn lasted until the mid-1990s, when a renewed interest in Irish culture accompanied the opening of Montreal's Irish pubs, the 150th anniversary of *An Gorta Mór*, the signing of the Good Friday Agreement and the rise of Ireland's Celtic Tiger economy. Paul Legrand then enjoyed a time of relatively plentiful work, with regular performance and session-hosting gigs for a trio of which he was a member. The other members were

⁴⁷ Aindriú MacGabhann, interview, 11 January 2018.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Paul Legrand, interview, 27 October 2017.

⁵⁰ Ibid. See Chapter 4.

Aindriú MacGabhann on guitar and *bodhrán*, and guitarist Peter Senn.⁵¹ Since the demise of the Celtic Tiger, Paul has had fewer gigs, but has continued teaching the fiddle at the Siamsa School of Irish Music, and performing for Irish dancing competitions and lessons. However, these teaching and performance opportunities have offered little in terms of reliable work.

Why So Serious?

Three main factors explain the parameters within which professional players of Irish traditional music in Montreal operate. First is the very marginality of traditional music. The small size of the city's Irish music community reflects and compounds this marginality. Kate Bevan-Baker estimates that there are no more than 200 or 300 people playing Irish traditional music in Montreal. Furthermore, these people will never be at the same session or event at the same time.⁵² This issue is further exacerbated by the fluctuating popularity of Irish traditional music since the 1990s. Rae Shepp recalls that throngs of people used to gather in Montreal pubs to listen to Irish traditional music in the early 1990s, after the start of the global *Riverdance* craze. However, since the 2000s, she has noticed fewer and fewer people going out of their way to listen to this music live, particularly if they are not performers of the music.⁵³ This is understandable, given that many traditional music pub gigs begin in the evening, around 10pm. It is difficult for people working a 9-to-5 job to stay up late at pubs for events such as these multiple nights a

⁵¹ Paul Legrand, interview, 27 October 2017. Currently, Aindriú MacGabhann and Paul Legrand share responsibilities as paid session leaders for the Saturday afternoon session at Hurley's Irish Pub. Paul Legrand typically hosts a session one Saturday a month, while MacGabhann hosts his sessions on the other Saturdays.

⁵² Kate Bevan-Baker, interview, 27 July 2017.

⁵³ Rae Shepp, interview, 29 May 2017. That said, she does believe that there are currently more people than ever interested in playing, and in learning to play the music.

week.⁵⁴ This is a problematic situation for the long-term sustainability of the local Irish soundscape. As John Blacking put it, the “continuity of music depends as much on the demands of critical listeners as on a supply of performers.”⁵⁵

Paradoxically, the second factor stems from one of the music’s most attractive elements: its informality. Musicians who come to enjoy a particular session make a point of attending it as regularly as they can; some will even call other musicians to encourage them to come along, or will post on social media platforms, announcing their intention to attend. However, no one takes roll call at sessions. If other plans get in the way, these plans will likely take precedence over a session. This has been problematic for hosts of paid sessions, who must actively foster a sense of loyalty and enjoyment among their musical followers. Otherwise, these hosts might perform with one or two acolytes, and have to answer to the pub management for the low attendance at their session. This, in turn, would mean less business for the pub, which could threaten the hosts’ livelihood.

The third reason stems from the cost of hiring musicians to perform live. Very simply - and sadly - playing a recording is a cheaper and more durable alternative to hiring a live band on a regular basis. This situation places significant pressure on performers to justify - through their musical skills and energy - their continued employment. The bars of Montreal’s downtown core are over saturated with bands seeking a foothold. At times, Aindriú MacGabhann has had to defend his livelihood against pub managers who sought to bring in cheaper, or unpaid, musicians to replace him.⁵⁶ Fortunately, many Montreal bars - including the Irish pubs - are keen to differentiate themselves from other establishments by offering live music multiple times a week. Whether

⁵⁴ Kate Bevan-Baker, interview, 27 July 2017.

⁵⁵ John Blacking, *How Musical Is Man?*, 11.

⁵⁶ Aindriú MacGabhann, interview, 11 January 2018.

this live music takes the form of a session or that of a show, it is a boon for some of the city's professional players of Irish traditional music.

Conclusion - the session as mirror

Throughout these difficulties, professional musicians approach sessions and session hosting differently. Kate Bevan-Baker does not play in sessions very often, but wishes she had more time to do so. When she does attend sessions, she finds them to be a refreshing change from the professional stage performances she delivers three nights a week.⁵⁷ Although she has not yet been a session host or leader, she would be delighted to take on this role, should the opportunity present itself.⁵⁸

The music played in sessions in Montreal has by now acquired its *lettres de noblesse*. As Chris Crilly puts it, there are “more tunes...more people, more styles...just more heat, there's more of everything...there's a sophistication of attitude towards the music, it's not so new-fangled.”⁵⁹ This is to be expected as tunes composed in the Irish traditional idiom gradually filter into the repertoires of various musicians. Kate Bevan-Baker has also noticed this layering of tunes and the growth of individual and collective repertoires. However, she finds that this accumulation is not necessarily gradual. Many tunes she hears in sessions are very recent compositions.⁶⁰ This trend suggests at least one of two developments. First, traditional musicians might simply be composing more in the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries than in earlier

⁵⁷ This work does not include evenings during which she gives private fiddle lessons.

⁵⁸ Kate Bevan-Baker, interview, 27 July 2017.

⁵⁹ Chris Crilly, interview, 26 January 2018.

⁶⁰ Kate Bevan-Baker, interview, 27 July 2017.

times. It could also be that these composers have also become more willing than their elders to claim authorship of a tune.⁶¹ Second, the rate at which these tunes are absorbed and adopted might have accelerated. Composers of traditional tunes in the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries recognize that a well-known performer other than the composer must adopt a tune as their own before the tune acquires notoriety.⁶² This *modus operandi* classifies composers as “avant tout des créateurs [qui] laissent souvent à d’autres le soin de veiller à la préservation du répertoire traditionnel.”⁶³ The ongoing influence of Irish traditional supergroups contributes a global element to Montreal’s Irish soundscape. Old Irish tunes and recent Montreal compositions share sonic space with tunes composed by musicians from Lúnasa and Flook, to name just these two bands.

The sessionscape in Montreal is divided into so-called amateur sessions, such as the Siamsa session at Hurley’s Irish Pub on Monday evenings, or the “slow” session at the Old Orchard on Saturday afternoons, and those hosted by professional musicians who are paid to do so. The latter include sessions hosted by Paul Legrand and Aindriú MacGabhann on Saturday afternoons at Hurley’s Irish Pub, and MacGabhann’s sessions on Sundays at McKibbins Irish Pubs on Bishop Street and Saint-Laurent Boulevard. Admittedly, some overlap exists between the people and spaces in these types of session. This overlap extends even to the session leaders themselves. Even though he does not host the Siamsa session on Monday evenings at Hurley’s Pub, Paul

⁶¹ According to Jean Duval, personal pleasure and satisfaction, and a desire to share compositions as offerings, are among the foremost reasons why composers of traditional tunes in the Irish, Québécois and Scottish idioms undertake their work. That said, they also feel their compositions remain firmly anchored in the continuity of their respective tradition (Jean Duval, “*Singularités et similarités*,” 236).

⁶² Jean Duval, “*Singularités et similarités*,” 166.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 169.

Legrand sometimes attends to play a few tunes. On the other hand, Aindriú MacGabhann typically does not attend sessions that he is not paid to host. Other professional musicians steer clear of sessions overall. This is the case for Kate Bevan-Baker's bandmate David Gossage. He plays flute and whistle in *Solstice*, and is noted for his high-energy style of playing, and for his eclectic range of musical styles, which include Celtic music, folk music, jazz, classical music, and funk.⁶⁴ Chris Crilly claims to have never encountered him at a session - either because Gossage does not play in sessions, or because he and Crilly simply attended different sessions at different times. As a film composer, Crilly has, on certain occasions, hired Gossage to record his compositions. Crilly claims David Gossage makes "everybody whose music he plays shine."⁶⁵ Although Gossage plays no role in traditional music sessions, he is nevertheless one of the figurehead performers of the Irish music scene in Montreal by virtue of his role in *Solstice* and *Búmarang*.

Certain musicians believe that pub owners should go out of their way to support Irish traditional music; for others, place is incidental. Sessions can take place in pubs, on street corners, or in people's homes.⁶⁶ Understandably, session hosts must foster their respective followings of musicians, whose continued engagement is essential in keeping these sessions alive. However, some musicians prefer sessions without a clear leader or host: "Des hôtes de session qui étaient là pis qui demandaient aux autres de venir. C'est le fun parce que ça a permis à des gens de...des musiciens professionnels de mieux vivre, mais en même temps il y avait un côté un peu...c'est pas le même esprit que quand il y a pas de leader."⁶⁷ Fundamentally, Irish music in Montreal sits

⁶⁴ Dave Gossage, "Bio," accessed September 20, 2018, at <https://davegossage.com/bio>.

⁶⁵ Chris Crilly, interview, 26 January 2018.

⁶⁶ See Chapter 3.

⁶⁷ Jean Duval, interview, 31 January 2018.

in different places. If one specific place fails to attract players, the music will stand and walk away.

CONCLUSION

The late historian A.T.Q. Stewart claimed that Irish history is the product of the intersection of - and interaction between - horizontal and vertical forces. The vertical forces are either homegrown to or have become peculiar to Ireland, while the horizontal ones have influenced Ireland from outside the island. Citing republicanism as a prime example, Stewart claimed the meeting of these forces creates a product that will be “distinctively Irish...often modifying the outline and even the essential nature of the external influence, adapting it to specific Irish circumstances.”¹

The Irish traditional music soundscape of Montreal is, in many ways, like the vision of Irish history Stewart describes: it is spawned by forces both foreign and local, with the local strain inevitably absorbing and recasting horizontal influences from elsewhere in its own local mould. As this thesis has demonstrated, this perpetual recasting has resulted in a soundscape characterized by either vibrant precarity, or precarious vibrancy. This phenomenon is just the most recent iteration of a soundscape shaped since the 1970s by the ethnic fade of Montreal’s Irish population, the privileged place of Ireland and the Irish in Québécois culture, the circulation of Irish culture in commodified forms around the world, the ongoing ebb and flow of tradition and innovation in Irish traditional music. Individual and collective decisions by players of the music also influenced this musical climate. Arjun Appadurai’s theoretical lens of the “scapes” - ethnoscapas, mediascapas, technoscapas, financescapas, and ideoscapas - has proven a useful medium for analyzing the flows of cultural effervescence surrounding Montreal’s Irish soundscape.

¹ Anthony Terence Quincey Stewart, *The Shape of Irish History* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001), 4-5.

The cultural shifts within Montreal's Irish community since the late nineteenth century have caused the Montreal Irish to adopt - alternatively - Anglo-Canadian culture, or Québécois culture as their core paradigms. Although Irishness naturally has remained important for many Irish Canadians, or Irish Québécois, this Irishness is generally highlighted at specific moments of the year, around Saint Patrick's Day. In this way, Irishness is "not necessarily at the core of their everyday lives and identities."² This acculturation, along with the dwindling of large-scale Irish immigration to Montreal before 1970, led to both a relative and an absolute decline in the number of Irish-born musicians in Quebec. Some of this "orphaned generation's" last representatives, to use Steve Jones' term, include Pat Conroy, Joe Mell, and Willie Fahey. Their aging and passing has left a vacuum, which younger, non-Irish musicians filled, having been drawn to Irish music by the supergroups of the 1970s.

The global *engouement* for Irish traditional music found fertile soil in Quebec and in Montreal. Francophones in Lower Canada, and later in Quebec, had long drawn parallels between their own political and cultural experiences under British colonial rule, and those of Ireland. For many, Ireland has become a mirror for Quebec's own experience.³ For this reason, Ireland and its music were featured in the watershed *Veillées d'automne* in 1975, which sought to celebrate solidarity between Quebec and oppressed cultural minorities worldwide with whom Quebec shared linguistic or cultural ties.⁴ Paradoxically, Irish traditional music in the 1970s and 1980s became so popular that it prompted a protectionist exodus of Québécois players, who flocked anew to Québécois music and founded Québécois sessions to counterbalance the Irish influence in traditional music circles.

² Camille Harrigan, "Storied Stones," 17.

³ Linda Cardinal, Simon Jolivet and Isabelle Matte, "Les études irlandais-québécoises," 14.

⁴ David Berthiaume, "Les Veillées d'automne."

Montreal performers have circulated far and wide in their musical journeys, and the city has itself drawn players from the far reaches of the world. One may, in fact, liken the Irish traditional music soundscape in Montreal to an airport terminal. People pass through, some merely transiting and others staying for a long time, as everyone leaves sonic traces that never completely fade away. These traces embedded in memory, and transmitted through, from and in various interconnected nodes, buoy Irish traditional music from one tradition-bearer to another, like “fragmentary sonic remembrances as they reverberate.”⁵ I have recounted the travel tales of just a few musicians; many other musicians’ journeys - and the marks they leave on the global Irish traditional music scene - will warrant attention in future studies. For instance, *sean-nós* singer Yolanta Kruk has regularly competed in Ontario and Ireland, and uilleann piper Olivier Craig-Dupont gave the reed-making workshop at the 2019 Chris Langan Weekend, in Toronto.⁶ Their contributions, along with those of many others, warrant being brought to light.

The ethos of traditional music in Montreal is streaked through with exceptional openness and friendliness; in any given session, varied and eclectic blends of tunes will be played. This distinctly Montreal musical culture means that, in some sessions, “[i]t suddenly became okay to do anything you liked, and if you weren’t playing well, to do it okay and to make a big mess, or to have a really good set, depending on how it turned out.”⁷ Naturally musicians pick and choose their preferred performance settings, and will continue starting new sessions if their current one becomes too slow, or too fast, or if their session experience begins to suffer because of changing conditions in the pubs. The proliferation of sessions throughout the city and the seeping of new

⁵ Steven Feld, “Waterfalls of Song,” 99.

⁶ Uilleann piper Chris Langan (1915-1992) is the namesake of this long-running weekend festival of Irish music. Langan’s role as a lodestone for Toronto’s Irish music community has been likened to David Papazian’s role in Montreal (Chris Crilly, interview, 26 January 2018).

⁷ Robin Beech, interview, 8 January 2018.

compositions into players' repertoires are indicative of a dynamic music community that will continue to blaze its own paths between tradition and innovation.

A vibrant, or precarious, future?

The vibrancy of Irish traditional music in Montreal cannot be denied. The musical tradition is maintained by a self-perpetuating community of performers, which regularly draws interest from musicians looking to explore new horizons, or from people curious about this musical aspect of Irish culture. These people find outlets in informal music sessions, or in more formal settings such as the Siamsa School of Irish Music. The overlap between Irish traditional music and Québécois traditional music will also continue fostering a unique blending of music and culture.

Precarity persists, however. Custodians of Irish traditional music in Montreal number in the low hundreds at the utmost. Some of these custodians make it their lifelong duty to promote Irish traditional music, along with other musical genres. Others shift to different projects after a few months, years, or decades. If too many musicians sign off at the same time, the Irish music community as a whole might lose some of its momentum. Although Montreal's Irish community has provided financial support for some Irish music initiatives since the 1970s, this support has been systematic in very few cases. Existing cultural initiatives such as the granting of the Liam Daly Heritage Award will likely continue into the future. That said, Montreal traditional musicians perceive an enduring disconnect between their music community and Montreal's Irish community, despite both communities' common goal of promoting Irish culture in Montreal. Also, it takes exceptional skill and grit to navigate the economic uncertainty which professional

players of Irish traditional music face. Their livelihoods depend, in large part, on dwindling audiences, who sometimes choose other entertainment options than heading to Saturday afternoon sessions, or attending 10 p.m. pub gigs on a weeknight.

This thesis has shed light on one Irish soundscape, in just one part of Quebec, Canada, and North America. The Irish soundscapes of other cities and towns - particularly west of the Ottawa Valley - have yet to receive significant attention from historians, ethnomusicologists, and scholars of the Irish diaspora. In the interim, Montreal's Irish traditional music community will continue recasting musical traditions in its own image, and will continue radiating its music and good cheer throughout and beyond its island-city home.

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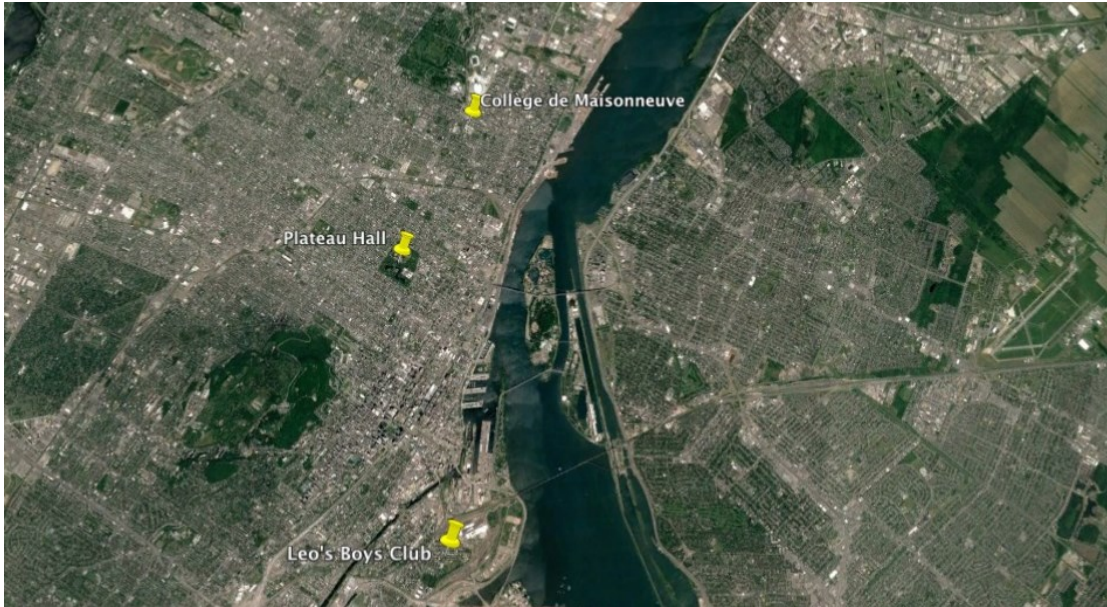
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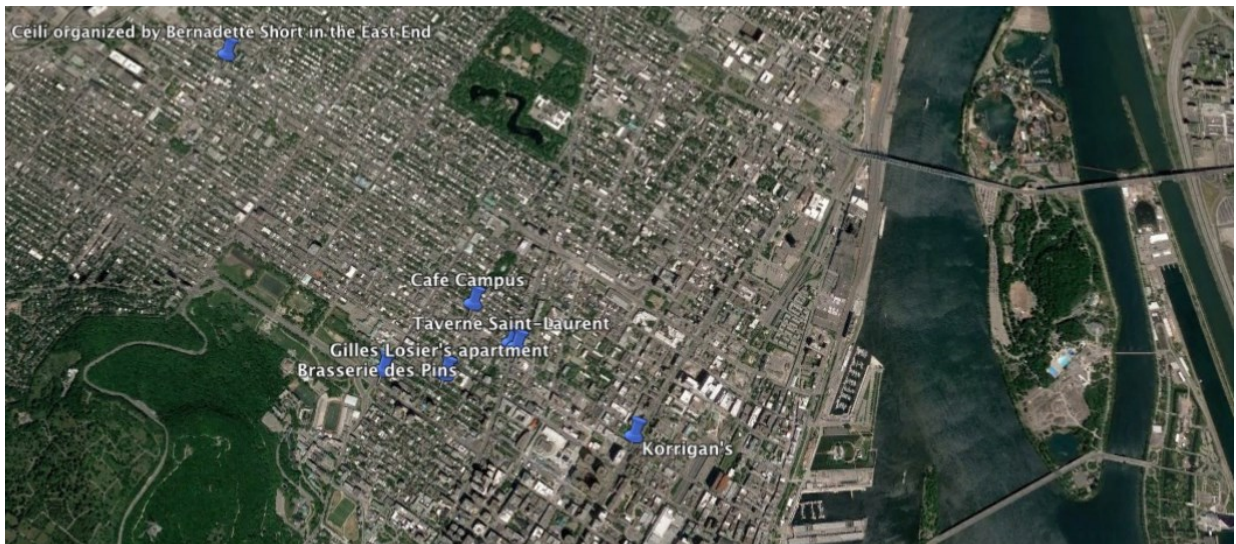
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Appendix A
Maps

Notables Sites where Irish Traditional Music was Performed, 1970s



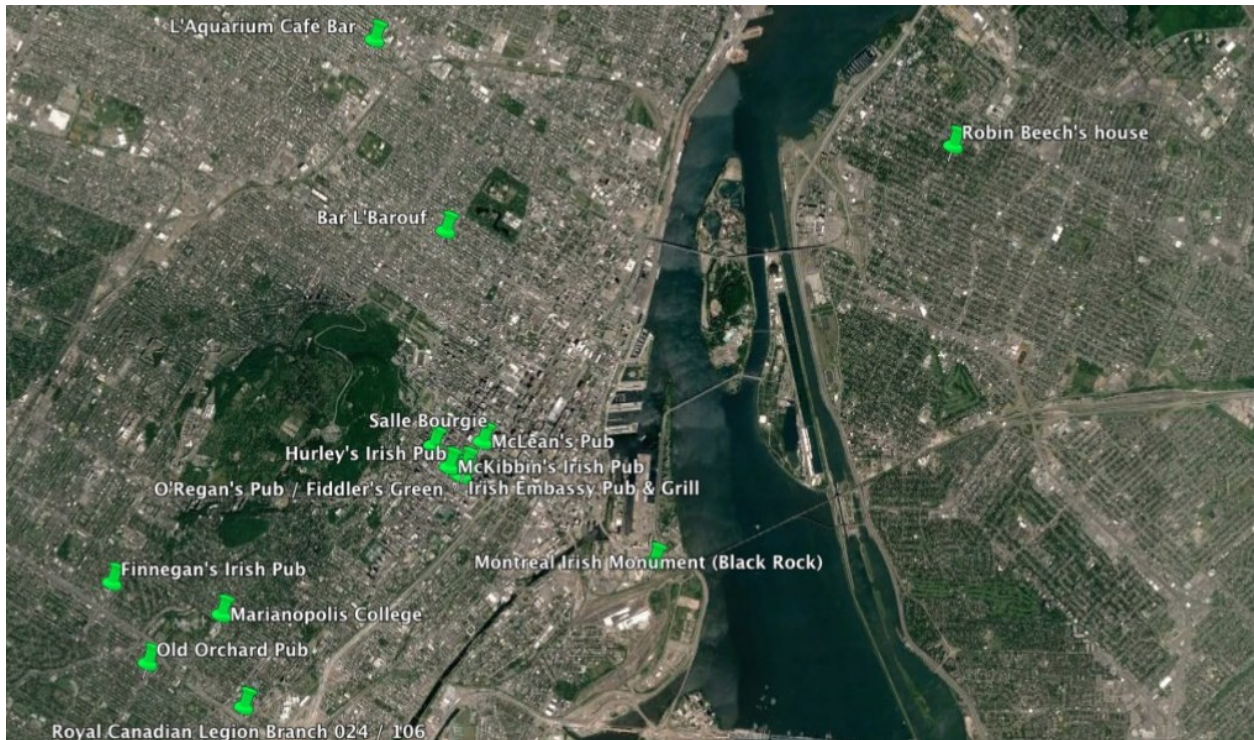
Notables Sites where Irish Traditional Music was Performed, 1980s



Notables Sites where Irish Traditional Music was Performed, 1990s



Notables Sites where Irish Traditional Music was Performed, 2000s and 2010s



Appendix B
Tunes and Performers / Composers on *Composium*

| Tune title | Composer / Performer name(s) |
|--|------------------------------|
| Treble Air | Jeremy Keddy |
| Kergin's Tune / Les Deux François | Serge Leroux |
| La Saucissière / Le Reel Méthé | David Boulanger & Mike Ayles |
| Bring on the Rain / The Swift | Nicholas Williams |
| An Mac Suirí Mídhlis | Shari McGuirl & Kerri Brown |
| L'Ado Dansante | Jean Duval |
| Roberta's Reel | Jeremy Keddy |
| Composium Jigs | Christophe Comte |
| Reel à Kerri (Reel Qui Rit) / Le Hoquet | Olivier Demers |
| Macnish Jig / The Broken Elbow / Farewell to Donegal | Gino Beaupré |
| The Ancestral Landscape / Camilien / Ferguson's Jig | Laurence Beaudry |
| La Vieille Gigue / La Ligue Du Vieux Poêle | Pascal Gemme |
| Gigue des Patriotes / Hommage à Sarah Allen / 6/8 Rue Chambord | Christine Fortin |
| Peter Senn's Hornpipe | Gilles Losier |
| Absinthe (Absent) / Reel Riendeau | Mike Ayles / Marc Maziade |
| A Silly Pola / La Bella Isa / The Dance on the Deck | Steve Jones |
| En Souvenir d'Alexia | Jean Duval |
| La Gigue du Mouton Cadet / La Gigue à Deux | Christophe Comte |

Source: *Composium* (courtesy of Steve Jones)

Appendix C

List of the sponsors of the Irish Fêtes for the Celebrations Montreal 1992 festival, and the amounts donated by each sponsor

| <u>Sponsor</u> | <u>Amount donated (in Canadian dollars)</u> |
|-------------------------------|---|
| City of Montreal | \$75,000 |
| Concordia University | \$25,000 |
| Molson/O'Keefe | \$10,000 |
| Protestant Benevolent Society | \$5,000 |
| St. Patrick Society | \$5,000 |
| Bank of Montreal | \$5,000 |
| St. Patrick's Orphanage | \$5,000 |
| Guinness Import Company | \$2,500 |
| Power Corporation | \$2,000 |
| United Irish Society | \$2,000 |
| Royal Bank of Canada | \$2,000 |
| Bombardier | \$2,000 |
| Corby's Distillers | \$1,500 |
| Erin Sports Club | \$1,500 |
| Northern Telecom | \$1,000 |
| Canadian Pacific Rail | \$750 |
| Alcan Aluminum | \$500 |

Source: Irish Activities Montreal 1992 / Fêtes irlandaises Montréal 1992. "Celebrations Montreal 1992 - Final Report," 7.

Appendix D

Funds attributed by the Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal to select Irish cultural initiatives (in Canadian dollars), 1990-1998

| | Siamsa School of Irish Music / Irish Music Workshop | Ville-Marie Feis | <i>Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann</i> | Radio Centre-Ville(The Irish Show) |
|-----------|---|------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1990/1991 | 250 | 1,000 | 500 | 250 |
| 1991/1992 | 350 | 3,000 | 5,000 | 0 |
| 1992/1993 | 950 | 0 | 500 | 0 |
| 1993/1994 | 950 | 1,900 | 500 | 250 |
| 1994/1995 | 950 | 1,000 | 500 | 250 |
| 1995/1996 | 950 | 1,550 | 500 | 250 |
| 1996/1997 | 950 | 1,550 | 500 | 250 |
| 1997 | 1,100 | 1,850 | 500 | 250 |
| 1998 | 1,100 | 1,800 | 200 | 250 |

Sources:

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Appendix E

Select Interview Transcripts

Interview with Robin Beech

JTF: Ok today is Monday January 8th, 2018, I'm sitting here with Robin Beech. Thank you for inviting me over to talk about Irish music.

RB: No problem.

JTF: I'll ask you maybe to begin from the start. How were you first introduced to Irish traditional music?

RB: Period?

JTF: Yeah period.

RB: When I was in the UK, my sister used to run a folk club.

JTF: Ok.

RB: Which was...it's common in England. I don't know if it's common anymore, but it used to be where acts would should up, you'd put your name down, get up, you'd sing a couple of songs, and at the beginning or at the end there's an artist who does a spot. Like a paid artist.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: But then the rest of the time it was people who stood up. And I remember from about the age of 12 going to music festivals and going to folk clubs. But it wasn't really Irish music at all. It was English singing, and folk tunes but I didn't really know about it. I went to festivals quite often. But mostly just because I liked the music, it wasn't Irish trad music. Then I stopped playing music completely until around 2003. And then I thought: "Well, ok, I want to get back into music." I bought a whistle, and I got four tunes, and I sat down and learned them. And then my brother said: "You can't just sit in the car and play whistle."

JTF: *chuckles*

RB: *chuckles* you have to go and find people to play with *chuckles* so I emailed Steve Jones, and he gave me the name of the O'Regan's pub, and then I started playing from there.

JTF: And how did you find Steve Jones' name? Was it from his website?

RB: How did I find his name?

JTF: I know he used to have Brother Steve's Whistle page.

RB: Yeah I think it was through that page. I think I did a search for: "sessions Montreal," and his name came up. And I clicked on that Brother Steve website, emailed him and he just said he vaguely remembered hearing something about O'Regan's. He actually called it the O'Riada pub.

JTF: *chuckles*

RB: It took me about three weeks to figure out he didn't mean the O'Riada pub, because that didn't exist *chuckles*

JTF: *chuckles*

RB: It ended up being O'Regan's pub. I think it had only been going for a year. I think I first went in...must have been 2003. Because I got my concertina the Christmas of 2004, and I'd been playing the whistle for a year. So it must have been 2003, and I think they'd set up the O'Regan's session the summer before that.

JTF: Ok. So it hadn't been around that long at that point?

RB: No I think six months, nine months if that. And I remember five of us would just sit there and we only knew a repertoire of five, six tunes. And we would just play them over and over again, like three or four times a night.

JTF: *chuckles* Nice.

RB: *chuckles* And then gradually we increased the repertoire and the speed of the playing and more people started coming and it just kind of blew up from there.

JTF: And who were those four or five other people?

RB: There was Yolanta...there was Winnie Hayes, who died three years ago, something like that. Janet Lasky, and Rae. Those were the four. And the story I heard was that they were taking classes with Siamsa...but the classes finished in May. They had nowhere to play so they said: "Oh we should find a corner in a bar somewhere." At O'Regan's they found a place, they said: "Sure you can sit in the corner and play." So it was nothing official and I think that's why there's never been a host of that session, there's never been anything official, because it just kind of grew out of nothing.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: *chuckles*

JTF: Yeah and it became one of the major sessions in Montreal for a little while.

RB: Yeah. I mean there've been lots of sessions, but it's been one of the ones that's been going the longest.

RB: There used to be a session at l'Utopik, which is now l'Escalier. It was run by Peter Senn. And it was mostly Quebecois, but there was a big mix of Irish music in there. And then Peter had a problem with his hand and disappeared. So the session stopped but nobody could figure out what was going on...

JTF: *chuckles*

RB: And so it just disappeared. And then I'm guessing four years ago Patrice Boucher decided he wanted to start something up at l'Escalier, the same kind of format. And the format he's got works really well. He gets a different host every week.

JTF: Ok.

RB: So it's somebody different rotating, and the one tonight's going to be really good.

JTF: Yeah?

RB: I don't know if you know Jocelyne Petit?

JTF: The name doesn't ring a bell.

RB: Violin player? She's really good. So she's the one leading the session tonight.

JTF: Ah nice.

RB: *chuckles* But it rotates. And it's a really young crowd that shows up.

JTF: Ok.

RB: And there's a big mix of Irish music in there as well, but played in Quebec style. So no swing, really fast, as many notes as possible, but Irish tunes.

JTF: *chuckles* there you go.

RB: But they change the names so it's not Julia Delaney's, it's La Sorcière.

JTF: Ok yeah.

RB: *chuckles*

JTF: Yeah, no, it's like La Rosée du Matin instead of Morning Dew.

RB: *laughs*

JTF: I remember the first time I heard that tune it was on a Bottine Souriante album.

RB: Ok *laughs*

JTF: And it was literally La Rosée du Matin...wait a second this sounds suspiciously like Morning Dew.

RB: And then you think hey wait a minute. Yeah.

JTF: You were saying before you'd gone to a Comhaltas meeting when you first started on the whistle.

RB: Yeah.

JTF: Who was involved in the Montreal Comhaltas branch at that time?

RB: I have no idea at that time.

JTF: Ok.

RB: But I know that Janet and Emily....you know the fiddle player?

JTF: Emily?

RB: Used to be involved in Siamsa.

JTF: Ok.

RB: She's still around, but I don't see her very often.

JTF: Emily...I might recognize her face if I saw her face.

RB: Yeah. She's older, she's probably in her 60s now. Plays the violin. I think she was the director of Siamsa for a while, before Marilyn. So it was her and Winnie and Rae and a couple of

other people I can't remember. And they just said: "Oh we're renting a minivan and we're gonna drive down to Poughkeepsie. You'll really enjoy this meeting." And it was a lot of fun.

JTF: Nice. So you drove down with them?

RB: Yeah.

JTF: How was that first meeting there?

RB: That was funny actually...I remember Janet was laughing at me because I was so tired at two o'clock in the morning. And my eyes were closing, and I was kind of playing along and then I'd stop moving because I'd fallen asleep, then I'd wake up and my arms would keep moving again
laughs

JTF: Wow.

RB: But yeah it was a lot of fun, yeah...you just wander around different hallways, corridors, rooms, and you'd find a session. They just sprang up spontaneously all over the hotel. Whereas when I went to the Catskill Irish Arts Week, it was completely the opposite. You have to drive five kilometers to the next session. It's a little spread out. Whereas in Comhaltas, there's like ten all in one small space.

JTF: And the apartment where you said Dave Papazian was hosting sessions, when did you first go to a session there?

RB: I didn't go to a session there. I only heard about it afterwards because Laurence started there.

JTF: And do you know when those sessions were taking place? Around what year?

RB: He had left I think the year before I arrived on the trad scene.

JTF: Ok.

RB: So that must have been around 2001 or 2002 that he finished and moved away.

JTF: Moved out of Montreal?

RB: Yeah.

JTF: Ok.

RB: So it must have been five years before that he was running the sessions.

JTF: Ok. And do you know where he went to?

RB: He went to New Brunswick, or Cape Breton, or somewhere on the East Coast. Not sure.

RB: They once had trad sessions on Saturdays at Hurley's with the really good musicians. People like Jean Duval, and Kerri Brown, and Gino. I have no idea what his last name is. Do you know Gino?

JTF: Yeah.

RB: Plays the pipes.

JTF: I know him on a first name basis, I thought he played fiddle.

RB: He plays fiddle, he plays guitar, he played pipes in the beginning.

JTF: Everything.

RB: Yeah *chuckles* And I think he's over in Ireland now.

JTF: Ok.

RB: Who did I meet? There was an Irish musician from Dublin who showed a couple of weeks ago, and somebody said: "Oh, do you know Gino?" And he said: "Oh yeah, we know Gino."

JTF: *chuckles*

RB: He's one of these people who makes a big impression wherever he goes. So now he's in Dublin, everybody knows Gino.

JTF: I'm not surprised.

RB: *chuckles* Yeah.

JTF: But I ran into Gino in Toronto a few years ago.

RB: Yeah.

JTF: It seems like wherever he goes, he leaves a mark.

RB: Yeah. Yeah. And he seems to have this cloud of uncertainty around him. He tells people he was born in Ireland, or he was born in Montreal, or he was born in Cuba, and you're not quite sure which story's the true one.

JTF: *chuckles*

RB: *chuckles* Yeah I met him when he was a piper.

JTF: Ok.

RB: And he was one of the first introductions I ever had to the tradition they have here of never stopping a set.

JTF: *chuckles*

RB: Because if you go to Manchester or Glasgow or somewhere, you play three tunes, you stop. And if you don't stop, they will get up and leave.

JTF: Oh.

RB: You don't play more than that. And I was used to that. And so when I came...I think it was one of Bob and Andi's sessions, I met Gino for the first time. And just coming to the end of my third tune in the set, he was looking at me like this *glares* And I thought I was doing something wrong. Because he was getting really close and staring up at me, and it suddenly dawned on me that he was looking for the sign to say: "This is my last tune. It's ok for you to start the next one."

JTF: *chuckles*

RB: And then as soon as I stopped playing he carried on with the next tune.

JTF: *chuckles*

RB: *chuckles*

JTF: Ok. Yeah, every session seems to have its own little code of etiquette.

RB: It does, yeah. I've been to quite a few around the world, because every time I go to a conference I look up where the session is and I go to them.

JTF: Yeah of course.

RB: I went to two in Melbourne, in Australia. In one of them, everybody showed up with a music stand and the music.

JTF: Ok.

RB: And in the other one, it was much more like some of the advanced sessions in Glasgow, where people had a huge repertoire of tunes, and they were playing really good quality music.

The one on Wednesday night has always been...no leader, really tolerant of anything anybody does.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: Whereas some other sessions...the Saturday session used to not be like that at Hurley's. I remember the first few times I showed up there I was just starting on the concertina, and they told me to stop playing.

JTF: Oh.

RB: Because I wasn't playing well enough, which is understandable. It's kind of intimidating the first time somebody says that to you, but afterwards you think: "Well yeah they did have a point."

JTF: Yeah, yeah.

RB: *chuckles*

JTF: I had a similar thing when I first started going to sessions, kind of squawking a few tunes out of the pipes. When I returned to Montreal after a few years away, I went to one of Bob and Andi's sessions, and it was either Bob or Andi who said this to me, he said: "Oh yeah, your playing has gotten a lot better."

RB: *laughs*

JTF: And I thought: "Was it that bad before?"

RB: *laughs*

JTF: And I have my answer. Probably *chuckles*

RB: Yeah, yeah.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: It's funny because I know that when we started the session at O'Regan's, I was an absolute rank beginner and so was everybody else. And over the years people arrived, people got better, and when I look back on how I was playing 10 years ago, I was terrible. Now I'm a lot better. I mean I'm not as good as a certain class of musicians, but I'm up there. And there are some peo-

ple, like Philippe Murphy who were absolute rank beginners when they started, now they are really quality musicians. And the thing I find amazing about Philippe is that I don't think he had a music lesson in his life until he was in his mid-30s.

JTF: I think that's right.

RB: And he started playing the whistle.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: And wow, has he got an ear!

JTF: I know, it's incredible.

RB: And the same thing with Olivier.

JTF: I know.

RB: When he started the pipes...but it's obvious, he's starting the pipes.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: But he's only been playing them a couple years, he sounds really good.

JTF: When you discovered that all these sessions existed in Montreal, when you first began, I guess, playing this kind of music in pubs, they were located I'm guessing mainly all downtown, or close to downtown?

RB: O'Regan's is on Bishop. Hurley's is on Crescent. Vice Versa is around Saint-Zotique, so kind of further outside.

JTF: At this point were you in Longueuil, where you are now?

RB: No, I was in Beaconsfield.

JTF: Ok.

RB: Up until 2010.

JTF: Ok. So did the distance from Beaconsfield or from Longueuil make it more difficult for you to get out to these sessions, or was that never an obstacle for you?

RB: I never really thought about it. It's just something I did. And the reason I moved to Longueuil was partly for Laurence. But I found that I was travelling to work for 10 minutes during the day. But then driving to a session, coming back for 40 minutes after midnight. Whereas now, I drive 40 minutes to go to work during the day, but it's only like 12 minutes to come back from the session.

JTF: *chuckles*

RB: So it's a lot easier than the other way around.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: But yeah, no, it wasn't a barrier for me. And I remember being completely addicted when I started. I would literally go to every session. I went every Wednesday, I went every Tuesday, I went every Saturday and Sunday to Bob and Andi's sessions. In 2006 I took a year's sabbatical

and went to Glasgow, and I went to every session I could. I recorded everything I could, I learnt as many tunes as I could. And it was kind of funny when I arrived, I'd been playing here about two years. And I went to my first session, and I recognized about one tune in ten. And I said: "Ok, I'm gonna have to make an effort to learn the repertoire." So I learnt about three tunes a week, and by the end of the year I could play about twenty percent of the time.

JTF: Ok.

RB: Because the repertoire there is enormous.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: Because they have the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, so all the best players are in Glasgow.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: And the sessions there are amazing. I learnt so much. There was a box player there that really inspired me to start playing the accordion. Because before then it was only the concertina. It was a lot of fun. Yeah.

JTF: Yeah, I can imagine.

RB: And quite a bit of the repertoire that we play on Wednesday is stuff that I learnt in Glasgow and then brought back with me. People gradually picked it up.

JTF: That's really cool. You've been playing for fifteen years now, I guess, more or less? If I do some quick math...

RB: *chuckles*

JTF: I started not too long after that, so yeah. Why have you kept playing that music for as long as you have?

RB: It's fun *chuckles* It's social. Ah...it's an easy way to meet people. When I went to Glasgow I arrived at the same time as somebody else in the same lab.

JTF: Ok.

RB: And after two months, I guess I knew about 30 or 40 people on a first name basis that would invite me back to their place. Whereas the other person who didn't play music or anything knew maybe two or three people. You just show up with an instrument, and they would invite you home, give you a bottle of whisky, and start playing tunes. *chuckles*

JTF: There you go. Fantastic.

RB: Yeah, so it's really...it's fun. It's a way to connect with a group of people. Because I found before I played music, I would invite people for a Halloween party or something to my place, and they would show up at nine, because they wouldn't want to come too early to impose. They'd leave around ten-thirty because they didn't want to impose. They would eat before they came, so they never ate anything. It was always really quiet and polite. I remember the first party I organized after I started playing at O'Regan's, people arrived half an hour early, they ate everything I had in the fridge, drank everything in the house, and they were still playing when I had to go to bed.

JTF: *laughs*

RB: And I woke up in the morning and there was a little sticky-note on the front door saying “Thanks for having us.”

JTF: Wow.

RB: And it was a lot of fun. And I think it’s because there’s a life to the culture you don’t get if you don’t play music.

JTF: When was that first big party you hosted where all the fridge got emptied out?

RB: That must have been 2000...it was January 2004. Because I remember that my concertina arrived in the morning by post. And I spent the whole day learning a tune instead of cleaning the house.

JTF: *chuckles*

RB: So by the time I realized how late it was, I hopped in the shower, and the doorbell rang. It was Elizabeth, and maybe Rae who arrived. And I was still in my dressing gown, and I said: “Please, can you vacuum the front room?”

JTF: *laughs*

RB: *laughs* But listen to this tune I just learnt.

JTF: That’s incredible.

RB: Yeah, that was quite memorable, that one.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: I literally spent the whole day learning tunes instead of cleaning up for the party.

JTF: All right.

RB: *chuckles*

JTF: That’s incredible. And was this at your house in Beaconsfield?

RB: Yeah.

JTF: Ok.

RB: Yeah.

JTF: And when did you move to where you are now in Longueuil?

RB: That would be 2010, I think.

JTF: Ok.

RB: Yeah.

JTF: So I guess it was at that point that you started that twice-a-year big session party?

RB: Oh at my place?

JTF: Yeah.

RB: Yeah, that would have been...I think the first one would have been summer 2010.

JTF: Ok.

RB: Because we have one in the summer for my birthday, and one in the winter for Laurence's birthday.

JTF: You've explained to me why you play music, why you've continued to play it over the years. What does it mean for you, other than the social dimension, which is obviously really important?

RB: I don't know *chuckles* I...I never really thought about it consciously...But I think it's a way of keeping mentally active. And the one thing that makes me think that that might be one of the reasons is because I started on the concertina because it was easy. Then somebody said, "Well, you need to learn the technique of push-and-pull." And not just "go until you can't go anymore and then keep going until you can't go anymore..."

JTF: *chuckles*

RB: And so I started playing the accordion, and I started with a C#-D, because I have a D row, so I can play Quebec tunes. Then I got a real Quebec D accordion. And then for some insane reason I switched to the B-C. So I have to relearn all the tunes that I learnt on the C#-D, but playing them a tone higher. So if you play a tune in D it's like you're playing on an E major on the other one. So it's really confusing. Because a lot of the notes which are a natural push on the other one, are a pull on this one. So I get really confused. And in the back of my mind I'm thinking: "Am I doing this just because it's different?" And I think it is...and I like picking tunes which are weird and unusual. Because it's different. Because it's something novel. And I think I like it from that perspective. But I like the process you go through of learning all the notes. Being able to play a tune completely, and then learning how to make it sound like a tune.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: Which is really hard and I'm still struggling with that.

JTF: I mean there is that distinction between notes and music, as someone once explained it to me.

RB: And it's funny, I got two things. One thing that I started doing, that completely by accident improved my playing in sessions was, I would learn a tune in D, but I didn't have a recording of it. So I'd find another recording of the tune in D, and I'd put it on a loop. And I practiced using that for the rhythm. But it means I'm playing a different tune to the one that's playing, which means I'm concentrating more on what I'm doing. And so I found in sessions when people speed up or slow down or make a lot of mistakes, I can focus on what I'm doing and keep it solid.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: I think that helps. So it's a question of that. And the other thing is, until recently I haven't been good at ornamentation and variations. And I'm finally familiar enough now with the music that I can mess around with it, which is a lot of fun.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: So I like the idea of doing that.

RB: I remember Sarah...was it Sarah Crawford? Is that her family name?

JTF: Yeah I think so, yeah.

RB: I just know people by their first name.

JTF: Yeah, yeah.

RB: When I first met her, everybody was saying, "Oh yeah, but she plays classical music too. And she really should stop playing classical music so she can improve in trad."

JTF: Really?

RB: And she always said: "That's ridiculous. They're two different styles, and I can play the two different styles and I enjoy both, so I'm going to keep doing both."

JTF: Well yeah.

RB: But there were some people who were adamant that she had to stop one to focus on the other.

JTF: That's...wow.

RB: And I found when I switched to Quebec music, it's got a completely different feel. But that feel has spread over into the Irish sessions as well. There are some times Gord will start a tune with a lot of swing. And when everybody joins in, that swing disappears, because everybody plays it straight. And the Quebec music is played absolutely straight, with no swing whatsoever. And I think the Irish music is infected by that a little bit. Now when I try and start a tune with heavy swing, sometimes it manages to last for one repeat of the tune.

JTF: *chuckles*

RB: ...but not all the time *chuckles*

JTF: Eventually it disappears, yeah.

RB: When I switched to Québécois music, yeah, it was easy.

JTF: Ok.

RB: Because some of the phrases you get in Irish music that happen in all the jigs also happen in the Quebec tunes. So they're kind of plug-and-play sections that you can say, "Oh yeah, I can play that bit." You don't have to learn it because it's in every other tune. But it's a question of learning the style, I think. There are very common endings in Irish tunes. There are very common endings in English tunes, which are different to Irish tunes, and the Québécois tunes are different as well.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: So you reach the end of a phrase, and you're expecting to go that way, and it doesn't. And you think, wait a minute...

JTF: *chuckles*

RB: *chuckles*

JTF: Yeah.

RB: Yeah.

JTF: It's one thing I find to play tunes for your own pleasure at home or in sessions with friends, but I also find it's another thing to go out and play shows as opposed to sessions.

RB: Yeah.

JTF: I think you played in a band, Tarcolen, I think is the name.

RB: Yeah.

JTF: When did that start?

RB: I think when I came back from Glasgow I came back with a repertoire that was a bit weird, and the guitarist Richard Lupien sort of picked up on a few of those and wanted to play it. And then there was a party, I think 2008, where Laurence, Richard and I were at. And we all looked at each other and said, "We're the only ones playing these tunes because they're too weird for everybody else."

JTF: *chuckles*

RB: We should play as a group. So I think it was about 2008, and then we made a CD that we released in 2010.

JTF: Yeah that's right.

RB: Yeah we don't really play very much, we played a few festivals recently.

JTF: Ok.

RB: Oh it was fun. I find Richard has a really good style for backing up that I like. He always tunes his guitar differently for every tune.

JTF: Oh really?

RB: And he has some really novel ideas of how to make things sound and it works really well.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: And Laurence is really good at improvisation in some parts, and I come up with weird ideas for tunes to play *chuckles* So it kind of works together. Yeah, it's pretty good.

JTF: That's fantastic. If I could ask you to rank the three words I'm about to tell you in order of how important they are to you...

RB: Yeah.

JTF: The words are: "Irish," "traditional," "and music". What would your ranking be and why?

RB: I'd say music, because I don't really care if it's new compositions. So "traditional" I kind of think of as being old tunes where everyone has forgotten who composed it, and people have been playing it for years. And I don't mind if it's a new composition as long as it follows that style, and it's interesting. "Irish" I would put last, I think, because I'm interested in English music, French, Québécois, it doesn't have to be Irish. Traditional...I think there's a filter that happens, that when somebody composes a tune, if it sucks, people stop playing it.

JTF: *chuckles*

RB: So traditional tunes have been played long enough that all the crappy ones have been filtered out, mostly. *chuckles*

JTF: I've never thought of it that way before.

RB: Because I mean there are some 3/2 English hornpipes that I play that were written down in 1580-something. They are really cool tunes. And I think the reason is because they're really cool tunes, they've lasted so long. I looked up some others in that book that are terrible. They're really confusing, they don't fit with our current musical ideas, and nobody plays them for that reason.

JTF: There you go.

RB: So I think a lot of tunes have been filtered out because they were crappy ones. They're not played anymore. *chuckles*

JTF: Yeah exactly.

RB: There's a lot of new compositions that are just plain weird. They're popular because they're catchy or something. I mean something like *Catharsis* is a new composition, but it's catchy. *The Bus Stop*. Same thing.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: But then there are other compositions, I can't think of any off the top of my head, which are kind of trendy because somebody famous wrote them. But I don't think that'll last.

JTF: Yeah. I mean, some of them might, others might not. I guess it's just a question of seeing whether they spread to other places, or to other musical circles, I guess.

RB: And I think some other people expressed the opinion that if they composed a tune, nobody can change it.

JTF: Oh?

RB: They composed it, it's their tune, it has to stay like that.

JTF: Ok.

RB: And things that I composed, and things I've heard from other people, if you don't like that bit and you switch it around so it sounds better, I think that's fine. It's what happens to tunes.

JTF: Of course, yeah.

RB: Richard Forest is a violin player/composer. He's done a lot of Quebec compositions.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: And he's open to pretty much anything.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: He's got the *Reel de Montebello*, which I changed to 7 / 8.

JTF: Oh.

RB: When I first joined the Quebec music scene, everyone was playing it in B minor. But it was composed in A minor. And the flute players don't want it in B minor, so it's easier to play. And then recently it's gone back to A minor because there was this feeling...that's the real key. And

then when I said, "I arranged it in 7 / 8," the first thing Laurence said to me was. "You have to email him and ask him if this is ok."

JTF: *chuckles*

RB: So I emailed him and he said, "Oh that's cool!"

JTF: There you go.

RB: And then there's an accordion player, Jean-Marie...I forgot their name. Bruneau? Something like that. And he's done a waltz version now. So it's changing...and it's a really cool tune. That's another tune that has passed the filter. Because it gets people's imagination, it's changed keys, it's changed rhythms, and it's still a well-known tune. And there are some things, like Banish Misfortune, I can't stand playing that anymore.

JTF: It could be banished.

RB: It's just...It was played so often so badly that I don't like playing it. Richard is all the time playing the Atholl Highlanders. I can't stand it anymore. But he always plays it with Dusty Windowsill. That I still like playing, because it's an interesting tune, it's catchy. So it's just some tunes that just grate, and you think *moans*

JTF: Yeah.

RB: I'm not sure how...it'll probably survive because a lot of people play it.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: It's like the Devil's Dream. I hate that tune with a passion. It's easy on the fiddle, people like playing it on the fiddle.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: I've heard one really nice version on the fiddle. I can't remember who played it. Wasn't there a guy called Antony or Anton? Maybe six, seven, eight years ago...he played a really nice version of it.

JTF: So you went to that initial Comhaltas meeting back when you were beginning. Did you continue some kind of involvement with the Comhaltas organization in Montreal?

RB: No. I'd been to a couple of meetings. One of them was in Ottawa. But no I never had any kind of official organization with them.

JTF: I'm trying to think of the organizations that have kind of helped the music along in Montreal. Siamsa is the big one.

RB: Siamsa is the big one. The SPDTQ does Québécois, but they don't do anything Irish. And I think Peter Senn disappeared from Siamsa and went directly to the SPDTQ.

JTF: Oh ok. Do you know why?

RB: I think he is a good friend of Gilles Garand, and he was involved with organizing the festival.

RB: I guess the Montreal Session website is an organization which has helped people.

JTF: Ok.

RB: Because I met...there was a guy doing a PhD in Alberta when I was a postdoc there. And I moved to Montreal, and completely by accident I met up with him at a conference in Ontario. And we both realized we played Irish music, and we said, "Oh, we should sit down and play." So he produced a binder with all these tunes in it, and I was thinking that's a cool idea, but a binder is a crazy idea, we should do it on the web.

JTF: There you go.

RB: So I started doing it on the web.

JTF: Yeah. And when did you start uploading tunes?

RB: I think it was 2009, was it?

JTF: Ok.

RB: If you go to the site, it's listed on the bottom, copyright to 2018.

JTF: Ok.

RB: I think it was 2009.

JTF: Ok.

RB: Yeah. And I have very basic web coding skills, but I wrote it in a way that there's a file of ABC tunes, and what you do is paste in the ABC, and the site will recognize it's there and show it, and produce all the sheet music and everything automatically, so you don't have to think about it.

JTF: Fantastic.

RB: I don't know why it became popular. Probably because I have an editor on there so you can edit things yourself. You can paste the ABC and get the sheet music, and then somebody sent me the three O'Neill's books in ABC form, which I put on the site. And then I found a copy of the Northumbrian Minstrelsy, which an old book of Northumbrian tunes. I resurrected that and put it there and then somebody sent me a copy of Allan's Fiddler, and some people tried sending me other stuff. And it just kind of snowballed. People sending new stuff and you just paste it on. It's not a fancy site, I don't really do much to it, but it seems to have made a big impact on people.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: Now they find the link, they email me and say, "Where's the session? You know, we should meet up for tunes." So that's good.

JTF: Yeah. And I mean...with a website like that, combined with thesession.org or something like that, it looks like the Internet has really helped bring people to the music.

RB: I think so, yeah. Yeah there's another one...J C Tune Finder.

JTF: I've never heard of that one.

RB: It's a really big one.

JTF: Ok.

RB: But it's something he wrote for himself pretty much. It's a search engine.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: And I think thesession.org gives particular results because it has the discussion forums on there.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: And Gord wanted me to open up something like a discussion forum or a wiki on the Montreal Session, and it just becomes loaded with porn links. Very quickly.

JTF: *chuckles*

RB: And it takes so much time to delete all of those...No. I couldn't do it.

JTF: Yeah. There you go.

RB: Yeah.

JTF: Fair enough. And since you've been playing Irish traditional music in Montreal, have you noticed anything that's changed about it?

RB: Hurley's was going in the old format when I started there, so that must have been...that was with the concertina, so that must have been 2005, or something like that.

JTF: Ok.

RB: And I'm sure that the session on Wednesday nights changed the philosophy of what people were doing. It suddenly became okay to do anything you liked, and if you weren't playing well, to do it okay and to make a big mess, or to have a really good set, depending on how it turned out. So I think people are a lot less inhibited about starting tunes. And then when we got faster the Saturday session broke off from the Wednesday session. That started the whole culture again from...it's like a seedling. You take off, you cut it, and you plant it. And then you find people saying, "That session's too fast now." And they need a slow session to branch off from. So I think that's something that's changed a lot, is new Irish sessions have sprouted up that were not there before.

JTF: Ok. And I guess to keep those sessions alive, I suppose you would need enough people who are interested, so I guess it's a good sign that there are people interested in this kind of music.

RB: I think there must be more people playing. There was a whole raft of people like Yann Falquet, Jean Duval, I can't remember all their names, that would regularly go to sessions and keep them alive. And then when the Hurley's session kind of tailed off and disappeared, they stopped coming to the music scene at all. But I think those people have been replaced by people like me, Philippe Murphy, other people who kind of took over, but grew up in that tradition.

JTF: And going to sessions to keep them alive, was that an overt effort, I guess knowing "I'm doing this to keep this music alive"?

RB: When O'Regan's closed, and it shut for like six months...when did it close? I think it was five or six years ago.

JTF: Yeah it reopened, but it closed again in 2017, I think.

RB: That's right, yeah. But when it was closed, we just showed up one night, there was a notice on the door saying, "We're closed." We didn't have any warning.

JTF: Ok.

RB: And there was a deliberate effort to find a new place and to ensure that people would come. And then we moved back to Fiddler's again, and it took off again by itself. But then when Fiddler's closed again, there was a deliberate effort to find somewhere new and encouraging people to go somewhere new.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: It was a bit easy, because Phil said that McLean's had emailed Siamsa and said, "We want a session. Can you provide one?"

JTF: Is that right?

RB: And it was just before Fiddler's closed, and we were looking for a new place. So they said, "Ok, sure, that's a good fit."

JTF: That's perfect timing, there.

RB: Not sure we'll stay there, though.

JTF: Yeah?

RB: Sometimes the acoustics are pretty bad, and they don't treat us very well. They cancel us for hockey and baseball.

RB: But I think there's a new culture that started around about 2005, 2006, something like that. And it's pretty strong. I think Siamsa particularly has been involved in encouraging people to come into Irish music and play it.

JTF: Yeah. And do you think Comhaltas has had a similar role in recent years?

RB: I've never seen that in Montreal. I don't know if they have a big chapter here or not, I don't know.

JTF: Yeah, I don't know either.

RB: What it Janet who was involved with them, I can't remember.

JTF: I know...Actually I think Donna-Marie for a while was leading it, then she left that position, but I don't know what happened with the organization after that.

RB: Hmm. I mean I've never seen anything obvious that was Comhaltas in Montreal.

JTF: Yeah. Or maybe it focused more on getting people to the meetings elsewhere, in Ottawa or in the U.S.

RB: Could be, yeah.

JTF: Yeah. It could be that, but I'm not sure. It seems that Siamsa's really had an important role in keeping...

RB: I don't know about dance.

JTF: Yeah?

RB: On the Quebec side there's pretty often a dancer in the middle, jigging while you're playing. There used to be, what were their names, I don't know if you ever saw them, there were two people who were taking a dance class at Siamsa. And while we were playing, they were dancing up and down the hallway leading to the washrooms.

JTF: *chuckles* Wow.

RB: And then they stopped coming for some reason, and I've never seen any sign of dancers coming back. So I don't know if there's much of a dance culture in Montreal. I mean it seems like the schools of Irish dance are alive and well. I know Bernadette Short, that school is alive and well. I think there's another one.

RB: I think Michelle has something to do with them.

JTF: I think she does, yeah, she's involved with one of the schools, I forget which one.

RB: Yeah.

JTF: There's another one, Costello. I don't know if they're based in Montreal or just off the island.

RB: Oh ok.

JTF: But I think another school recently opened.

RB: Ok.

JTF: So I think the dance scene is alive and well, but I'm not sure how integrated the music and dance communities really are.

RB: Yeah. On the Quebec side they're very integrated.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: Yeah.

JTF: That doesn't seem to be so much the case here, I mean...I've heard people telling me that the music scene is kind of fractured with different groups of people going to different sessions.

RB: In Irish? I think so. I mean when the Saturday group branched off, I've never been to that session.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: I got to the point where I was playing Québécois music a lot, so there was another session, and I got the impression that it would be better if I wasn't there, because I was kind of the face of the too-fast Wednesday session. So even though I tried to listen to the speed somebody's playing and stick to that, I became the face of the Wednesday session, so people thought, "Oh, you know, we don't..." So I was afraid of showing up and intimidating people, and I never have gone. I mean I probably...I think my concertina is the only presence at that session. Because I sold my concertina to Caroline.

JTF: OK.

RB: There's somebody who plays the English concertina on a Saturday afternoon at the slow session.

JTF: The one at Old Orchard?

RB: Yeah.

JTF: Ok.

RB: Because she borrowed my concertina for a couple years, and then I sold it to her.

JTF: Fair enough.

RB: *chuckles*

JTF: So are you still playing concertina at all?

RB: Oh yeah.

JTF: You have another one, I guess.

RB: Well yeah, I've got two. I had three, so I sold one.

JTF: *chuckles* Fair enough.

RB: Now I've got three accordions, I'm trying to sell one.

JTF: *laughs*

RB: *laughs* I had four. I successfully sold one of them. *chuckles*

JTF: One accordion at a time.

RB: Yeah I have three now. I've still got the C#-D, the B-C and the D row.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: Yeah.

JTF: Ok. And of the people who've gone to play this kind of music in Montreal, how many do you think have any kind of Irish ancestry?

RB: No idea. Not a clue. My immediate impression is nobody.

JTF: *chuckles*

RB: *laughs* But I don't know that for sure.

JTF: No, for sure, it's so tricky to actually...

RB: Some of the barmaids who came through Fiddler's played the fiddle occasionally, but they were too busy working to play. They were from Ireland. I can't think of anybody from Ireland other than people visiting, passing through. Yeah, I can't think of anybody. English, certainly. Québécois, certainly.

JTF: It's all over the place, it seems.

RB: There's a lot of French people as well.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: Yeah. But no, I can't think of any Irish people.

JTF: That was another question of mine, is who is keeping this music alive?

RB: Yeah.

JTF: I don't know if it's fair to say it's everyone but the Irish, but certainly there's a lot of non-Irish people.

RB: Yeah, sure, yeah. Whereas with Québécois music, it's completely the opposite. There's a really big drive among the Quebec culture, to keep that Quebec culture alive.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: But, yeah the Irish side, it's kind of outsiders who are just taking over *chuckles*

JTF: Exactly. Because it seemed like even the Irish organizations in this city, like the UIS, the Saint Patrick's Society, all those...

RB: I don't notice they have much of a connection with the Irish music side.

JTF: I think they might hire a traditional or a non-traditional band for their annual balls and that kind of thing, but yeah, I haven't noticed that much.

RB: Is it the Black Watch that have the whiskey tasting once a year?

JTF: Yeah, they do.

RB: I think Laurence gets invited to that.

JTF: Is that right?

RB: She sends me photographs of these 40, 50-year old whiskeys that I can't taste.

JTF: Aww.

RB: *chuckles*

JTF: And the tickets are probably through the roof.

RB: Oh yeah.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: She goes with Ken MacKenzie.

JTF: That's right, yeah.

RB: Yeah.

JTF: Ken...I had him as a teacher in CEGEP, actually.

RB: Ok.

JTF: Yeah, he taught a math and logic class, which I'll never forget. That was something.

RB: Yeah.

JTF: Yeah it was...he is Santa Claus, I mean.

RB: Oh yeah *chuckles*

JTF: Pretty much. But I mean, Ken is someone who I think has helped showcase Irish music in unusual settings. I find he's one of the bridges between the Irish community and the Scottish one.

RB: Yeah, for sure.

JTF: Yeah. He's the one running that non-bagpipe tent at the Highland Games every couple years, he plays whistle...

RB: Yeah, I think Laurence has been running it for the last few years.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: Between him and Laurence I think they are much stronger on the Scottish side, but they bring Irish music in.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: Actually Laura Risk is big on the Scottish music as well.

JTF: Is that right?

RB: I don't know if it's once a year, or once a month ceilidh that Laura Risk was playing for.

JTF: Really?

RB: She asked Laurence to play for it once. Laurence was terrified because she said, "Oh yeah, we're playing..." They only play each tune once, and they don't repeat it. And you never want to play the same tune twice during the night. So here are the eight tunes you need for that night.

JTF: Oh goodness.

RB: And Laurence had memorized about twenty of them, and then said, "I can't do this."

JTF: Yeah.

RB: "Oh no, you'll have the music there. You don't have to memorize."

JTF: *laughs*

RB: *laughs*

JTF: Oh goodness. Oh that would have been good to know. Oh that's amazing. And would this have been a Scottish ceilidh, then?

RB: It was a Scottish dance. I think...I don't know if you know Ewan MacIntyre.

JTF: Yeah, I ran into him...

RB: Yeah he's interested in starting a Scottish ceilidh band.

JTF: Is that right?

RB: He wants to organize like a flying band, whoever's available will show up and play.

JTF: Ok.

RB: And he wants to organize ceilidhs for banks who are having a fundraising evening, or people at a wedding, or something. So he wants just this spontaneous flying ceilidh kind of...you know, we'll come and do your Scottish country dancing ceilidh.

JTF: There you go.

RB: *chuckles*

JTF: That's really cool.

RB: Yeah.

JTF: Wow. There are a lot of really interesting connections there. And in terms of how the music's evolving now, do you think the scene, as vibrant as it is, even though there's maybe no more than 200 people probably playing this music in the city...

RB: Yeah.

JTF: I'm not sure of the exact number, but not that many.

RB: Yeah.

JTF: Given those numbers, do you think this music will continue to thrive in Montreal for the foreseeable future?

RB: For the foreseeable future, I think so. I mean the Wednesday session is having its teething problems, because I don't think McLean's is a great place. A lot of people stopped coming because of that, but there's a core group that still go. And as far as I've heard, the Saturday session, slow session at the Old Orchard, is thriving. Bob and Andi's session is still going on, but I haven't been to any in a long time.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: But, yeah, I think it's still going. But I think it needs a continual cultural presence of...not necessarily an Irish culture from the outside saying, "This is what you should be doing." You need it from the inside saying, "We want to be involved in this, we want to do it."

JTF: Yeah.

RB: I think Siamsa's really good for that. And I think the Monday night session that Fred Graham started as the Siamsa session was a good idea. Because a lot of cities I've been to sessions in, it's been the Comhaltas session.

JTF: Ok.

RB: But I don't think there is one like that in Montreal. So I think having a Siamsa session is a good idea because it's kind of officially sanctioned.

JTF: In a way, yeah.

RB: So that's good.

JTF: Yeah. I think with all the players, all the sessions happening, I think we'll be hopefully in good shape for the next while.

RB: Yeah, I think so. But you need characters who will keep it going.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: I mean...I've forgotten his name. The guy who runs some of the slow sessions at the Old Orchard.

JTF: The Old Orchard.

RB: Gemma and Harold.

JTF: Harold, yeah, yeah.

RB: He is definitely a driving force there.

JTF: Yeah.

RB: And you need somebody like that, even if they're quiet behind the scenes, you need somebody to do that role.

JTF: Yeah, of course.

RB: And Rae's been doing that for the Wednesday night session, and so have I. And Patrice Boucher for the Escalier session on Monday. Fred Graham had to start the Monday at Hurley's session. There's somebody, there's a name there that's continually pushing. And I think if you lose those people you might struggle. But if you can replace those people, then I think you're ok.

JTF: Yeah actually, I think it's Denis. Denis Martin, I think, who...

RB: He's another character who hides in the background, but he's a really strong presence.

JTF: Yeah. Because I think he's one of the leaders of the...not officially, maybe, but of the Monday night session.

RB: Yeah.

JTF: I've seen his posts on Facebook.

RB: He was also the head of Siamsa, wasn't he?

JTF: Yeah.

RB: Until he passed it on to Phil?

JTF: Yeah.

RB: And I think he takes it seriously that he wants the Monday night session to be the Siamsa session.

JTF: Yeah, I think so.

RB: Yeah. I think that's good.

JTF: Yeah, no definitely. There you go, I think you've given me a lot to think about, but thank you, thank you very much for everything.

RB: It'll be half a page on chapter three.

JTF: *chuckles*

RB: *chuckles*

[END]

Interview with Kate Bevan-Baker

Jérémy Tétrault-Farber: Today is Thursday August 31st 2017 and I'm here with Kate Bevan-Baker. Thank you very much for coming to speak to me.

Kate Bevan-Baker: My pleasure, thanks for asking.

JTF: I guess I'll start with this question. How were you first introduced to Irish traditional music?

KBB: Well, my dad is from Scotland, and two of his sisters are professional violinists and fiddlers, so I grew up hearing Scottish music, basically from birth. And I always wanted to play the fiddle and I think the proximity of Scotland to Ireland...I was also exposed to hearing Irish music at a young age. And when I started taking fiddle lessons when I was four, and just listening to whatever recordings I could get my hands on, there was a fair amount of Irish music. So that's how I was first exposed.

JTF: So it was very much through a family connection.

KBB: Yeah, absolutely.

JTF: And when you started those lessons, how long was it until you realized you wanted to continue on with this music and make it a big part of your life?

KBB: It was not very long. I was also taking classical lessons at the same time, so getting to play with other musicians and kind of balancing different styles always kept me interested in wanting to practice, which I think also played a big part in it. And especially the social aspect of Irish traditional music that appealed to me and going to ceilis and playing for dances and taking a break and doing the dancing it was just...It was so much more than just the music itself. And that really helped me fall more in love with it.

JTF: I guess that kind of explains why you've kept playing this music for as long as you have.

KBB: Um-hmm.

JTF: I know you also play professionally. At what point did you decide to make a career for yourself in music?

KBB: It was probably when I was in high school, deciding what I wanted to do in university. I mean I shouldn't say decision because the only thing I really wanted to do was music.

JTF: Ok.

KBB: I didn't really consider any other program, and I was teaching a little bit in high school and I really enjoyed it and I was given some really cool performance opportunities and that's when I realized oh this...making music is fun and I can make a living from it. This is what I

want to do. So when I did my undergrad in classical I formed a folk band in Newfoundland and we did a lot of Irish music and did some tours and recordings and that kind of satisfied me during my classical training. Worked on the side in folk music.

JTF: And at what point...I mean this was in Newfoundland...at what point did you come to Montreal?

KBB: I came to Montreal in September 2010. To start my Master's at McGill. And that was also in classical but it didn't take me long to kind of integrate into the Irish music community here through going to sessions. Some of my classmates were also fiddlers and we had some things in common...Then I found the Siamsa School and started teaching there I think in 2012 or 2013. I would have to check the start date of that. But it didn't take long and it's such a vibrant musical community. Lots of different people to play with. Yeah. How does it compare with what you experienced elsewhere? You're from PEI.

KBB: Um-hmm.

JTF: And you've played in Newfoundland as well. How does that community compare to what you've seen elsewhere in Canada?

KBB: I think it's definitely more of...maybe not a melting pot is the best word but...patchwork quilt perhaps. There's a bigger city, more people, more variety, and at the sessions on PEI, they're obviously smaller-scale, maybe ten players, and they've been going for years and years and years, and they're set in their kind of routine. What tunes they play, and who shows up. But here, you never really know. The sessions could be thirty or forty people, and it's definitely just more varied and eclectic, you don't only hear Irish music at an Irish session. So I think it is more stimulating to be here in Montreal than in PEI or in Newfoundland where...at a session they would strictly play Irish tunes and that's not the case here.

JTF: Yeah I've definitely noticed that as well in the midst of a lot of different things. So do you mainly play professionally, or I guess professional gigs, or sessions?

KBB: I mainly play professional gigs. I would go to more sessions if I had the time. And when I do have the time I love to go on a Saturday or a Monday, just to kind of cleanse and not...not be playing in a performance setting, for me which is different...but yeah it's more professional settings.

JTF: So how many evenings a week on average would you be performing?

KBB: Three.

JTF: Ok.

KBB: And teaching fiddle lessons during the week as well.

JTF: That certainly keeps you busy I can just imagine. I guess you've already kind of touched on it, why you began exploring Irish traditional music in the first place. Why do you play it?

KBB: Why do I play it? I mean it's not really in my blood...it is generations back but I'm...I was born in Newfoundland and my dad was born in Scotland, so I learned mainly Scottish tunes at the beginning. But I love the versatility of Irish music and the nuances and ornamentation, especially being a fiddle player. If you listen to recordings from different parts of Ireland you can hear such a big difference. It's a non-stop learning process if you want to really master different styles of Irish music. And so I do it because I love it. And because I get to meet and play with lots of other musicians. It's a group atmosphere, it's not just solo...it can be. You can play by yourself or play with others. I just love all the opportunities it gives, and it's fun to listen to, it's fun to play.

JTF: It definitely is. And how easy or difficult do you find it's been to earn a living playing traditional music in Montreal?

KBB: It hasn't been as difficult as I thought it might be. And it wasn't my goal coming here to make a living, being an Irish musician, so perhaps because I wasn't scrambling and had that mission, like, must make money being a fiddle player.

JTF: Yeah.

KBB: The gigs that I was offered kind of slowly accumulated and I'm turning many down now just because of other commitments and I can't handle any more on my plate. But there is a lot of work if you're a fiddle player in this city and I guess if you have to know...you have to have connections to get that work, but it's relatively easy to make a living as a traditional music musician here.

JTF: That's really good to hear because I've heard from some people, some of the musicians I've spoken to have found it a little more difficult. They also have a regular gig as well.

KBB: Yeah if you have a regular gig, then...if you're melody player if you have a guitarist or some backing up person that you work really well with...booking festivals and weddings and corporate events, that's really where the money is. They might not be the most enjoyable musically fulfilling gigs all the time, but if you want to make a living, the possibilities are there.

JTF: I want to ask you if you wouldn't mind ranking the three words I'm about to say in order of how important they are to you.

KBB: Uh-hm.

JTF: And then tell me why you chose that order. The words are as follows: "Irish," "Traditional," and "Music."

KBB: Oh no *chuckles* My order of importance...in relation to...

JTF: To you.

KBB: To me?

JTF: Yeah.

KBB: Irish traditional music. I would say music would be my top priority.

JTF: Uh-hm.

KBB: Because when I pick up my instrument that's what I'm doing. I might be playing different styles of music but it's all music, it's where it branches from. So that would be my top. And then I would say traditional. Because sometimes I'm playing something from Finland or England or America. I've always been intrigued by different folk and traditional music cultures, so that would be two. And three would be Irish, probably because it is the most frequent type of traditional music I play. It's the style that consumes most of my time, which I love and that's the way it is. But I think Irish is still a really broad term. Just because of the other cultural influences that have had an effect on the Irish traditional music and then vice versa. Irish traditional music has influenced other traditional cultures, so yeah, that would be my order.

JTF: Do you play contemporary music as well?

KBB: I do.

JTF: Ok.

KBB: Yeah. And even just spending most of last summer around Ireland taking lessons and going to sessions, I found that a lot of the music that's played in sessions now is recently composed. It's contemporary traditional, I suppose. And it's being written down and it's notated. I remember asking: "Oh, what was the third jig there?" and they said: "Oh that was whatever by so-and-so, and I can email you the sheet music." And, so it's being written now and being played now, but it sounds like it could be hundreds of years old.

JTF: And is that something you've found to be the case also in Montreal?

KBB: Less so. Perhaps because of the musical circles I find myself in, but yeah it definitely exists, because I know at some Siamsa recitals, the classes play compositions by their teacher or another teacher. It definitely happens.

JTF: This is a very subjective question I guess, but, for you, what does it mean to play Irish traditional music?

KBB: That is a very subjective question. I think when you pursue Irish traditional music maybe in a more professional way it has a different meaning than when if you're purely playing for yourself or the social aspect. But I think you're becoming...you're consciously becoming part of something so big and that's so old and there's so much history that it's important that you inform

yourself a bit. Less so if you're just learning for yourself. If you're playing at home. But if you're gonna go out to sessions I think it's important to understand where the music comes from and have a grasp of maybe some history. And definitely listen. I think that's the number one thing that I wish I had more time for. And...you learn so much and you can understand so much about a culture or a region just by listening to it, so I think...what was your original question?

JTF: What does it mean to play Irish traditional music, but you've touched on something really interesting I find. About consciously, I guess, integrating yourself into this network of people and tunes and history. But I think you're right. It makes sense for someone working professionally as a musician to do that. And the onus would be a lot heavier actually I would imagine.

KBB: Yeah. Because if people are asking you questions, you want to be able to answer. Not just so you can...when you're putting your own stamp on a tune to have listened to a few versions and make decisions based on what already exists. It's just really important to understand as much as you can.

JTF: I absolutely agree. And I can imagine that would inform your playing of other musical styles as well.

KBB: Uh-hm. Yeah.

JTF: Now you've been in Montreal since 2010?

KBB: Yeah.

JTF: That would be a good long while ago. Have you noticed anything that might have changed about Irish traditional music in this city since you began playing it here?

KBB: I haven't noticed a big change partly because I've only been involved in the scene maybe for five years. I do notice more non-Irish people...people of non-Irish background learning and playing the traditional Irish music. And I think that's a great thing. It shows an interest in the culture and the traditions...it's keeping it alive. There's nothing wrong with anyone wanting to join this, they're not doing any harm by playing Irish music if they're Japanese or Russian...so I would say that's a change I've seen just in the students that sign up for my classes because you never know what you're gonna get. Old, young, any background, any language, it's interesting.

JTF: And are there people, with consciously or visibly Celtic or Irish roots, coming to learn from you or play music?

KBB: Yeah, some people. I have a female student who's probably in her mid-40s, and she was born in Ireland but didn't live there for very much of her life. So, she's recently taken up the fiddle and she knows a ton about Irish history and geography and the culture, but not...she's a beginner musician. So it's really interesting to come at it from kind of an opposite place as many musicians do. And her young children they're turning 10 and 12, they're gonna start learning fiddle. So it'll be interesting because it's in their blood but they haven't expressed it through music yet.

JTF: So I guess for that student and maybe her children as well, is that for them a way to re-explore their roots somehow?

KBB: I think so. They're obviously interested in it and consciously seeking out a way to learn Irish music without having to physically move to Ireland. I think it'll be really exciting.

JTF: No absolutely. In terms of the gigs you play, what proportion would you say are either Irish or Celtic, and what proportion would you say is something different?

KBB: In my working professional...?

JTF: Or overall, yeah.

KBB: I would say maybe 75% of my gigs are more Celtic. More traditional Celtic...the other 25 would be classical or...I've done some rock and jazz gigs as well.

JTF: Ok.

KBB: Less of them.

JTF: Ok. And have you ever hosted a session in Montreal?

KBB: I've never been the leader or host of the session. I just go as a regular musician.

JTF: Fair enough. Is that something you might like to do at some point?

KBB: Yeah absolutely. I love smaller sessions, like in people's homes. I think there's something. The energy is different it feels a lot more kind of special, and when it's a close-knit group. Everyone's hand-picked because I want to play with you and let's see how we jive together in a musical setting. That's the kind of session I'd love to host.

JTF: Yeah. And have you found a lot of people hosting sessions in their homes within Montreal?

KBB: Not very many. But I mean, I think you have to go to a lot of sessions to know those people who have the private sessions to get invited. I haven't been to enough to make it into those circles.

JTF: That 75% of Celtic gigs you play, is it mainly downtown?

KBB: Yeah they're mainly downtown. But a good proportion of those gigs are also weddings or parties. And we'll drive to Ontario and more remote regions to just a city or community hall in the middle of nowhere. And there'll be a massive party there. And everyone will be dancing until 2 or 3am. So it's great to see the love and appreciation for live traditional music because you

know...they'll pay to bring in live musicians at these little small venues, which I think is really special and encouraging for working traditional musicians.

JTF: No it really is.

KBB: Yeah.

JTF: And, I guess since you've been in Montreal, what's the furthest you've driven for one of those small-town events?

KBB: I mean we're going to Saskatchewan in a month.

JTF: Oh boy.

KBB: We're flying there.

JTF: Yeah.

KBB: Driving...maybe three hours drive. But we've done a wedding in Germany. Someone who heard us play at Hurley's and flew us over for their wedding.

JTF: Wow.

KBB: I guess if they like it enough they'll bring it to the party.

JTF: Germany, that's...

KBB: Yeah that was cool so we made a little tour of it. We went to Belgium and France too.

JTF: A wedding in Germany, I can't believe it.

KBB: I know.

JTF: That's so cool.

KBB: Yeah.

JTF: Oh wow.

KBB: *chuckles*

JTF: Uh, if you had to guess, about how many people play Irish music in Montreal, or are part of that community? What would be your guess?

KBB: I'm sure my guess would be well under what the actual number is.

JTF: Yeah.

KBB: I would say 200 to 300 people. But I'm sure there are many that...house musicians who play for themselves. Just for the joy of music-making, that might be too shy or not mobile enough to get to that downtown core you were talking about where most of the sessions happen. Or they just don't like the busy environment of, you know, having to go to a pub where there'll be other patrons talking and, you might have to buy a drink, just the whole etiquette surrounding a lot of the music-making. But I'd be interested to know what you find out.

JTF: Yeah I've thought about that myself. I mean if 30 to 40 people show up to a session, and of course not everyone will be there all at the same time, those numbers to me would make sense. But you're right there's a lot that's kind of unknown.

KBB: And branching away from Montreal there will be more as well.

JTF: Yeah. No definitely. You've taught at Siamsa before.

KBB: Yeah.

JTF: And you teach privately as well?

KBB: Uh-huh.

JTF: How do your students approach learning this music?

KBB: Very differently.

JTF: Yeah.

KBB: The biggest challenge I find teaching at Siamsa is the varied levels and learning styles of the students.

JTF: Uh-hum.

KBB: Some of them might not even speak English. Or French. Music is your common language, but I find being able to communicate with a group class really difficult, and then some of them only want to read from sheetmusic, and some of them cannot read and want to learn by ear only so finding a balance between that and challenging everyone and getting them to learn keeps you on your toes as a teacher. It's resulted in a lot more preparation and making recordings for those students and providing sheet music to those students who want it. It can be overwhelming but it's very satisfying at the end of a term at the recital when they're all sounding great and they all got to the same place via their own interesting routes.

JTF: Yeah. Yeah I can just imagine. I remember I taught whistle once upon a time at Siamsa, and every student had a different path through to the tune, really. And do all your students take interest in this music in the first place through...for the same reason, through interest in Irish culture?

KBB: No.

JTF: What draws them to the music?

KBB: Many do have an interest in the culture or they've listened to it and say oh I've wanted to play like that. But a lot of the fiddle students I'll get are trained in other styles or instruments. They'll play piano, or have a degree in classical violin, or oboe and "I've sort of taught myself this instrument but I don't know the style." So they come to me with an existing knowledge of music in some form.

JTF: Um-hm.

KBB: Um, it's more teaching them the nuances and bowing techniques and ornamentation of the tunes. Really they could teach themselves by listening and watching archival video footage, but it's nice that you get to work with them one on one as well. But I definitely get them to listen a lot, we spend a lot of lessons listening, imitating recordings.

JTF: When you do professional gigs in pubs, be it in downtown Montreal or elsewhere, have you ever encountered competition from other musicians, or other bands?

KBB: I suppose a little bit, there aren't very many...as far as I know there aren't very many Celtic duos or trios doing all the pub gigs. And they seem to be booked by the same few groups all the time so you see the same names, the same faces a lot. Because the group I play with was established well before I stepped in, I don't think we face a lot of competition because they've been around for so long. That's kind of reassuring that we're not, struggling for work. If you were a new group, or relatively new to the city, yes there would be tons of competition. But if you've been doing it for a few years, I think, if people know you and you've kind of proven that you can entertain, and that you can play well, then there's much less competition.

JTF: Yeah I can imagine. So if the band you play in, Solstice, is one of the more established groups in this scene, what are some other more established groups along those lines that you could think of?

KBB: Salty Dog was playing a lot. And now I think they've kind of broken up, but some of the members have formed another one called Mariner's Curse. The Bombadils were playing a lot on the scene. And there are others that I can't think of the names of right now.

JTF: Yeah.

KBB: One or two more. But those are for just the three Irish pubs on Crescent and Bishop, that little triangle.

JTF: And all those names are pretty well known in the community as well.

KBB: Uh-hm.

JTF: And do a lot of Irish music players, or I guess amateur musicians come out to listen to professional musicians?

KBB: Less than I would imagine.

JTF: Ok.

KBB: Partly because most of the gigs I do don't start until 10 o'clock at night. And older people or people with young families, nine o'clock work schedules, that's late for them. So that might have something to do with it. How few amateur musicians come out to watch professionals, but it definitely happens. I can kind of pick out a musician in a room because they won't be talking as much or at all. They'll really be watching and you can see whispering and questions, or imitating playing an instrument, and it's nice to see those people really appreciating the music. And they'll come up and talk to you on breaks, where a lot of other patrons might not be there for the music. And sometimes we feel like we're just part of the wallpaper, or background music.

JTF: Yeah.

KBB: That's the name of the game.

JTF: Yeah, no, it really is.

KBB: *chuckles*

JTF: There you go this has been, really insightful, thank you very much for answering my questions.

KBB: That's it? You're welcome.

JTF: I'll let you know as my investigation continues.

KBB: Thank you.

[END]

Interview with Chris Crilly

Chris Crilly: Have you got any kind of level there? Can you tell?

Jérémy Tétrault-Farber: Should be ok?

CC: Ok.

JTF: Yeah should be good like this. Alright we are Friday January 26th, 2018, and I'm sitting here with Chris Crilly. Thank you so much for agreeing to meet with me, and thanks for lunch.

CC: *funny gesture*

JTF: *chuckles* I guess I'll ask you to begin from the start. How were you first introduced to Irish traditional music.

CC: By my mother, whose father was the player and owner of that fiddle that you were carrying earlier.

JTF: Ok.

CC: But all through my childhood my mother would sing. She didn't play jigs and reels as much as she'd sang songs. And then by exposure to that I ended up getting hooked onto that, practically, in the late 60s and early 70s on the records by Seán Ó Riada, the Chieftains, and the last one, Planxty and Bothy Band. I just got sucked right into it. I always used to play music. Classical music, what passed for folk music in those days, in the Folk Revival movement. I just got drawn inexorably, not without even intending it, into playing Irish music, and I just finally came of age and realized that this fiddle had been bequeathed to my brother, who didn't play at the time either. Because I didn't, my grandfather had bequeathed it to my younger brother.

JTF: *chuckles*

CC: And I still have it, and I've had it ever since. And I still play it a lot. But those were the main influences, and Seán Ó Riada was a huge, huge influence. In the same sense as he was in the Revival during the late 50s, well 60s essentially. With Ceoltóirí Chulann and Seán Ó Sé and all those guys. And here I am, I can't shake it off.

JTF: There you go, all those years later. And your life path, I guess, just took you a few places other than Montreal before you ended up here. Did you play music all throughout that time?

CC: No I didn't. I came over here in 63, did a year of high school right here where we're sitting. Well not here, there. In Loyola High School, which was like having been sent to hell and back.

JTF: *chuckles*

CC: I have no affection for this culture, I did not like the weather, as you can imagine.

JTF: *chuckles*

CC: Brought up in the British Isles. The set was set. Anyway I went back to England, finished off my schooling there. Three more years, came back here to go to university. Got tricked into staying here a second time by my itinerant parents who could no longer afford to keep me in England. And so I did my university, again, right here where we're sitting. In the same department that I'm now teaching in.

JTF: There you go.

CC: The apple didn't fall far from the tree. And all that time, I didn't touch a piano from about the day I got off the boat here, literally off the boat, in 1967 in July, until I had finished university and that was 1972. So I didn't touch a piano, I didn't sing, I didn't play the fiddle at that time. And I don't know, I was just sucked into my studies, making movies, I became a cinematographer, went off to work in that for a while. But gradually I started getting back into music. Music has been kneecapping me ever since. No matter what it is I wanted to do, I went into pre-med science, trying to get into medical school, music kneecaps that. I went into religious studies to get a degree in Psychology of Religion, a Master's degree, music kneecapped that too. So after a while I said, you know what, using that scholarly term, *expletive* I'm going to stick to music.

JTF: There you go.

CC: So that's that and sound.

JTF: Yeah. And the music kept kneecapping your projects, kept sucking you back in, it's been part of you I guess since those days, so it wouldn't have been thinkable for you to kind of let it go, or anything like that, I suppose?

CC: Well I thought it was. I didn't think about that. When you're 18, 19, 20, you don't really... At least I didn't think about a great deal. You live your life frenetically, foolishly, you know, fabulously, fall in love, fall out of love, oh music ok, ok. I took up the guitar for a while. But it'd never occurred to me that that would be my living, playing or writing music. It didn't cross my mind. If someone had said to me would you like to, I would have said: "Well that means I'm gonna have to go to music school." Well I did the school thing.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: Anyway it was good fun. Not a very focused early adulthood, actually. Music just lingering there always like this sort of nice smell. And anyhow, as you know yourself, it's a seductive mistress.

JTF: Oh that it is. It definitely is. And was it the appeal of that mistress that brought you and the other co-founders of Barde to get that up and running?

CC: Yeah. Well as I was telling you earlier in 1973 I was at the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Listowel, Kerry. Is Listowel in Kerry? Yeah it is. As it happened I was there in August at the Fleadh; I didn't go over to go to the Fleadh, I was there and I was soaked in a lot of Ó Riada, the house I was staying was full of Ó Riada's music, and Ceoltóirí Chualann, and early Chieftains' albums. I just sort of was awash in this, not only the music but the physical environment of Kerry. It was right on the edge of the Carrauntoohil. The range, MacGillicuddy's Reeks range right around the ring. And you drive around the countryside a lot, and I was just intoxicated with the south of Ireland where I'd spent very very little time before. Very little. Only once or twice in Dublin and that was it. Being born in the North, I'd always gone back there. And what happened was I got back here in September and got involved with some musicians playing bluegrass music here and there. Eliot Selick was playing bluegrass at the time on banjo and fiddle. And I didn't know Richard and I didn't know Toby, but I went to this party. Some party in Mile End. We didn't call it Mile End in those days...a *chichi* term given to it since then.

JTF: There you go.

CC: And met Toby and we hit it off just like this. And it turns out we had both been at the Fleadh.

JTF: Is that right?

CC: You've probably been to a few of those yourself. It's a zoo. It wasn't like in...in Clare, Ennis.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: This was in Listowel, which is a fairly laid out town, a little more so than Ennis is. So yeah we never met. And I got back here. And this way we thought this was rather wonderful that this synchronicity had occurred. So we started playing tunes together. And then you know Eliot was around. We played with him. And Richard Chapman who was sort of...I forget what he was doing at the time. He was studying something at McGill. He played mandolin mainly at the time. And we just ended up being invited to all these parties to play. And so we said: "Hey. We should take this on the road," in the old saying. It usually never happens but this one did.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: And we got together and I'd say within a year we had given ourselves a name, *Na Baird*, which was a stupid name to give ourselves because nobody knew how to pronounce it. *Na Baird*. We changed it to just Barde with an "e" to satisfy the political climate of the day, and ended up getting invited to play various...not festivals but bars or house parties or...the way bands start up, you know.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: Same old thing. And then along came in 1976...or is it 5? It's 5, I think. 6...anyway. The *Veillée d'automne* series of concerts at the Plateau Hall. Organised in large measure by André Gladu and somebody else whose name I now forget. Which I shouldn't. You could find that out.

JTF: I'll double-check.

CC: It wasn't Gilles Garand but it was people of that ilk. And we played there, and my sister was playing with us at the time. Joanna. She was playing flute. And one thing led to another, we got invited to more and more things, eventually got a manager, Yvan Néron, who managed us after his fashion, and ended up playing at festivals and touring, and it became a full-time thing. We were playing 250 days a year for about four years in a row. All over the country, or in the States. From Vancouver Island to Halifax. We didn't play Tuktoyaktuk. We played northern Ontario down to Virginia, Norfolk, and Chicago and Philadelphia Folk Festival. And we were on our way to shining fairly brightly, which was a lot of fun. But it was very wearing on Eliot. He got a little sick and had to drop it. And other stuff.

JTF: Yeah, as there always is. As there always is.

CC: Yeah.

JTF: The band stopped being active in 1983 I think, if memory serves.

CC: Well, that depends who you ask. Yes.

JTF: Ok.

CC: Yes, I suppose you could say it was 1983.

JTF: Ok.

CC: Eliot left in 1979, I think it was. And then Ed and I left in January of 80. And so Pierre and Richard and Toby carried on, they took on a rock drummer, a rock bass player and a guitar player and started writing original material, and moved sort of drifting away to some extent from the Irish music, although not entirely. They did put out a third record called Voyages, which tells that story.

JTF: The band, I guess, shifted over time, went on that trip into something different. In what kind of environment was that happening? Because the band I believe was based in Montreal. At least at first and then...

CC: No *taps the table with a finger*

JTF: It was always based in Montreal? Ok. You referred to the political climate earlier. What kind of environment was there in Montreal?

CC: Well amongst musicians, it wasn't...from my perspective it wasn't a huge deal. But from the management who were trying to place us in various places to play, mainly in Quebec because the manager was Quebecois, and I don't think...I think he thought the Ontario border was where the edge of the flat earth was.

JTF: *chuckles*

CC: I mean he'd send us abroad that way, but really he was concentrated...all that to say he was very sensitive to things Quebecois, and at the time in 76, you probably remember, the Parti Quebecois came to power, that following summer, that was November, the following summer we were playing St-Jean Baptiste concerts here.

JTF: Ok.

CC: And his instruction was on all these occasions whenever we were playing like in a French-speaking CEGEP, which we did a lot, or University of Montreal or other places, but particularly these Saint-Jean-Baptiste affairs: "Eille les gars, pas d'anglais" Yep. Nothing. Just speak French amongst yourselves. There was only one French guy in the whole group. We had two Americans, two Irish guys, a guy from town, Town of Mount-Royal and Pierre, from Ahuntsic, who spoke flawless English.

JTF: There you go. I mean you would almost end up speaking Irish to each other by that point.

CC: Toby had some Irish, I had none at the time. Anyway, I made a point of speaking as much English as I could, because I'm that kind of bloody-minded...

JTF: *chuckles*

CC: Even though I had happily voted for himself. René Lévesque. And I'd vote for him tomorrow morning if he was here again. The guy was a prince. Makes all the rest of them look like twits. But anyway. Toby too. The two of us took delight in being contrary that way. But all that just to say there was some sensitivity about it at the time and that was why we chose a name for the band that was bilingual, or non-lingual, or inter-lingual, or pan...

JTF *chuckles*

CC: That wouldn't upset anybody.

JTF: Exactly.

CC: And that was a thing in those days. It was a thing. I mean...I refused to kowtow to it, but it was there.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: The pressures were on. But that's all gone now.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: I don't see a trace of it anywhere.

JTF: Me neither.

CC: And I'm happy that...

JTF: Yeah. I mean, there are other issues that have come up, but not that one.

CC: And this has nothing to do with music. I'm delighted always to inform my Quebecois friends that for the most part I've been speaking French longer than they have.

JTF: *chuckles*

CC: Perhaps not as well. But longer.

JTF: *laughs* No absolutely. I mean...it's incredible how the environment has changed.

CC: Another thing at that time...In 78 we first played Toronto. We played the Horseshoe Tavern on Queen Street, I think it is. Or is it King? King. I forget. None of them.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: The southernmost of the two.

JTF: Ok yeah.

CC: Anyway, right near the corner of Spadina. And we get in there, and we suddenly realize, we get up on the stage and we gotta do our *patois*, our patter, and it's all in French. Now we're not speaking French, but we've realized we've never ever practiced stage patter, or introducing the songs, or the jokes about the songs, we've never done them in English. They'd always been in French. Or almost always been in French. We were laughing at ourselves, we were laughing at each other, and explain this to the audience about...they didn't give a shit about Quebec. Oh that banana republic. But we had to very very quickly cook up what we thought would be some nonsense to pepper throughout the show. But it was like pulling teeth. We had no idea what to say. The tune called *The Kid on the Mountain*, right? Well on the record, the French record it's called... what was it called? *Le chèvre sur la montagne*?

JTF: *Le chevreau sur la montagne*?

CC: *Le chevreau sur la montagne*. But when we introduced it we would talk about it as being: "Well you know, il y a la rue La Montagne à Montréal, pis il y a le chevreau laid, alors c'est le Chevrolet sur la rue La Montagne."

JTF: *chuckles*

CC: Ah ben. That would be lost on a Toronto audience. And it wasn't that funny anyway, but it would be lost on a Toronto audience. So that was trying to turn ourselves inside out. It was really fun, considering we were all English-speaking anyway.

JTF: Yeah. And you guys probably pulled it off.

CC: It was good, it went well well for a couple years. We found ourselves...I can never remember what magazine it was. I think it was Rolling Stone, listed...they had a wishlist every New Year or something, or every Christmas. Musical wishlist. And the number one thing on that list that time was anything new from Barde. That was it. There was no article, there was no critique of their concert, anything new from Barde.

JTF: Well yeah.

CC: I've got it at home somewhere. Yeah absolutely. That just to say that yes we were on the brink of becoming actually quite successful.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: Now how far that music could have gone...at that time we didn't know. But now we do.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: Now we're drowning in it.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: And there are millionaires. Flatley isn't, but the Chieftains and the Planxtys and the Christy Moores, you know. Fabulous. More power to them. Love it. They were a great inspiration to us.

JTF: Absolutely.

CC: And we were...Our timing was such that nobody else in Canada was doing what we were doing at all. The only thing remotely connected to what we did, and I mean remotely, was the Irish Rovers.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: Even more than remotely.

JTF: I was gonna say, add a few more remotelys. But yeah.

CC: That was it, you know. They were doing come-all-yes, and we were doing rigs and jeels, you know.

JTF: There you go. So you guys were the only ones doing what you were doing at that time. How quickly did...

CC: Here.

JTF: Here in Quebec, in Montreal I guess? How quickly did the fire spread?

CC: Well it came on fast with the arrival of people like Le Rêve du Diable and Spirit of the West.

JTF: Yeah. Yeah, of course.

CC: They came up while we were active. And they did this amalgam of grafting on a reel to the end of songs that had nothing to do with it. At the time we kinda laughed at it, but it was obviously clever and they did well.

JTF: Uh-hm.

CC: Then there was the Battlefield Band. Not the Battlefield Band, the...we used to call them Sizzling Willy. It was Silly Wizard.

JTF: Silly Wizard. Yeah *chuckles*

CC: So yeah but that stuff was all starting up.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: We were just maybe a few weeks or months ahead of what was gonna happen anyway. We don't think we caused anything, but we were in tune, so to speak with the ructions that were starting up at that time, which culminated with that amazing bloody original show, Riverdance.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: In its original incarnation it was pretty bloody amazing.

JTF: Yeah. Yeah that was something and a half.

CC: Then I found out that your man Flatley plays the flute better than he dances.

JTF: Hah! Yeah I only found that out recently myself.

CC: Unbelievable. Anyway we were exalted and then quickly humbled, you know.

JTF: Yeah. Well I mean humbled or not, I think it's safe to say you...the band did have a huge impact, at least on the trad scene in Montreal. Because I know when I first began playing this kind of music in Montreal, one of the first things I was asked was: "Do you have a Barde album?" Like, no? "You need one. Go get one."

CC: Oh. That's nice to hear.

JTF: And since then friends of mine pestered me until I got the first album.

CC: One of the things was if we'd been just playing jigs and reels from...you know if we'd just been playing *The Maid Behind the Bar*, and *The Kid on the Mountain*, *An Phis Fhliuch*, and nothing but that sort of thing, we would have been just another Irish trad band. And we did that, but we also did a certain amount of orchestration. We didn't call it that, but that's what it was. And arranging, and grafting baroque chords onto things. And we didn't call it that either. We just did it. We just, whatever came, and you know...As most musicians do. You don't call it this or call it that, necessarily. Let the critics do that. Let the guys that don't like it tell me that. "I don't like that shit; because it's baroque."

JTF: Yeah.

CC: So we did that. And it's just because of the baggages we all brought. Richard brought old-time Appalachian dulcimer-playing, soft, very soft, he never plays anything loud. You have to sort of strain your ears, so microphones were his good friend.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: And Pierre was this flamboyant good folk-singing troubadour guy that played bouzouki and guitar very well. And recorder. So recorder, right away. You know, Duvaliesque stuff's gonna start creeping in.

JTF: Of course.

CC: And then I came from a classical choral, and liturgical choral background. And piano. Although I didn't at first play any piano in the group. And then Toby, who knew which end of a tin whistle to blow in, and got better and better at it, but always rough, always so hairy, you know, Toby-esque, you know. Never refined the way sort of...what would be a good whistle player to quote now? Seán Potts or something like that.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: But he never polished himself, but he played with bollocks, you know.

JTF: Well yeah.

CC: And then Ed on the drum. Well he'd never known anything about playing drums or percussion at the time. And he just sort of picks...picked up patterns and...from military drumming, from what he heard other people play and he'd give it his own thing, but where he really shone was in his concertina playing. Which again was not...not conservatory style but real feeling in it, more than his percussion did, I felt. He was really really kind of...pull a note out of a libatto in such a way that it worked. It wasn't stylistic and it wasn't pretentious the way classical players will sometimes bring this trick and that trick into their playing and you know, if they play well it will be angelic and it will be wonderful but they wouldn't have the *schmutz* Ed's playing had. Interestingly enough Pierre also picked up the concertina. Ed played an Anglo-German, I think, and Pierre played an Anglo.

JTF: Ok.

CC: I don't play either of them but I know that the one is a push-pull and the other is like a harmonica.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: Yeah. Same note. Not same note.

JTF: Yeah exactly.

CC: And who've I left out? Eliot. Eliot brought...that's interesting. Eliot. People would say: "Oh, we love the two fiddles. Nobody else uses two fiddles." Well yes they do. The Chieftains have been using two fiddles for years.

JTF: Yeah, of course.

CC: But over here it wasn't so...in bluegrass they used to call it twin fiddles. Anyway, we did this not because we thought it was a good idea, but because we were both in the band.

JTF: *chuckles*

CC: And guess what we both played the same instrument. We didn't play it the same way. Eliot dots his notes just the way a bluegrass player often would do. And I don't. Unless it's in six, or something like that. He'd play a reel *sings a dot-cut reel rhythm* whereas I would go *sings rounded reel rhythm*

JTF: Yeah.

CC: And we'd put them together and it would be this sort of...almost like a marée of similarity. Our time would be really good together. And to this day it still is when we get together and play, our time is bang on. But the style is still the same, still *sings a reel rhythm*

JTF: Yeah.

CC: Eliot's swinging it, whereas mine is...there's a swing, but it's a square swing, instead of a dotted swing.

JTF: Yeah and you can hear that unison, I mean that difference and unison together.

CC: It's weird. It's really weird. We never planned it. I mean it's just the smell that came off *sniffs the air* ah, there it is.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: That's covered everybody there.

JTF: I think so.

CC: My sister didn't stay in the group. She did six months or so.

JTF: Not very long, yeah. It's surprising what happens when nothing is forced, in that kind of musical setting, it's just...the magic can really happen.

CC: Yeah.

JTF: So you still play with some of the old members still to this day?

CC: Oh...the only one around is Eliot and I don't see him very often because he lives out in the Townships.

JTF: Ok.

CC: But I see him maybe once or twice a year. Which is a shame. Because we're both mobile, we can get around now that we're getting on. Richard, I used to get together with a lot more because he and I would play with Theresa Perreault. Are you familiar with Theresa?

JTF: The name rings a bell.

CC: PEI. And also we'd play with Susan Palmer.

JTF: Yes.

CC: And sometimes just the two of us. And once in a while we would get Eliot and Richard and I both, bring us back together for a show out in Saint-Isidore or something like that. I can't remember.

JTF: So you were playing this music in Montreal, Barde being based in Montreal. What was there in terms of sessions in the city at the time?

CC: For years there had been a session. I don't know when it started. It was sort of like a folk music in the loosest sense session at Pine's Tavern, corner of Pine and Park. I don't think it's still there, I'm not sure. That's where we used to go, it was a horrible...floors were wet with you-know-what. A tavern in the old sense, with leather aprons. They had just begun letting women into taverns, there was a sign up saying *Bienvenue aux femmes...verres stérilisés...*

JTF: *chuckles*

CC: All of those off-putting things. And so we'd go there, people would sing, you know, belly songs, Peter Paul and Mary songs, bluegrass group, it was all very loose and unformed, not the

way things are now. And then at the same time there was a place called the Montreal... What was it called? I can't remember the name of it now. Montreal Folk Club, I think it was. They would meet at various places for a few months at a time, then they'd get kicked out, they they'd go to this hotel bar, and then they'd go to this one and there was a name for it and I don't remember. Look it up.

JTF: Ok.

CC: Penny Lang would sing there. McGarrigles, Bruce Murdoch would sing there, Gilles Losier and Fran Losier...used to play stand-up bass at the time, I remember seeing it. It was a folk scene...tons of Dylan, tons of early Van Morrison. You know, sort of the flagships of that folk music era, late 60s, 70s. And then after that and I don't know when this started, but Papper...what was his name?

JTF: Dave?

CC: Dave Papazian. He was from Toronto and he was in Montreal, I don't know what he did for a living, I think he was a carpenter at times...but fabulous fiddler, and very very sociable guy. He would have people over at his place...his place on Saint-Laurent became a real Mecca, like Chris Langan's place in Toronto used to be.

JTF: Ok.

CC: And so you know everybody would go there, I forget if it was Friday night or Saturday night, we would all play in each other's nose with our bows and stepping on each other's toes, and had a fabulous time. You wouldn't even know half the people in the place, that's where I met Laurence actually. I was digging her in the ribs with my bowing...

JTF: *chuckles*

CC: With my bowing elbow. And the tune she was playing is a tune I've really liked ever since. It was *If Ever You Were Mine*.

JTF: Ok.

CC: It's not a pipe tune, but it's a good fiddle tune.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: Everybody was there, Toby would be there, Eliot, all our guys would show up. And I'm trying to remember the timing of that. Probably, yeah, mid 70s, early 80s, yeah about that time. There were other sessions going on, but I wasn't aware of them at the time. Most of them would have been Quebecois. Had there been another Irish session I'm sure we would have all known.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: But very quickly in the late 80s and 90s, tons of sessions appeared. The Irish bars didn't exist yet, but as soon as they did it was starting to catch on, Hurley's was the first.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: And then there would be the place on Peel Street which is not there anymore, the name of which I don't remember. They would have musicians play, and sometimes a session. Some of them were hangers, some of the were cozy places. There was another one on Bishop which is still around.

JTF: McKibbins, I think.

CC: McKibbins came more laterly.

JTF: Ok.

CC: First McKibbins, then there was the Old Orchard, which didn't have sessions but did have Irish music. Toby and I played there an awful lot. And I'm missing a whole bunch...the upstairs...the Bar En Haut?

JTF: The Bar en Haut?

CC: Near Berri...

JTF: Yeah.

CC: Le Restaurant en Haut? Deuxième Étage? À l'Étage? Anyway it was upstairs.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: That was good I think it was. l'Escalier...

JTF: L'Escalier, yeah.

CC: You had to do stairs. They had great sessions there. I don't think that's there anymore. I'm not sure.

JTF: There are still sessions going on there but they're more Québécois sessions.

CC: Yes. They were mostly then too. They didn't..nobody minded. And then along came the whole culture around the festival in the summer...the name of which again has escaped me...

JTF: The Montreal International Celtic Festival?

CC: Grande Rencontre.

JTF: Grande Rencontre, yeah.

CC: Which is still going on I believe.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: They'd have everybody and everything, from pipers to fiddlers to dancers to people from Matane, to cloggers from Shannon, Irish bands would all show up and that would spawn other sessions during the year at places the names of which I...some of which I've never been to, but, the names of which I don't remember. There was one on Prince-Arthur near Saint-Laurent, for a few years. They come and they go like mushrooms now.

JTF: Yeah I know they do.

CC: And do you know Andi?

JTF: Yeah.

CC: He ran a lot of them. Who else would run them? Toby used to run them too.

JTF: Paul Legrand I think?

CC: Paul Legrand runs them at Hurley's from time to time. Paul Legrand is perhaps the Pope of Irish sessions in Montreal.

JTF: Is that right?

CC: Fabulous player, there isn't a tune he doesn't know, and he's really got the scum around the edges that it takes to be authentically roasted in the milieu. You know. He's a fabulous guy to have play. You know him?

JTF: Absolutely. I've played at a bunch of his sessions.

CC: He's a very humble musician actually.

JTF: And he's a treasure trove, I find, of knowledge and experience with that music in this city. And people who have interchangeably played Québécois and Irish sessions and vice versa, there was never much...were there any people who were uptight about playing certain styles of music at certain sessions?

CC: I imagine there were, although honestly I've never really run into it.

JTF: Ok.

CC: You hear about this on the Session site.

JTF: Yeah yeah.

CC: There's all sorts of people and policemen in there, you know, people trying to be PC. I can't say it, but I'd like to say: "Get over yourselves, play the damn tunes!"

JTF: Yeah.

CC: And if I wanted to play it in a key that you don't know, shut up for a minute and listen to it, you might learn something. You know, I don't do that in sessions, but I try to impose that...get out of your PC knickers, for God's sake. But I've never run into it in Montreal.

JTF: Ok.

CC: Some people might say: "Well it was a little bit fast." So you say: "Oh, sorry. Next time I'll slow down." Right? And that's it.

JTF: Or you don't slow down anytime either.

CC: *Par contre*, I was in Clifden, Galway...is it Clifden, Galway? Yeah it is. Twice now, I was there in 2010, and I was there last year. I would go into this pub...Lowrey's, near the main square. Have you ever been to Clifden?

JTF: No I never have.

CC: Anyway, it's Lowrey's Pub...there's 50 of them.

JTF: Ok.

CC: It's on the strip. You go in there and there was a session. It was the middle of winter the first time, so I go in there, and there's a group. There was at least three banjo players as there always are in the West.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: And a couple of fiddlers, a tin whistle player and a guy on the guitar. Usually if I see two or three banjors and a guitar...

JTF: *chuckles*

CC: ...gone. Anyway I sat in on this, there was nowhere else to go, it was cold. And I was driving around the countryside. And didn't one of them at the end of the set of tunes that I walked in on. I sat sort of listening, fiddle on my knee, waiting to be invited to join in. Never did get invited to join in. But I joined in.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: And doesn't this fellow pull out a notepad, he writes down the name of the three or four tunes they'd just played, how many times we played each of them, what keys they were in, were they too fast or too slow or just right, who played what instruments, everybody sat and waited until he did this. Checking his facts. "And that was that, was that *The Stone Outside Dan Murphy's Door*, or *Rafferty's Frolics*? You sure? Yes. Ok." Then they'd play more tunes.

JTF: And he would note down everything?

CC: Last year, this was seven years ago. Last year, the same guy was there doing the same thing but with an iPad.

JTF: Oh my goodness.

CC: I laughed *chuckles*

CC: All this just to say that in other places it's not the same, but in Montreal, it's always been in my experience, it's always been very very very nice. And then of course there's the slow session, which goes on at...

JTF: Now there's one at the Old Orchard, I think.

CC: Up on Monkland?

JTF: I'm not sure where it is. No, the one closer to downtown I think.

CC: Yeah, yeah.

JTF: Yeah. I think there's a slow session there.

CC: There's one out on Bishop. In...

JTF: Fiddler's Green. What used to be Fiddler's Green previously was O'Regan's.

CC: That's right.

JTF: That place has closed down now.

CC: Oh no. Really?

JTF: Just last summer I think it was.

CC: Ok.

JTF: What had become Fiddler's Green closed down. The owner retired, I think.

CC: They always had Irish girls working there.

JTF: Yeah they did.

CC: All of them. And they all knew the words to the songs, they all played fiddle.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: Yeah.

JTF: I remember a lot of them did. Just recently that session moved to McLean's Pub on Peel.

CC: Was that where McLean's is?

JTF: Yeah it's on Peel. But it's...

CC: On the Square.

JTF: Yeah, it's right on the Square. From what I hear, that session is...

CC: That's a hanger.

JTF: Yeah. That session has its ups and downs all the time.

CC: Who runs it?

JTF: No one runs it, from what I know. It's whoever shows up from the gang shows up.

JTF: Yeah, go on.

CC: There's one person that I don't think I have ever encountered in a session...one guy.

JTF: Ok?

CC: Who I'd have thought would have been going out to sessions, and perhaps he was, but I've never been at the same sessions.

JTF: Ok?

CC: Dave Gossage.

JTF: Yeah. As far as I know he just doesn't do sessions, he does his gigs.

CC: He practices during his breaks.

JTF: Yeah. And he does plenty of those...practices and gigs.

CC: Hot, hot player.

JTF: Yeah. Yeah, that's something and a half.

CC: But he's never done sessions. I've never ever seen him in one.

JTF: No, me neither. I don't know.

CC: And he's my guy for anything other than straight flute. He doesn't do straight. He does jazz, anything he does...anything but straight. You know what I mean?

JTF: Yeah. You know, I'm not surprised. I'm mean...Dave Gossage as far as I know has never done sessions. I don't know if it's because he's too busy, or would rather just do gigs and all that.

CC: Sleep?

JTF: Yeah.

CC: He's up until three in the morning.

JTF: Pretty much all the time, yeah.

CC: Well, a musician. He's one of my *expletive* heroes.

JTF: Is that right? *chuckles*

CC: Yeah. What he does with the flute can't be...look. A lead sheet, with a skeleton of the melody on it. He...it changes. Stay out of the way. It's just...Ah, thank you.

JTF: He's got it.

CC: He makes everybody whose music he plays shine.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: He's been doing it for other film composers as well.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: I've used him a fair bit. Yeah. I had him all lined up to do a...oh that's a long story. I'm not gonna tell you.

JTF: Fair enough. So if you have all these musicians in the session circuit or in the gig circuit, what have you noticed? Has the music itself changed much in Montreal since you first encountered it here?

CC: I guess it has, there'd be more tunes, there are more people, more styles, more people, more...just more heat, there's more of everything. And I think that breeds...I've never followed the session culture anywhere else, so I can't compare it to...at least not at great length. But yes it's changed. There's a sophistication of attitude towards the music, it's not so new-fangled. It's not so...oh, Irish music. It's a given that there will be lots of it. So now as well, a lot of mediocrity, as will always be the case. And there will be stars, and there will be people who innovate, write their own tunes. We never had that before, although I started off doing that. But now there's tons of that. Jean Duval cranks the tunes out by the egg-carton-full.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: I don't know who else is doing a lot of that. And I think what that does is it allows a composting, sort of fermenting, percolating process to begin. And I think, I hope, that other new music will come out of it. But knowing the temperament of most traditional musicians, which is traditional, they'll do all that they can to keep it from developing. And that's what goes on in folk traditions the world over.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: The really interesting thing I've found is that interface, with people writing tunes, others learning them them, which they do. And I've had the exalting, humbling, embarrassing, delightful experience more than once of walking into a session, putting my fiddle case down, and hearing them start playing the tune that I wrote.

JTF: That's amazing.

CC: I look over to them and they're all going *gives a knowing look*

JTF: *laughs*

CC: Now that's a wonderful thing, you know. It is embarrassing, but it's...oh get over it, it's nice.

JTF: Have people ever started playing one of your tunes without knowing that you were in the room?

CC: Oh I'm sure that has happened.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: It's usually the same tune.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: One tune. The reel that I wrote for my grandfather.

JTF: Yeah ok.

CC: *Jack McCann's*. It's a reel. Kind of tricky to play. Most of the other people who play it play it better than I do.

JTF: Yeah. I remember coming across that same comment. Barde's first album is on Youtube. I remember coming across it. And I think you'd written that in the comments.

CC: Yeah I said that to many people because it's true. And, you know, my fault for writing a tricky tune.

JTF: *chuckles*

CC: And more power to them for being able to get on top of it, you know.

JTF: Yeah I know, exactly. I still have to decipher whether there is that kind of percolating happening. Uh, I mean it depends who people interact with in this whole musicscape. But if memory serves, the Montreal branch of *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann* was founded in 74. That's as far as I've been able to tell. And the Siamsa School of Irish Music was founded in 91, I think. Were you ever involved in any of those?

CC: It's funny you should mention that. In 1973, I got back from Kerry, I phoned up *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann* in Dublin, in Dún Laoghaire...Blackrock it is, actually.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: Or I wrote to them. I found the *Treoir* magazine and I wrote saying: "Listen I'm all on fire with the music again. I'd love to maybe consider setting up a branch of CCÉ in Montreal." Never ever got a reply from anybody. And then I heard a year later or so that Patrick Barthe had set up a branch.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: He's not even a musician. He's a lover of music. He's the husband of...

JTF: Is Patrick...

CC: The dance school.

JTF: Oh Short? Patrick Short? Bernadette Short?

CC: Oh that's right no. Barthe is somebody else. But they were all friends.

JTF: Or was it Conroy?

CC: Conroy had something to do with it too, that's true.

JTF: Yeah, yeah.

CC: Is he still with us?

JTF: I think he is.

CC: Wow.

JTF: Yeah I think he is. He's getting on in years, but he's still around as far as I know, yeah.

CC: He was old then.

JTF: Yeah. There you go.

CC: Anyway, so as you say, 74 I guess makes sense.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: I've had very little to do with them ever since...not on purpose, it's just that I never crossed paths with them except...There's something I got involved in with them. What was it? Oh you know what I can't remember what it was. They were involved...They used to, I think, have something to do with the Fleadh...not the Fleadh, the Feis.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: Every year. I think Bernadette Short was doing that. Or used to organize. And I think they had a hand in funding some of that.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: But that's...oh and the other thing that was they put on a concert with the Bothy Band. The first time the Bothy Band ever played in Canada, we opened for them.

JTF: Wow.

CC: And we did it, are you ready for this, at Verdun Catholic High School.

JTF: Is that right? *chuckles*

CC: Then we did it, we also played...did we open anywhere else? No that's right. That's where we played with them and then we did a session afterward. That's the only thing I ever had anything to do with *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann*.

JTF: Ok. I know one person tried to either continue it or revive it, or whatever the case might be. But I know she stepped down at some point.

CC: Gearóid would know about that.

JTF: Yeah I think he does, I'll have to ask him. She was a *bodhrán* player, Donna-Marie is her name. Since she stepped down I'm not sure what has happened if anything. But Siamsa, from the early 1990s onwards as always been the go-to resource, more so than Comhaltas. Were you ever part of the Siamsa orbit at all?

CC: No. I had taught before they got going.

JTF: Ok.

CC: But I found I didn't like really like teaching violin. Being an autodidact player is not a good foundation for teaching for me.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: You know, I didn't want to pass on my bad habits to anybody.

JTF: *chuckles* There you go.

CC: But they're doing some fantastic stuff.

JTF: I think so, yeah. I used to teach over there. I used to teach whistle over there.

CC: Oh did you?

JTF: Yeah, just for one term. I know there was talk of trying to get some piping lessons there as well which I would have taught, but there wasn't enough interest. I've taught some people here. I've started some players on the pipes, and then they've continued on on their own. But there are few uilleann pipers in the city actually, and we all know each other.

CC: There's a young kid. He lives on the South Shore or somewhere...or Saint-Jean?

JTF: Yeah?

CC: He's like 19 or something.

JTF: Ok.

CC: Ho! He was at this Blackie show. I'd never heard of him before. But he moved to Ireland, lived in Dublin for two years, studied pipe making, and made his own pipes. Came back, plays them quite well.

JTF: That's Alexis Kelly. I know him.

CC: You know the guy?

JTF: I know him, yeah.

CC: What's his name again?

JTF: Alexis Kelly.

CC: Yeah. Very very humble little fella.

JTF: Yeah, very kind.

CC: Speaks pretty good English.

JTF: Yeah, good English. And I guess he might be the future of piping in Montreal, because he knows how to make and repair everything. I actually gave him a few pointers before he left. I gave him most of my reed-making equipment, which I'd used once. I'd just destroyed the cane completely. So I figured I wasn't cut out for reed-making.

CC: So he will do it. *chuckles*

CC: There's a piper in Quebec City. Christophe something. He's a Frenchman.

JTF: I don't know.

CC: From France.

JTF: I know a fiddler from France.

CC: No, I know who that is too. But he lives in Quebec.

JTF: Ok.

CC: He's a scientist of some sort. Very, you know, astrophysicist or something.

JTF: Something like that. Wow.

CC: Anyway...

JTF: It's not Patrick...

CC: Gorgeous player. Good stuff.

JTF: It's not Patrick Sweeney or McSweeney?

CC: Oh yeah, I've heard of him too. I've played with this other guy once with Susan, the three of us. Oh boy, what a delight! His notes were right in the middle. How do you do that with uilleann pipes? It's hard.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: I mean, mostly.

JTF: Of course, it's the pipes.

JTF: I'll ask you this question. If you had to rank the following three words in their order of importance to you...the words are as follows: "Irish," "Traditional," "Music." In what order would you list them?

CC: I guess music would have to be the last one.

JTF: Ok.

CC: Because it's the only noun.

JTF: *chuckles* Fair enough.

CC: That's a really interesting question.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: Thought they were interchangeable, but in the end does it mean the same thing?

JTF: It's a good question.

CC: You can if you want it to. *whispers* Traditional, Irish, music...I've never ever thought of that. See, scholars come up with good stuff.

JTF: Every so often we try *chuckles*

CC: Still waiting for my answer?

JTF: If you have one. If not no worries. You can say it's all part of the same bundle. And that would be fair enough. What I've found is a lot of people I've spoken as part of this project have listed "Irish" either second or third. They prioritize "music" or "tradition" however they define those.

CC: I'm not trying to make any sense out of it, just...

JTF: Yeah. Yeah. Just the order of those terms within your own life.

CC: Meaning important to me?

JTF: Yeah.

CC: Or should be important?

JTF: However you...

CC: To me?

JTF: Yeah.

CC: Music.

JTF: Music's first.

CC: Music, Irish, Tradition. In other words...Opposite.

JTF: Yeah.

CC: Because I play all sorts of music, I listen to Irish traditional music.

JTF: Of course that's a whole other chapter in a new time, I guess. In terms of the Irish traditional music scene right now in Montreal, and maybe in Quebec generally, would you describe it as a thriving scene?

CC: I don't know. I'm not active in it very much. And if I had to find someone who would be a qualified person to answer that, I would say Paul Legrand would be the guy. His ear is far closer to the ground than mine is. I don't even live in Montreal anymore. There's all sorts of reasons what I just said...loosened my grip in the community. I don't get called as often as I used to because I think they realize that I'm not playing anymore, that I'm doing other things. And so, fair enough. I don't get included as much as it's a self-fulfilling divorce.

JTF: Yeah, I know, of course.

CC: So no I can't really help you with that. Yeah, Paul Legrand, or even you know, Andi.

JTF: What can I say now, but I'm reeling, or jiggling, or either or. This has been a supremely interesting and insightful chat.

CC: Meandering as it was.

JTF: Oh yeah.

CC: *chuckles*

JTF: With all the meanders of the thing, you've given me a ton to think about. So thank you very much, I'll hit the button.

CC: My pleasure.

[END]

Interview with Julien Després

Jérémy Tétrault-Farber: Alors nous sommes le jeudi 27 juillet 2017 et je suis ici avec Julien Després, merci beaucoup d'être ici, en ma présence. Alors j'ai quelques questions pour toi sur ton implication au niveau de la musique irlandaise à Montréal.

Julien Després: Ok.

JTF: Pour commencer, comment est-ce que t'as découvert cet univers là de musique irlandaise?

JD: En fait je l'ai découvert via un ami, Marc-Antoine Bérubé qui m'a initié aussi. Et par la suite Sophie Gagné, avec laquelle j'avais déjà eu...avec lesquels j'avais déjà eu des projets musicaux. Je dirais que mon expérience avec la musique typiquement irlandaise a commencé sur la rue Crescent, avec les groupes qui jouaient à l'époque au Hurley's, David Gossage et compagnie.

JTF: Ok et c'était vers quelle époque à peu près?

JD: Je dirais vers les années...je suis rentré au Musée Stewart en 2000, donc je dirais peut-être 2001, 2002.

JTF: Ok.

JD: Donc déjà quinze ans.

JTF: Quand même. Ah oui mets-en ça va vite.

JD: Faque je dirais qu'il y a quinze ans, j'avais déjà un intérêt pour le violon, les instruments celtiques, j'avais un intérêt pour ça. Notamment en écoutant des films comme *Le Dernier des Mohicans*...des films...j'ai toujours aimé beaucoup des films historiques, donc forcément en écoutant des films historiques et en ayant un intérêt pour ça j'ai côtoyé la musique traditionnelle. Mais pour vouloir en faire ça a commencé en 2002.

JTF: Ok. Et ça fait déjà une quinzaine d'années. C'est quoi qui a fait en sorte que t'as continué de jouer cette musique là pendant cette quinzaine d'année là?

JD: C'est une musique qui m'habite. C'est très difficile à décrire, mais c'est une musique qui me décrit, en tant que personne. J'ai l'impression que quand je l'écoute je comprends un peu mieux ma vie. Là je parle pas nécessairement de la musique irlandaise, mais de la musique aussi québécoise qui est teintée de...mais quand j'écoute ça j'ai l'impression de faire peut-être un voyage dans le temps aussi.

JTF: C'est quand même puissant ça, un voyage dans le temps, par la musique. Puis, est-ce que ce voyage dans le temps change selon l'instrument que tu joues? Tu joues plusieurs instruments.

JD: Oui, mais au départ j'ai commencé vraiment avec la base. J'avais un djembe, on pourra en reparler plus tard, là, mais c'était très...c'était pas très bien vu. Marc-Antoine qui était plutôt guitariste à cette époque là, qui commençait à jouer du violon, il m'expliquait qu'il y avait beaucoup de gens qui se pointaient dans des sessions avec djembes, et qu'en fait j'ai fait ça une fois. C'est là que j'ai vraiment...que je suis rentré dans ce petit monde là. J'ai découvert un petit monde, quand même tissé serré. C'est pas toujours facile d'entrer dans ce monde là. C'est un paradoxe. Ça peut être accueillant quand on l'écoute, quand on rentre dans le pub. Mais quand on veut rentrer dans le cercle pour en jouer, il y a différentes philosophies par rapport à ça.

JTF: Ouais.

JD: Des puristes qui côtoient des ouverts.

JTF: Ouais. Puis justement est-ce qu'il y a des sessions plus puristes ou plus ouvertes, ou est-ce que c'est souvent un mélange des deux d'après toi?

JD: Je pense que ça va toujours être un mélange des deux, puis ça va toujours créer...pas une discorde mais créer des questionnements, parce que la musique traditionnelle, la philosophie reste traditionnelle mais la musique traditionnelle d'aujourd'hui j'ai l'impression passe par des canaux modernes, que ce soit l'amplification, que ce soit...Faque il y en a qui vont interpréter...en fait le moderne c'est un peu comme, t'as ta base de sauce à spaghetti puis tu l'épicer comme tu veux. Tu peux l'épicer, tu peux faire ce que tu veux avec un spaghetti, avec une base de spaghetti. Mais je pense qu'une base de musique traditionnelle, tu peux l'agrémenter comme tu veux, tu sais.

JTF: Ouais. Ouais non ça c'est très vrai. Tu l'as agrémenté dans différents groupes de musique. Je sais qu'il y a Corsaire dans lequel t'as été très impliqué. Cats in the Kitchen aussi.

JD: Ouais.

JTF: C'est quoi les épices différentes pour ces groupes là?

JD: Oh. Ben c'est un bon exemple, dans le fond, Cats in the Kitchen est arrivé après. J'ai commencé avec Corsaire. Corsaire j'ai vu ça évoluer dès ses débuts avant que j'arrive dans le groupe, je côtoyais les anciens membres, puis je commençais à voir un peu ce qu'ils faisaient.

JTF: Ouais. Et c'était qui alors ces membres?

JD: Jérémie...Jérémie, Jérémie, Jérémie...je me souviens plus de son nom de famille.

JTF: Pas Keddy?

JD: Non non non...Jérémy Tétrault? Peut-être, je sais pas.

JTF: Ah oui?

JD: Non, c'est pas toi.

JTF: Non c'est moi ça.

JD: Ah excuse.

JTF: Pas de problème. Mais il y avait un Jérémie là-dedans.

JD: Ouais, il y avait un Jérémie tu pourras voir ça sur le site de Corsaire...les anciens membres.

JTF: D'accord.

JD: Ah, donc j'ai côtoyé Louis et Jérémie puis en fait, ensemble, à cette époque là on travaillait aussi au Dragon Rouge. Au Dragon Rouge on essayait de monter du répertoire entre guillemets médiéval. Faque c'est comme ça qu'on a commencé à travailler ensemble. Déjà en partant on avait...ce qui s'en venaient des créations Corsaire étaient fortement teintées de notre expérience au Dragon Rouge. Je dirais un peu plus mineur, tu sais, dans le sens où les chansons sont en mineur. Il y a pas beaucoup de majeur. Mais Cats in the Kitchen c'est un groupe qui est plus, comment je dirais, qui est plus axé sur l'instrumentation. Moins de chansons. Et c'est un répertoire qui va être assez éclectique. On va aller chercher du trad québécois, du gaspésien, de l'irlandais, de l'anglais, de l'écossais. On va piger dans différents répertoires. On va essayer de faire des agencements.

JTF: Justement ces agencements là font en sorte que la musique traditionnelle, peu importe ça vient d'où, peut évoluer justement. Mais avant tu disais que c'était une musique qui te décrivait, à la limite.

JD: Ouais.

JTF: Alors, pourquoi est-ce que tu en joues, aujourd'hui?

JD: Bonne question. En fait si je fais un parallèle avec mes parcours, j'ai travaillé au Musée Stewart en 2000, et je faisais de la reconstitution historique, ce qu'on appelait du "reenactment" en anglais.

JTF: Ouais.

JD: Le concept est fort simple, c'est "learning by doing." En fait tu comprends comment les gens vivaient à l'époque en le faisant. J'ai toujours été passionné dans tout ce que je faisais. Que ce soit mettons une ride de canot sur la Richelieu, je veux savoir c'est quoi pagayer pendant, je sais pas moi, trois jours de suite consécutifs. Je veux savoir c'est quoi faire une bataille rangée, manipuler le fusil avec la pierre de silex, tirer trente coups puis être obligé de nettoyer mon fusil. Là je fais vraiment un parallèle avec l'histoire. Mais pour moi la musique, je la vois de la même façon, c'est que si cette musique là me passionne, bien il faut que j'essaie de la comprendre, puis de la façonner, de la manipuler un peu comme de la pâte à modeler.

JTF: En apprenant à en faire “by learning by doing”, où est-ce que tu as joué ou appris à jouer?

JD: En écoutant.

JTF: En écoutant, donc un peu partout?

JD: C'est une musique...est-ce qu'on peut dire que c'est une musique qui s'apprend plus que les autres styles musicaux à l'oreille? Moi je pense que oui, je pense que c'est une musique...je vais parler à travers mon chapeau, mais à une époque où on faisait d'avantage de musique traditionnelle, c'était la seule musique, les gens savaient pas lire, les gens savaient pas écrire.

Mais...étonnamment savaient jouer des mélodies qui existaient nulle part ailleurs, ou des mélodies qu'ils avaient entendues, je sais pas moi, à bord d'un bateau, ou dans une veillée. Faque cette musique là est peut-être plus accessible, parce qu'elle dépend de l'écoute.

JTF: Mais t'as absolument raison, c'est vrai que ça dépend de l'écoute. Et des endroits où t'as joué cette musique là, est-ce qu'il y a qui prédominent dans ton expérience? Est-ce que c'est une musique qui se joue dans certains lieux en particulier ou ça peut être n'importe où?

JD: Tu sais moi je pense qu'on assiste en ce moment à un ré-intéressement, c'est pas un mot qui existe, mais une réappropriation de nos racines. Je ne pourrais pas dire si c'est quelque chose qui est propre à tous les pays. Mais je pense qu'au Québec on se cherche énormément en tant que culture. Puis on se réapproprie nos racines notamment, par exemple le conte aussi, avec des conteurs comme Fred Pellerin qui...le métier de conteur était pratiquement disparu depuis Fred Pellerin, et là on a un ré-intérêt pour la culture plus ancienne, je dirais.

JTF: Ouais, et c'est vrai que c'est plusieurs aspects culturels assez vieux qui ont formé la culture québécois aussi. C'est sûr que ça aide beaucoup.

JD: Mais c'est une culture qui dépendait aussi beaucoup des marins, en fait. Pas qu'ils dépendaient des marins, mais en fait, on est une communauté très jeune, la communauté québécoise. On est très jeune, puis on est fortement teinté de plusieurs communautés très anciennes. C'est ce qui fait la beauté de la richesse d'un folklore musical, linguistique, et social.

JTF: Je suis absolument d'accord. Et toi même, dans tout ça, évidemment t'es québécois. Est-ce que t'as des racines irlandaises?

JD: Non *laughs*

JTF: Aucunement?

JD: Mais c'est drôle parce que j'ai les cheveux roux. Puis souvent, souvent on me demande: “Coup donc, t'es tu irlandais?” Non, je suis pas irlandais. Je m'appelle Julien Després. Je ne vais pas te cacher qu'à une certaine époque où j'étais plus jeune, en 2000, peut-être 2001, 2002, j'ai- mais bien qu'on me demande si j'étais irlandais, puis j'aimais bien dire ah on l'est tous un peu, tsé.

JTF: *laughs*

JD: Je me donnais une sorte de personnage. Mais en fait si cette musique là vient autant me chercher c'est probablement parce que...ça paraît facile à dire, mais probablement parce qu'elle coule dans mes veines.

JTF: Ouais. Que ce soit par le sang ou par le sang de l'esprit, on pourrait dire. Au niveau des instruments que tu joues, je sais que on a déjà joué de la musique ensemble. Tu joues du whistle, différentes sortes de percussion, et de la guitare aussi c'est bien ça?

JD: Ouais, récemment j'ai commencé à faire de la guitare.

JTF: Ok. Et est-ce qu'il y a un de ces instruments là qui pour toi est ton instrument principal?

JD: Principal? Bien je dirais la percussion. Ouais, la percussion. J'ai vraiment commencé comme percussionniste. Bon j'ai commencé à jouer de la flûte aussi au Dragon Rouge, parce qu'à la base on était un duo. On pouvait pas nécessairement juste faire des chansons. J'ai commencé à jouer du whistle. Mais je dirais que je joue principalement du *bodhrán*, le tambour irlandais. Marc-Antoine, mon ami de longue date, dit souvent à la blague que j'ai appris à jouer du *bodhrán* sur un stage.

JTF: *laughs*

JD: Mais c'est ça, j'avais jamais pris de cours. J'avais gossé un peu avec le tipper, puis à un moment donné en comprenant comment faire des triolets, bien tu comprends aussi comment va servir la main gauche. Après ça on peut tomber dans le plus technique. Mais tout, tout, tout à la base je pense relève de l'écoute. Dans mon cas, davantage que la théorie. J'ai suivi un cours. Peut-être deux leçons, puis j'ai pas accroché.

JTF: C'est quand même fort, d'avoir appris la *bodhrán* sur stage.

JD: Ouais.

JTF: Vraiment cool. Ça serait quoi pour toi tes meilleurs souvenirs reliés à la musique?

JD: Je dirais l'ambiance qui va avec la musique traditionnelle. Les commentaires qu'on peut recevoir des gens après un spectacle. Il y a toujours des gens qui viennent nous voir et qui nous disent merci, c'était vraiment bon. Puis dans les remerciements, c'est toujours, toujours, toujours personnalisé. Il n'y a jamais un remerciement qui est pareil, tsé. Pour moi c'est la preuve que cette musique là, elle nous habite tous d'une façon différente, tsé. Mais c'est ce qui nous rejoint.

JTF: Ouais. Non, c'est vrai que c'est une musique très personnelle, surtout que la mélodie est rarement la même à chaque fois qu'on joue un morceau.

JD: Mais pas tant comme ça, c'est qu'elle vient nous chercher différemment, tsé. Peut-être que c'est une musique qui est peut-être plus proche de nos émotions qu'on le pense.

JTF: Ouais. Ouais non, c'est vrai la musique est "drivée" par les émotions. Mais ouais non, c'est vraiment pas fou.

JD: C'est une musique qui peut être des fois dure. Par exemple si on prend la vie des marins, tsé, il y a des reels qui sont plus...on dirait qu'on sent qu'ils sont plus agressifs. Comme il y a des reels qui sont plus gais, disons.

JTF: Ouais, non, c'est très vrai. C'est vrai que chaque morceau raconte un peu une histoire un peu différemment, c'est très vrai.

JD: Puis ce qui est bien aussi c'est qu'un reel qui est à la base plus "dark," comme je dirais en anglais, tu peux le rendre plus gai, plus joyeux. Mais mettons dans la musique classique, mettons Carmina Burana, tu serais jamais capable, je pense, de rendre ça joyeux. À la base ça a été écrit pour être comme ça, mais la musique traditionnelle ce qui en fait sa beauté c'est que tu peux aborder un reel, puis le personnaliser parce qu'il fait partie du monde du traditionnel.

JTF: Non c'est très vrai. Parlant de tradition, justement, j'ai ici trois mots que je vais te demander de mettre en ordre d'importance, du plus important au moins important pour toi, et de me dire pourquoi tu as fait ces choix-là. Et le premier mot c'est "musique." Le deuxième mot c'est "traditionnelle." Et le troisième c'est "irlandaise." Alors de ces trois mots là, lequel pour toi serait le plus important?

JD: Je commencerais par la tradition. Musique, puis Irlande.

JTF: Ok. Et pourquoi cette combinaison là?

JD: Parce ce que j'ai toujours aimé la musique. Avant d'aimer la musique irlandaise, j'aimais déjà la musique. Tradition parce ce que pour moi ça symbolise l'histoire. Ça évoque l'histoire, j'ai toujours été un passionné d'histoire. Puis Irlande, bien, c'est arrivé plus tard. Je te dirais que je te les donne par ordre d'apparition dans ma vie, tsé.

JTF: Ouais, ouais, ouais.

JD: Puis, oui, par ordre d'importance parce que je pourrais me passer de musique irlandaise, mais je pourrais pas me passer de musique.

JTF: Ok. Et peut-être tu pourrais penser à te passer de musique mais pas de tradition?

JD: Non.

JTF: Ok.

JD: Non.

JTF: La musique et les traditions pour toi ça va vraiment ensemble?

JD: Ça va ensemble dans ma passion de la musique traditionnelle, mais je suis capable d'écouter d'autres genres de musique. Même si ma blonde, des fois elle est un peu tannée de toujours de la mozusse de musique trad, je suis quand même assez éclectique dans mes choix, dans mes styles musicaux. Je pourrais dire que j'aime pas mal tout. Sauf l'opéra. Mais ça viendra peut-être un jour.

JTF: Et en gros, d'être un musicien qui joue de cette musique là, de la musique traditionnelle irlandaise, justement, qui on le sait a beaucoup d'influences qui sont pas nécessairement irlandaises, qu'est-ce que ça veut dire que d'être un joueur de cette musique là?

JD: Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire? Ça veut dire que je suis un bloc de légo dans un château de Légo, tsé.

JTF: *laughs*

JD: Je pense que j'apporte ou que j'ai peut-être apporté à une certaine époque, un peu avant quand j'étais plus impliqué, là je fais d'autre chose aussi de ma vie, mais je pense que j'ai apporté quelque chose en tant que promoteur, pas promoteur, mais en tant que représentant peut-être de cette musique là, de ce style de musique là. C'est ça, je pense que je fais partie de ce château là, mais je suis un petit bloc. Un petit bloc carré, pas un gros bloc.

JTF: Un bloc parmi tant d'autres?

JD: C'est ça.

JTF: Qui font partie de...

JD: Les gros blocs?

JTF: Ouais.

JD: Qui prennent beaucoup de place.

JTF: Ouais.

JD: Puis qui sont importants, qui sont des pièces maîtresses. Un peu comme dans une maison, t'as la fondation, t'as la base.

JTF: Ouais.

JD: Puis ces bases là évoluent, tsé. Prend Planxty, ça a été une base à une certaine époque, mais Planxty s'est inspiré de musique de monde aussi. Tsé, la Bottine Souriante.

JTF: Oui.

JD: C'est une base au Québec. Mais la Bottine Souriante est inspirée de musique du monde aussi. De musique irlandaise.

JTF: Oui.

JD: Mais pour moi, des gars de la Bottine Souriante, c'est des gros blocs, là, qui prennent une grosse place dans cette espèce de château de Légos. Mais je pense qu'à partir du moment où on en a fait pas mal pis qu'on a...je sais pas, qu'on a...

JTF: Je vois un peu ce que tu veux dire au niveau de la construction, de l'édifice des tradition si on peut voir ça de même. Puis c'est vrai qu'il y a des plus gros joueurs que d'autres. Pas nécessairement au niveau de la taille mais au niveau de l'impact.

JD: Ouais.

JTF: Planxty ça va de soi, c'est des excellents exemples. Mais est-ce que l'édifice d'après toi, l'édifice de la tradition de musique irlandaise, est-ce qu'il est différent à Montréal qu'ailleurs au Québec?

JD: Oh bonne question. De la musique irlandaise, est-ce que c'est différent à Montréal qu'ailleurs au Québec. Je te dirais je ne sais pas. Je ne sais pas, c'est sûr qu'à Montréal on a une grosse concentration de personnes, on a une grosse concentration du pubs irlandais. Mais en même temps, puis là je vais faire une petite parenthèse. Il y a beaucoup de pubs irlandais qui s'affichent irlandais, mais qui font de la musique, tsé, qui font des covers de musique rock. Ça a rien à voir la musique qu'ils font là, ou qu'ils offrent aux gens, ça n'a rien à voir avec la musique irlandaise. Ça j'ai réalisé ça au Hurley's. Je reviens au point de départ, mais Hurley's m'a donné le goût de la musique irlandaise en écoutant Dave Gossage, mais David Gossage joue aussi de la guitare électrique. Puis il fait aussi des chants rock-and-roll, là, tsé faque...donc pour revenir à la question, est-ce que c'est plus fort à Montréal qu'ailleurs au Québec. Je pense que ça dépend de la région du Québec. Je ne suis pas sûr qu'au Saguenay il y a un intérêt pour la musique irlandaise. Mais en Gaspésie j'en ai vu, dans des petites communautés comme Douglstown. On est allé là avec Cats in the Kitchen. Dans les Cantons de l'Est il y un intérêt. Ça dépend où on se trouve. Mais, je pense que par la force du nombre à Montréal, oui effectivement il y a plus de culture irlandaise. Quelque chose d'intéressant ça, par exemple. Pas forcément la musique, mais la culture des pubs. C'est quelque chose qu'on...tsé j'ai voyagé en Asie, j'ai voyagé en Afrique du Nord. C'est, c'est un peu comme une marque de commerce, puis c'est quelque chose qui intrigue partout dans le monde. Mais les gens aiment se retrouver dans un pub irlandais, mais y'aiment pas nécessairement écouter de la musique traditionnelle irlandaise.

JTF: C'est un peu comme si on pouvait magasiner un peu l'expérience de ce qu'on veut vivre.

JD: Ouais. On aime l'ambiance du pub, mais après ça la musique qui passe là, il faut que ce soit de la musique moderne des fois, tsé. C'est assez difficile de faire entrer, je pense, une session de musique dans un pub.

JTF: Mais c'est sûr qu'il y a plusieurs sessions qui "runnent" depuis longtemps. On en connaît une couple, toi et moi. Mais c'est ça, est-ce que ça a toujours été difficile de les faire rentrer d'après toi? Ou est-ce que c'est plus difficile maintenant?

JD: Je ne pourrais pas dire. J'ai jamais été dans un groupe comme Siamsa là, tsé, une société qui promouvoit la musique.

JTF: Ok. Mais c'est ça, par exemple, avec Corsaire ou Cats in the Kitchen, est-ce que trouver des contrats c'était très difficile?

JD: Non, c'est plus facile.

JTF: Ok?

JD: Qu'un groupe qui... Par exemple, on fait un groupe de musique rock, rock and roll, on fait nos compositions. C'est très difficile de se faire connaître, c'est très difficile de percer. Mais quand on fait de la musique traditionnelle, c'est clé en main. Puis on a eu énormément de contrats, devant énormément de personnes. En fait la diversité des contrats me fascine encore aujourd'hui. J'en fais beaucoup moins mais je pense à tout ce que la musique traditionnelle m'a permis de faire en terme de voyages au Québec, je me considère vraiment chanceux. Très chanceux.

JTF: Ok. Clé en main, ayoye c'est...

JD: Parce que c'est une valeur sûre.

JTF: Ok?

JD: Souvent les gens nous demandent: "Ah ouais vous faites de la musique tard...un peu comme les Charbonniers ou un peu comme..." On touche un peu à tout. En fait les mots clés, ça c'est intéressant par exemple. Les mots clé c'est tradition, Québec, folklore, et Irlande aussi.

JTF: Ok.

JD: "Irlande" pique la curiosité.

JTF: Ok.

JD: On parlait de pubs tantôt. Il y a une fascination, je pense, internationale pour l'Irlande. Je ne serais pas prêt à expliquer pourquoi mais il y a quelque chose qui...en Thaïlande, là, dans le fin fond de la Thaïlande j'ai vu dans une ville bien reculée, un pub irlandais.

JTF: Ayoye.

JD: Les gens sont intéressés par ça, tsé.

JTF: Mais c'est quoi d'après toi les endroits les plus inusités, où justement t'as fait des contrats de musique traditionnelle? C'est sûr qu'il y a par exemple des pubs, des festivals de musique...

JD: Inusités?

JTF: Ouais. Est-ce qu'il y avait déjà eu des endroits un peu inhabituels? Ou qui t'ont surpris?

JD: Ça serait des bars qu'on associe pas nécessairement à la tradition, tsé.

JTF: Ok.

JD: Par exemple le Bistro de Paris sur St-Denis, tsé. Qui va prendre des groupes qui veulent percer ou qui veulent se faire connaître. On a joué aussi une fois au Lion d'Or pour l'UQAM. En fait on jouait, c'était dans un concert pour l'UQAM. On avait trois pièces à jouer. On a eu la chance de voir ça, le Lion d'Or, le Métropolis.

JTF: Ok.

JD: Ça c'est dans le cadre de l'UQAM. Tsé je te dirais que ça c'est des spectacles...pas bizarres, mais tsé, où on était vraiment les seuls à faire de la musique traditionnelle là.

JTF: Ok.

JD: Mais sinon...bon peut-être des petits bars en guillemets plus miteux, plus reculés.

JTF: Je savais pas que le Bistro de Paris accueillait de la musique traditionnelle. Tu m'apprends vraiment quelque chose. Mais depuis que tu joues de la musique traditionnelle, est-ce que tu as remarqué une évolution dans la musique, au niveau du répertoire qui est joué, des gens qui la jouent? Est-ce que tu as vu la musique...bien ça fait quand même une quinzaine d'années que t'en joues. Est-ce que la musique a changé beaucoup depuis le début?

JD: Ce que je remarque par rapport à ma propre expérience, c'est que je suis parti peut-être plus puriste, puis qu'aujourd'hui je suis plus ouvert. Dans le sens où à force d'en écouter, tsé, on parlait de l'écoute tantôt, à force d'en écouter, puis de voir toutes ces interprétations différentes là, on se rend compte qu'il y a pas juste un château mais qu'il y a plusieurs châteaux, tsé. Un peu comme dans Game of Thrones il y a plusieurs royaumes. En fait, tu réalises que toi t'es peut-être un peu plus dans tel royaume, mais qu'ailleurs il se passe autre chose. Puis en fait, c'est quand tu sors de cet univers là, qui au départ est un peu plus restreint. Tsé, comme moi je suis parti de la percussion, je suis parti du *bodhrán*, j'écoutais beaucoup de *bodhrán*. Mais après ça je me suis mis à écouter d'autre chose, puis je me suis mis à apprécier d'autre chose que le *bodhrán*. Puis je dirais aussi qu'avec les années on apprend aussi à être plus ouvert par rapport à ces interprétations là. Ça dépend toujours aussi de la personne puis des valeurs, mais tsé, je veux dire...au départ par exemple la Bottine Souriante quand j'entendais des brass ça m'énervait. Je parle de la Bottine parce que je connais plus la Bottine, mais je sais qu'en Irlande aussi il y a des bands qui vont utiliser un drum set, ou je pense à Brian Finnegan qui a joué avec Flook, qui était un espèce de gros ensemble. J'ai toujours au départ été réticent. mais je l'apprécie un peu plus aujourd'hui.

Puis je vois tout le travail, la démarche artistique qu'il y a derrière ça. Puis je trouve ça plus intéressant. Puis je trouve que ça reflète un peu la société d'aujourd'hui. C'est-à-dire que oui, on a nos traditions, oui, on a nos valeurs. Mais on peut accepter autre chose. Pour moi il y a un parallèle à faire entre la société québécoise d'aujourd'hui et cette musique là, traditionnelle mais qui est aussi accueillante.

JTF: Et qui est aussi moderne jusqu'à un certain point, un peu comme tu disais...

JD: Qui peut être moderne.

JTF: Ouais.

JD: Mais qui peut être aussi traditionnelle.

JTF: Ouais.

JD: Comme chez St-Hubert, t'as le choix de la crémeuse ou la traditionnelle.

JTF: *laughs*

JD: Il y a d'autres choix mais tsé.

JTF: Crémeuse traditionnelle.

JD: Ouais.

JTF: Ah ouais, non, c'est un vrai menu de festin duquel on peut choisir. Au niveau des sessions de musique, parce que c'est sûr que la musique des sessions, c'est un peu différent de celle des bars où on fait des contrats par exemple. Est-ce que tu connais des gens qui tenaient des sessions chez eux? Parce qu'on a souvent l'image de l'histoire d'une musique née, par exemple, au dix-neuvième siècle qui se jouait dans les cuisines chez les gens.

JD: J'ai l'impression...Là tu me parles de musique irlandaise...J'ai l'impression qu'au Québec on est plus fort sur les veillées québécoises, tsé. Moi ce que j'ai observé c'est que dans les sessions plus québécoises, par exemple à Joliette, où là je côtoyais vraiment des gens qui appréciaient...parce que il faut dire que pour moi il y a une différence énorme entre le répertoire québécois et le répertoire irlandais.

JTF: Ok.

JD: Même si les deux sont...j'ai pas le mot mais les deux sont...

JTF: On pourrait dire interreliés, peut-être?

JD: Oui, oui, interreliés. Les deux peuvent être un peu territoriaux. Quand on était à Joliette, par exemple, il se jouait beaucoup moins de reels irlandais. Puis moi je pense, mais peut-être que je

me trompe, mais j'ai l'impression que le répertoire québécois est beaucoup plus en majeur, beaucoup plus festif. Est-ce que je pourrais dire festif? Beaucoup plus en majeur que le répertoire irlandais. Mais là peut-être qu'il y aurait une étude à faire entre l'histoire de l'Irlande et l'histoire du Québec. J'ai l'impression que c'est plus "dark" en Irlande, c'est plus guerrier. Tandis qu'au Québec c'est plus la fête.

JTF: Je sais que tu disais récemment que t'as commencé à te concentrer sur d'autres aspects de ta vie.

JD: Parce que là, c'est vraiment...je ne suis pas fier de le dire mais je vais le dire pareil parce qu'on est en entrevue, et je vais dire ce que je pense...j'ai un petit préjugé envers le monde traditionnel québécois. Je trouve que, je sais pas, il y a une espèce de consanguinité. Mais j'ai l'impression qu'ils créent des petits groupes vraiment forts, puis qu'ils rentrent pas beaucoup d'autre répertoire que du québécois. J'ai l'impression que dans une session irlandaise on est plus ouvert à accueillir des reels québécois. Mais l'inverse est pas tout à fait vrai quand je vais dans des sessions comme j'allais avant à l'époque, dans des sessions comme le Vice et Versa. C'était un monde très tissé serré.

JTF: Ouais. Ouais, non, ça me laisse avec beaucoup de choses à quoi penser. Mais sinon, merci beaucoup de tes "insights" dans cet univers musical là. Ça a été un vrai plaisir.

JD: Super.

[END]

Interview with Jean Duval

JTF: Nous sommes mercredi le 31 janvier 2018. Je suis ici avec Jean Duval. Merci encore d'avoir accepté de me rencontrer.

JD: Ça me fait plaisir, Jérémy.

JTF: C'est très apprécié. Je vais commencer par une question qui remonte peut-être, peut-être loin, peut-être moins loin...comment as-tu découvert le monde de la musique traditionnelle irlandaise?

JD: J'avoue que mes premiers contacts avec la musique irlandaise ça remonte aux années 70, je dirais, avec la sortie de certains disques, le disque La Veillée des Veillées. Je pense que c'est 75, La Veillée des Veillées, donc en 76 le disque est sorti, pis là-dessus il y avait Jean Carignan qui jouait de la musique irlandaise, il y avait Yves Verrette, un vieux musicien de près de Québec, qui jouait aussi de l'irlandais, parce que lui était en contact avec la communauté irlandaise de Shannon et tout ce coin là. Il y avait le groupe Barde, et puis John Wright, qui jouait différents instruments dont la guimbarde. Mais il jouait du répertoire irlandais, c'est un Irlandais. Faque ça a été mon premier contact, pis l'année suivante en 77, le groupe Barde a sorti son premier disque, que j'ai d'ailleurs amené, je sais pas si tu l'avais déjà vu. J'ai amené le vinyle!

JTF: Le vinyle! C'est incroyable!

JD: Ça là, ça l'a influencé tellement de monde au Québec, tu peux pas savoir, même dans le répertoire, je dirais, québécois il y a plein de monde qui ont été influencé par ce disque là, pis moi c'est vraiment ça qui m'a allumé sur la musique irlandaise. Mais même dès 76, je jouais...je jouais surtout de la flûte à bec dans ce temps là, je jouais déjà des reels à la flûte à bec puis tout ça. Puis là je me suis mis au whistle avec Barde.. uasiment tous les membres du groupe Barde, je les ai connu par après, tsé, rapidement, à l'hiver 79, j'étais étudiant au CEGEP Maisonneuve. Chris Crilly et Pierre Guérin qui donnaient des cours de musique comme une espèce de parascolaire. Faque je les ai rencontrés là.

JTF: Est-ce qu'ils se déplaçaient dans des CEGEPs pour faire ça?

JD: Au CEGEP Maisonneuve. Je sais pas s'ils allaient dans d'autres CEGEPs, ça se pourrait. Je les ai vu plusieurs fois en spectacle dans ces années là. Faque là on est encore dans les années 70, sinon dans les années 70 pour ce qui est de mon contact avec la musique irlandaise c'est pas mal ça. Je pense que les disques de Jean Carignan, j'en avais peut-être déjà quelques uns. Moi aussi j'ai comme un bagage dont il faut que je parle qui fait partie de mon bagage familial. Du côté de mon père il y a des violoneux de la Gatineau. Mon père vient de Gracefield, dans la Gatineau. Beaucoup d'Irlandais dans ce coin là. Beaucoup. Évidemment les violoneux de la famille ont côtoyé des Irlandais qui jouaient aussi de la musique. Pis moi même j'ai un huitième de sang irlandais. J'ai deux arrière-grand-mères irlandaises. Faque il y a comme ça qui était, sans que je sois beaucoup impliqué dans la musique traditionnelle, il y avait ça dans le background. Mon père me

parlait des soirées de musique et de danse de quand il était jeune. Faque il y avait ça qui m'a amené aussi à l'intérêt de la musique. Comme je te dis c'est vraiment ça, là. Ce disque là, ça a été un déclenchement pour moi. Moi j'étudiais au CEGEP Maisonneuve, j'ai fait ma science pure, après ça j'ai fait un an de musique au CEGEP Saint-Laurent. J'étais plus en musique ancienne, puis là j'ai vraiment exploré de plus en plus la musique irlandaise, pis j'ai lâché pour faire plus de la musique traditionnelle, surtout irlandaise, mais j'ai touché aussi beaucoup au québécois et à l'écossais. Faque c'est ça, puis dans les années 80, si tu veux que je continues là-dessus...

JTF: Ouais. Pas de problème.

JD: Tu vois ma première session de musique trad c'était au Old Dublin Pub.

JTF: Au Old Dublin, ok, ouais.

JD: C'était à l'hiver 1981. Je me rappelle quand je suis rentré dans...il y avait deux étages à ce pub là, je sais pas s'il existe encore...je pense que c'était au deuxième. Je suis rentré puis il y avait Pat Short, que tu dois connaître, qui collectait à l'entrée pour les gens qui venaient écouter de la musique. J'ai dit: "Ben moi je viens jouer." Faque il était content d'avoir...Je me rappelle cette première session là, tsé c'était pas juste irlandais. Des sessions dans ce temps là, à Montréal c'était mélangé, c'était répertoire québécois, irlandais, écossais. Ça dépendait du monde qu'il y avait. Il n'y avait pas vraiment de...Même si c'était dans un pub irlandais, il y a pas cette distinction là, il y avait même des sessions où il y avait du bluegrass en même temps. Ce n'était pas encore très développé, je te dirais. Faque je me rappelle de Pat Short, pis je me rappelle, bon, qui est-ce qu'il y avait? Il y avait Ralph Thompson qui jouait plus de la musique écossaise, Michel Faubert qui jouait du violon, plus québécois, il y avait Toby Kinsella, le flûtiste de Barde. Je me rappelle de cette première session là. À l'été 81 j'ai rencontré Toby, je suis allé chez lui, il restait dans la commune Fullum. Puis on a commencé à échanger, puis moi entretemps je m'étais acheté une flûte traversière ancienne, une flûte de bois. Je me rappelle dans l'année 81 aussi il y a eu un concert des Chieftains à la Place-des-Arts, à la Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier. Ils ont rempli la Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier. Faque je pense qu'il y avait vraiment un intérêt à Montréal. Mais tout ce qui était de la scène session, c'était pas encore très développé.

JTF: C'est ça, la session au Old Dublin, c'était...est-ce que c'était un événement régulier?

JD: Je pense que c'était une fois par mois. Mais je ne suis pas certain. Puis c'était genre un lundi soir, c'était pas une grosse soirée. Puis le pub a changé de mains, il a été vendu à un propriétaire iranien qui voulait plus nous faire des rabais sur la bière, faque on a dit: "C'est correct, on s'en va." Faque on est parti de là à cause de ça, c'est bête comme ça. Puis là ça a été plusieurs années que les sessions se sont promenées à Montréal...au Old Dublin c'était 80 à 82, après ça il y a eu la Brasserie du Parc je suis pas sûr que ça s'appelait comme ça, c'était comme au coin de l'Avenue du Parc pis proche du Parc du Mont-Royal, juste avant des Pins...C'était peut-être la Brasserie des Pins, je pense que c'est ça. La Brasserie des Pins. Pis ça a pas été là très longtemps, peut-être un an. C'était pas à chaque semaine encore. Pis après ça une place que ça a duré quand même longtemps c'était sur la rue Bernard, La Ricane, ou La Petite Ricane, ça a changé de nom. Entre

83 pis 85, pis ça c'était vraiment une belle place, c'était plus un café mais ils servaient de l'alcool. Là il a commencé à y avoir un noyau plus constant je te dirais de gens qui participaient aux sessions. Je peux continuer sur les sessions dans les années 80 si tu veux.

JTF: Ouais, ben oui, ça m'intéresse. Mais juste avant...

JD: Oui.

JTF: Pat Short collectait de l'argent à l'entrée du Old Dublin?

JD: Oui.

JTF: Cet argent là allait à qui?

JD: Je pense que c'était pour le Comhaltas.

JTF: Ok.

JD: Je pense que c'était au nom du Comhaltas qu'il faisait ça.

JTF: Ok.

JD: Mais tsé c'était quasiment symbolique. C'était peut-être pour...je me rappelle plus s'il y avait un hôte de session, c'était pour aider à animer ça. Mais j'ai pas vu ça par après. À ma connaissance il n'y avait pas d'hôte de session. Bien peut-être que Toby était un petit peu en charge. Je ne me souviens plus.

JTF: Ou peut-être pas officiellement, mais ça finissait par être ça.

JD: Ouais, ouais.

JTF: Ouais, c'est souvent comme ça, je trouve, dans des sessions. À part la Brasserie des Pins dans les années 80, où d'autre se jouait cette musique là?

JD: À ma connaissance il n'y a jamais eu deux places en même temps. Ça s'est succédé. Les musiciens on se cherchait des places. La Ricane ça a été une belle place...je pense que ça a pas duré au delà de 85 pis c'était parce que le propriétaire avait décidé de donner une autre image au café, il voulait plus avoir, quelque chose comme ça. Après ça il y a eu la Taverne Saint-Laurent, qui existe plus, c'était quasiment au coin de Saint-Laurent pis Sherbrooke. Ça a été vendu pour faire, je sais pas si c'est pas le restaurant Globe ou des condos ou je sais pas trop, mais ça a été vendu. Faque je pense que c'est 85, 86 c'était de la Taverne Saint-Laurent. Pis c'était un endroit assez bruyant mais, il commençait à avoir des visiteurs pas mal à nos sessions là tsé c'est comme quand le mot se dit là pis tu connais du monde à Toronto, Ottawa, tsé ça commence à venir. Après ça, ça a été le Saint-Laurent Steakhouse qui était sur Saint-Laurent mais plus près de des Pins. C'était comme un restaurant portugais, je pense. À ce moment là on avait des sessions chaque semaine. Puis même à la Taverne Saint-Laurent je pense que c'était chaque semaine,

mais ce qui était spécial au Saint-Laurent Steakhouse c'est qu'il y a eu...t'avais une semaine irlandaise, une semaine québécois. Ça alternait comme ça. Il y avait des gens qui venaient aux deux là comme moi j'y allais souvent, mais moi je restais plus à Montréal depuis 83, mais je venais quand même assez régulièrement. Pis juste pour te donner une idée des participants à ces sessions là dans les années 80, les noms que je me rappelle. C'est sûr qu'il y en avait sûrement d'autres. Il y avait Paul Legrand, Patrice De Clos un guitariste, Alan Jones un joueur de cornemuse, Ken MacKenzie, Golo, Reinhart Goerner, Mario Côté, Geneviève Delawney, probablement pas un nom qui te dit de quoi...Joanne Saint-Laurent harpiste mais qui dans ce temps là jouait...elle commençait à la harpe, mais elle jouait du whistle aussi. Un joueur de flûte à bec Marc Lasalle, Youssouf Ehmed...musicien brillant de Pointe-Claire qui venait...Caroline Dupuis, une des dernières élèves de Jean Carignan au violon. Après ça t'avais tous les occasionnels, ceux qui venaient pas aussi régulièrement, Ralph Thompson que je t'ai parlé au violon écossais, Gilles Losier, l'accompagnateur de Jean Carignan. Après ça on avait des visiteurs, de la gang de Joliette, des visiteurs de Joliette, les frères Laporte, Rémi et Pierre Laporte, Jean Cantin, Normand Miron, Pierre Laporte il a été dans la Bottine Souriante...Jean Cantin aussi...je pense...Daniel Roy il a été dans la Bottine, Michel Bordeleau...c'est toute du monde qui sont tous venus à ce moment là...y a plein de monde qui venaient, des visiteurs des Maritimes. Papper, David Pappazian que t'as sûrement entendu parler.

JTF: Ouais, j'ai beaucoup entendu parler de son appartement, des sessions qui y avaient lieu.

JD: Bien c'est sûr, je vais y venir. Ça a commencé quand il est arrivé à Montréal. Lui au début il était plus visiteur des Maritimes, puis je pense qu'il s'est établi à Montréal à partir de 85, mais il y avait d'autres gens des Maritimes, Sigrid Rolfe une flûtiste, Paul MacDonald un guitariste qui a étudié à Montréal à McGill, qui venait, Kim Vincent brillant violoneux, John Goodman un joueur de cornemuse. Faque c'était plus des gens des Maritimes qui des fois débarquaient. Après ça il y avait la gang d'Ottawa aussi qui pouvait débarquer, James Steven violon surtout, Erin Cassidy une flûtiste, Nathan Curry, Pierre Schryer...

JTF: Le nom me dit de quoi.

JD: C'est un violoneux qui était, violoniste je dirais, de Sault-Sainte-Marie mais qui habite maintenant Thunder Bay. C'est quelqu'un d'assez connu dans le milieu de la musique trad...les frères MacGillis, il y en a un qui est joueur de cornemuse écossaise...Leurs petits noms par exemple je m'en rappelle plus. Ils sont deux. C'est des gens d'Ottawa qui débarquaient. Après ça la gang de Toronto, Debbie Quigley, Kate Crossin, Lee Cadieux, deux brillants joueurs de flûte, Wolf dont le vrai nom m'échappe...pis Nicholas Williams. C'est quoi Wolf son vrai nom? En tout cas, faque ça c'est du monde qui pouvaient arriver, c'était le fun pour ça.

JTF: C'est incroyable, ça.

JD: Peut-être pour continuer dans les années 80, à moins que t'aies des questions sur les sessions dans les années 80.

JTF: Est-ce que le free-for-all on pourrait dire du mélange d'irlandais, d'écossais, de québécois, est-ce que ça s'est poursuivi tout au long de la décennie?

JD: Ce qu'il a mené à avoir des sessions québécoises pis irlandaises c'était que justement il y avait des gens qui se retrouvaient pas, qui disaient ah on joue juste de l'irlandais, presque. Faque il y avait un dominance du musique irlandaise. Je pense que ça s'est comme, un petit peu canalisé par la musique irlandaise au courant des années 80, autant au début c'était quand même assez égal. Il y a eu une tendance, ça dépendait évidemment des gens qui étaient présents. C'est sûr que s'il y avait Ralph Thompson et Ken MacKenzie dans une session on jouait un petit peu plus de musique écossaise. Mais il y avait un noyau dur d'irlandais.

JTF: Et c'est par la suite que des sessions une-ou-l'autre on pourrait dire ont commencé à émerger?

JD: Oui.

JTF: Donc c'est pendant les années 80 que ça a commencé?

JD: Oui.

JTF: Ok.

JD: Au début des années 90 il y a même eu un tentative, milieu 90 quand McKibbins a ouvert, on a même eu des sessions écossaises, genre une fois par mois. Ça n'a pas duré.

JTF: C'est ça, ça me dit rien.

JD: C'est quand...c'est peut-être même plus tard. Je pense que c'est quand Laura Risk est arrivée. Faque c'est plus 98. Ce n'était pas à chaque semaine, c'était genre une fois par mois. Donc ça n'a pas vraiment marché. Le répertoire...c'est sûr que tu parles des années 70, 80, Barde a influencé localement, mais il y a les gros groupes irlandais, que ce soit Planxty, Bothy Band, De Danaan...

JTF: On n'est pas encore dans les années Lúnasa, ça c'est venu après.

JD: Non, on était pas rendu là, c'était vraiment ça les gros noms, puis après t'as tous les joueurs plus individuels, les Kevin Burke, Matt Molloy. Les Chieftains, il y a toujours eu une relation un peu spéciale avec les Chieftains. Tu regardes, les Chieftains ils ne ressemblaient pas à ça. Il y avait un espèce de halo alternatif à la musique irlandaise chez peut-être les non-Irlandais, je te dirais, de Montréal qui était là, qui était attirante. Faque les Chieftains ils étaient pas là-dedans, mais ceci dit je n'ai jamais eu cette espèce de...je puisais à même le répertoire des Chieftains, qui est très intéressant. Mais je me rappelle quand Matt Molloy a quitté le Bothy Band pour aller dans les Chieftains. Il y a plein de monde qui ont dit "Bouh!" C'était pas cool, c'était comme si...

JTF: Une trahison, presque.

JD: Ouais. C'est ça. Faque à la fin des années 70, ou début 80, je pense même...

JTF: Parce que je regarde l'image [du premier vinyle de Barde] puis c'est vrai...l'image représente une certaine époque...

JD: Oui. Mais tu sais leur disque d'après il était un petit peu différent. C'est l'année d'après, ça c'était 77, ça c'est 78. Ils sont déjà un peu plus clean *rires*

JTF: Ouais, un peu. En couleur aussi.

JD: Ouais, c'est ça.

JTF: Ouais, mais c'est vrai que ça représente une certaine époque. Puis l'image des Chieftains, bon pour tout plein de raisons ils dégageaient, ou ils ont cultivé une image différente pour eux-mêmes.

JD: Parce que c'est une image pas de folk club, de concert.

JTF: C'est ça, ouais.

JD: C'était vraiment ça l'esprit de...À la création même des Chieftains, comment il s'appelait le claveciniste? Je me rappelle plus de son nom. Qui était compositeur, qui a parti les Chieftains?

JTF: Seán Ó Riada?

JD: Je pense...c'est-tu ça?

JTF: Leur piper c'était Paddy Moloney.

JD: Je pense que c'est ça.

JTF: Seán Ó Riada, c'est-tu lui qui a parti...je pense que c'est lui qui avait parti un des groupes précurseurs des Chieftains.

JD: Oui, oui, oui. JD: Pas Na Filí. Mais oui, c'est ça. Faque déjà c'était l'idée que c'était du concert, c'était plus ça, alors que tout ce qui est venu après, Alan Stivell, c'était la culture folk club, un peu alternative. Les hootenannies américains, c'est vraiment un autre courant...faque avant qu'ils se rencontrent, ça a pris un peu de temps. Faque si je continue dans les années 80, à part la scène de la session, je te dirais qu'il y avait des groupes locaux, à part Barde. Barde ça a cessé quand même assez tôt, au début des années 80, il y a eu un split, puis ils ont pas continué.

JTF: Ouais, 83 si je me souviens.

JD: Il y avait un groupe qui s'appelait Swaggering Boney, avec Patrick Hutchinson le piper, qui habite à Providence, Rhode Island maintenant. Dans ce groupe là il y avait aussi Jerry Pachoke, une joueuse de *bodhrán* Dale, que je me rappelle pas son nom, elle c'était une vraie irlandaise de

Montréal, de Pointe-Saint-Charles. Vanlée Morin, qui a pas duré très longtemps, a peut-être duré trois ans, le groupe, mais c'était Pat Hutchinson qui drivait pas mal la patente.

JTF: Ouais.

JD: Il y a eu Music in the Glen, qui était mon groupe avec Golo, Mario Côté, Philippe Longval, un joueur de percussion. Encore là ça a duré jusqu'en 84. Moi j'ai déménagé à la campagne là vers, quasiment collé sur l'Ontario, en 83, pis là c'était plus difficile d'avoir un groupe. On a continué un petit peu en 84, mais on a pas continué au delà. Les plus gros noms il y a eu Oréalis, Oréalis avec les frères Gossage, Kirk MacGeachy. Il y avait René Morin aussi qui jouait du clavier dans le groupe. Je pourrais pas te dire les années d'Oréalis, mais ça a duré assez longtemps.

JD: Puis il y avait un autre groupe qui s'appelait Shenanigans, avec Polo, Paul Legrand, Bob Cussen, Golo, encore, puis Philippe Longval. Dans les chanteurs de pub, moi ce n'est pas une scène que je connaissais beaucoup, puis ce n'était pas si développé dans ce temps là. C'est sûr qu'au Old Dublin Pub il y en avait. Mais le seul que je connais, le main stay de la scène des chanteurs de pub de ces années là c'est Jerry O'Neill. Il me semble que c'est Jerry son nom, qui vit, je ne sais pas s'il est encore vivant, ça doit, à Martintown, en Ontario. Puis lui il faisait la route.

JTF: Quand même. Mais Martintown c'est juste de l'autre bord de la frontière avec l'Ontario.

JD: Oui, c'est pas loin de Cornwall. Lui, il gigait à Montréal mais aussi à Cornwall pis dans les environs, pis Ottawa. Faque je pense qu'il rayonnait de là. Il y a eu aussi une petite tentative de créer un folk club à Montréal. Il faut que je te montre ça. Une publicité de...avec un dessin d'enfant derrière. *rires* Une tentative de créer un folk club avec une perspective vraiment plus celtique. Alan Jones et Alain Leroux, qui a été après dans le groupe Advienne Que Pourra, qui est un Breton. Le chanteur je ne me rappelle même plus c'était qui, mais je pense que c'était... Hm, c'était qui ce chanteur? Je ne sais pas. Il n'y a pas de date, mais d'après moi c'est 84.

JTF: 84. Puis il y a un nom de pub que je ne reconnais pas.

JD: Korrigan's. Je pense que c'était une crêperie bretonne qui était sur une des rues dans...pas De La Montagne, ou une de ces rues là, dans ce coin là. C'était un deuxième étage, ouais. Puis on a eu peut-être trois, quatre événements là, comme ça.

JTF: Ok, quand même.

JD: Puis après ça il y a eu aussi un folk club qui organisait des concerts. Ça a commencé dans les années 80, ça s'est poursuivi dans les années 90. Mon ami Mario Côté était beaucoup impliqué là-dedans, je en sais pas qui d'autre.

JTF: Est-ce que c'était ces mêmes gens là?

JD: Oui, ça ressemblait à ça, des gens qui étaient communs aussi avec le festival à Saint-Patrice-de-Beaurivage, près de Québec. C'était vraiment une nébuleuse, tu avais du monde qui s'intéressait à toutes sortes de musique, beaucoup la musique française, bretonne. Tu sais, il y a eu ça qui a été publié dans les années, ça c'est fin 80, la revue Branle qui était reliée beaucoup aux Rencontres Champêtres de Vielles et Cornemuses, où est-ce qui se faisant de la musique, oui, française, bretonne, irlandaise, j'ai même vu du suédois, québécoise...

JTF: Je vois le nom de Mario Côté ici.

JD: Ouais, c'est ça. C'est des gens qui étaient intéressés à ce qu'il ait une scène folk vivante à Montréal et ailleurs. Je pense que Kirk MacGeachy a organisé beaucoup de concerts un peu avec ces gens là au petit Café Campus sur Prince-Arthur.

JTF: Ouais, je pense que c'est ça.

JD: Il y a eu des concerts de bands, pas nécessairement irlandais, beaucoup écossais, mais irlandais aussi. On a eu Altan, on a eu des Battlefield Band, du monde comme ça. Je ne pourrais pas te dire les années exactes, mais ça s'est tout fait, je te dirais, entre 84 pis 95. Puis à un moment donné ça s'est essoufflé. Les gens des fois ça rentre pas toujours dans leur argent, puis ça demande beaucoup d'organisation aussi.

JTF: Ouais. Non, c'est ça. À un moment donné il faut quasiment faire le choix que ça fasse une grande partie de notre vie, ou sinon ça prend le bord, c'est vrai.

JD: Encore dans les années 80, de ce que je me rappelle il y avait le Feis annuel, c'est plus une compétition de danse que Bernadette Short, son école de danse irlandaise, organisait. Faque tu sais, il y a tout un circuit de compétition de danse irlandaise, faque il en avait...moi dans les années 80 je suis allé peut-être une ou deux fois, ça se faisait dans le West Island... Dollard-des-Ormeaux, dans ce coin là...faque tu sais nous les musiciens des sessions on allait là par curiosité mais il y avait pas grand monde. Tu sais c'était vraiment plus un monde de danse.

JTF: Est-ce qu'il y avait des musiciens qui jouaient pour les danses?

JD: Oui.

JTF: Ok.

JD: Oui. Ils amenaient leur monde. Tsé c'était un circuit, ça, ils venaient avec...c'était souvent des accordéonistes, ou piano plus tard. Tu pouvais avoir comme Ena O'Brien de Toronto, sa fille en faisait...c'est vraiment une discipline particulière. À ma connaissance le premier violoneux qui a joué pour des Feis, c'est Paul Legrand.

JTF: Ouais.

JD: Avec Paul moi j'ai joué beaucoup pour la danse, pour Bernadette Short...je vais y venir c'était plus dans les années 90.

JTF: Et est-ce que c'était principalement dans des concours, pour des spectacles, pour des compétitions?

JD: Un peu de tout. Deux de mes trois enfants ont fait de la danse irlandaise pendant cinq ans, alors j'allais aux pratiques et je jouais live. Bernadette était contente. Ça c'est plus dans les années 90, mais dans les années 80. C'est ça que je te dis, les feis, j'étais curieux, je suis allé voir mais c'était pas...c'est un autre circuit, c'est un autre monde là.

JTF: Ouais. Avec, on pourrait un peu d'overlap, mais pas tant, peut-être.

JD: Non. Par contre Bernadette organisait des ceilis, qui étaient pas fréquents, ils n'étaient pas réguliers les ceilis dans ce temps là. Puis je me rappelle qu'elle en avait organisé un qui s'est tenu dans l'est de la ville. "Oh! Les Irlandais s'en vont dans l'est de la ville." Mais c'était quand même pas osé mais presque là parce qu'il y avait tendance à ce qui était organisé par "les Irlandais" ça avait tendance à être Pointe-Saint-Charles, West Island, c'était là pis...dans l'est on n'allait pas voir. Pourtant, je sais pas pourquoi mais c'était comme ça.

JTF: Ouais, non, c'est ça. Et c'étaient des ceilis organisés chez elle? Chez des gens?

JD: C'était par exemple une...c'était une salle communautaire...ou un gymnase d'école, je m'en rappelle plus. Je pense que c'était une salle communautaire genre Saint-Denis près de Laurier. Je pourrais pas te dire le nom, mais je me rappelle que c'était dans les années 80 et que Bernadette était là pour expliquer les danses. Les musiciens qu'il pouvait y avoir, je me rappelle qu'il y avait eu des gars de Joliette qui étaient venus pour ça, qui avaient joué avec nous. C'était Pat Hutchinson qui était là, moi...Toby il ne venait pas aux sessions parce que dans ce temps là, je pense qu'il avait d'autre chose, Toby. Sa flûte traversière était en Mi bémol...tu peux pas jouer avec grand monde dans ce temps là.

JTF: Non, c'est ça.

JD: Je ne sais pas. Non il jouait pas trop souvent dans les sessions à cette époque là, en tous cas au début des années 80 oui, mais pas vers la fin.

JTF: Et ces danses communautaires là, bon l'exemple de Bernadette Short c'était un peu impromptu, informel. Ou est-ce que c'était organisé par la branche montréalaise de Comhaltas?

JD: Ça je ne saurais pas te dire.

JTF: Ok.

JD: Je ne saurais pas te dire le canal dans ces années là.

JTF: J'ai trouvé des documents dans des archives qui font allusion au Feis, justement, à des ceilis. Mais parfois ce n'est pas évident de savoir si c'était un événement organisé formellement, ou une réunion, un party impromptu de musiciens, parfois c'est pas évident de trouver.

JD: Dans les années 80 je pense que c'était pas...il n'y avait pas de fréquence. Par contre dans les années 90 il a commencé à y avoir...c'était très fréquent et c'était à l'église Saint-Augustine dans NDG, au sous-sol. C'était pas mal toujours les mêmes musiciens et c'était Bernadette qui callait pour les ceilis. Maintenant c'était-tu elle, c'était-tu l'école de danse qui organisait ça, ou c'était les Ancient Order of Hibernians ou la Saint Patrick's Society ou, il y avait pas un autre groupe aussi?

JTF: Les United Irish Societies?

JD: Ouais. Écoute, je ne le sais pas. Pas mal tout ça c'est...

JTF: Je suis encore en train d'essayer de démêler tout ça.

JD: Parce qu'ils s'aident tous, ou du moins ils se tiennent. Mais bon.

JTF: C'est vrai qu'il y avait beaucoup d'overlap. Vers la fin des années 80, dans ces ceilis là, c'était j'imagine des ceilis strictement irlandais ou est-ce que c'était encore mélangé?

JD: C'était strictement irlandais. Où est-ce qu'il y avait du mélange, c'était dans des événements genre en dehors là, comme ce festival là Rencontres Champêtres de Vielles et Cornemuses, ça il y avait de tout. Dans les années 90 je vais te parler d'autre chose, où il y avait plus de cette intention là de mélanger, mais sinon non, c'était très même ceili dancing, c'était pas des sets.

JTF: Ok.

JD: Tu sais ce que je veux dire, la différence entre le set dancing et le ceili dancing?

JTF: Oui.

JD: Bernadette c'était vraiment...Quand il a commencé à se faire du set, c'était plus dans les années 90 et je vais te dire pourquoi. Juste pour finir dans les années 80, d'autres scènes de musique irlandaise, il y avait les tournées du Comhaltas internationales. Les gagnants des concours irlandais en Irlande qui faisaient des tournées nord-américaines. Encore là, je ne pourrais pas te dire c'est qui. Je sais que Pat Short était dans l'organisation de ça, mais au nom de qui, ça je pourrais pas te dire. Pis je me rappelle être allé dans les années 80 probablement deux ou trois fois à ces concerts là. Je me rappelle d'avoir vu...à un c'était fascinant, il y avait Philippe Bruneau qui était là, et le groupe Héritage, je ne sais pas si ça te dit de quoi. Le groupe Héritage...il y a eu un espèce d'événement après le concert des champions irlandais où est-ce que Héritage s'est installé, a joué avec Philippe Bruneau, Philippe Bruneau parlait aux accordéonistes irlandais qui étaient là. Il y a eu un bel échange qui s'est poursuivi après le concert. Pis une autre fois un petit peu plus tard...peut-être 88, après ça il y a eu une session d'organisée. Je pense que si je ne m'abuse c'était au Old Dublin Pub. J'avais remis les pieds là depuis des années. À cette occasion là il y a eu une session d'organisée. Ça je m'en souviens, c'était vers la fin des années 80.

JTF: Ok.

JD: L'autre scène qui était annuelle, c'est les Highland Games.

JTF: Bien oui.

JD: Parce que Ken MacKenzie, le cher Ken, qui s'est occupé de tellement de choses, de promotion pour la musique trad, celtique surtout. Aux Highland Games il invitait toujours plein de monde, ceux qui voulaient participer au concours de violon écossais, mais après ça il y avait toujours un open mike pour quiconque, tu pouvais venir jouer de la musique irlandaise, québécoise. Moi j'ai rencontré Jean Carignan aux Highland Games, c'est comme ça je l'ai vu deux ou trois fois aux Highland Games. J'ai eu l'occasion de jouer avec lui, ça faisait pas longtemps que je jouais de la flûte, c'était assez le fun. Mais donc c'était une autre place où on pouvait entendre de la musique irlandaise. Plus tard dans les Highland Games il y a eu un Irish tent qui était tenu...il y a le Siamsa School, qui a tenu une tente irlandaise, mais avant ça il y en a eu aussi, je ne sais pas trop...bien c'est encore comme ça, il y a des chapiteaux avec des thèmes. Je pense les Irlandais avaient un chapiteau là. Faque c'est pas mal ça pour les années 80 que je me rappelle.

JTF: Ouais.

JD: Faque là je suis dans les scènes de session, après ça ça irait dans les années 90. À mois que...

JTF: Je trouve qu'il y a tellement des mines d'or d'information pour chaque musicien qui a vécu à cette époque là, qui a fait partie de cet univers là. Moi j'ai commencé à jouer dans les années début 2000, début-mi 2000, donc pour moi une scène de musique irlandaise où il n'y a pas de...où les sessions de pub ne sont pas les environnements principaux, moi j'ai de la misère à me l'imaginer. Vu que j'ai grandi un peu avec ça, mais...de ce que j'ai compris c'est dans les années 90 que ça a commencé?

JD: Écoute, dans les années 80 il y avait de partys privés. Il y en avait plein, comme toujours, encore. Mais des sessions mémorables, party privé que je me souviens c'était chez Gilles Losier.

JTF: Chez Gilles?

JD: Chez Gilles sur la rue Sainte-Famille. Il en a fait assez régulièrement par après, pas nécessairement à chaque année, pis il faisait un gros party où qu'il invitait plein de musiciens. Gilles c'est comme un touche-à-tout, évidemment t'avais de la musique écossaise, irlandaise, québécoise, acadienne. Des fois il pouvait avoir invité un musicien jazz. C'était éclectique, mais c'était le fun. C'était beau avec son grand salon l'appartement sur la rue Saint-Famille c'est une superbe appartement avec son piano à queue.

JTF: C'était sur Saint-Famille proche de quoi?

JD: Entre Sherbrooke et Des Pins.

JTF: Ok dans ce coin là.

JD: Je ne pourrais pas te dire. Entre Milton et Des Pins.

JTF: Milton, ok.

JD: Ouais. Juste à côté, je sais pas si tu connais Garmen Guérard.

JTF: Le nom me dit de quoi.

JD: Accordéoniste, musique québécoise plus, c'était juste juste à côté de chez elle. Ça fait pas si longtemps que ça, parce que c'est une coopérative d'habitation. Il était dans la même coopérative que Carmen. Faque dans les années 90 là ce qui est bien spécial...à la fin des années 80 il a commencé à y avoir des sessions chez Papper.

JTF: Ouais.

JD: Je te disais, Saint-Laurent Steakhouse, 87-89, mais là Papper a commencé une fois par semaine, pas le même jour que la session au Saint-Laurent Steakhouse, à inviter le monde. Bizarrement toutes les sessions de pub, en tout cas que moi je connais, j'en connais pas, ça a tout disparu. Il n'y avait plus de scène de publique pour la musique irlandaise, mais la musique traditionnelle en général. C'est spécial là. C'était comme une période morte. Au Québec on a vu, il y a eu une explosion après le mouvement nationaliste, de la musique trad, qui a fini un peu avec le référendum côté musique québécoise, ça a piqué du nez. On était quasiment des bibittes là du monde qui s'intéressait à la musique traditionnelle dans les années 80 là, c'était assez marginal. Là ça a remonté tranquillement, mais côté pub irlandais je sais pas, il n'en avait pas, il y avait juste le Old Dublin Pub qui a survécu, je pense, à toutes les années. Faqu'il y avait un gros vide pis c'est Papper qui l'a rempli. Je te dirais qu'entre 90 pis 95 là, s'il y avait pas eu les sessions chez Papper, il n'y avait rien. Il n'y avait rien de public, régulier, lui c'était chaque semaine...pis il y avait du monde là ça venait de partout. Là ça se savait, ça se disait. Il y avait des visiteurs irlandais, les Valley, Cillian avec ses parents ils sont venues passer genre une couple de semaines, ils étaient là. Noreen Keville, les Kevilles sont assez connus quand même, c'est une joueuse de concertina, Noreen allait passer un an à Montréal pour...firme d'ingénieur...en tout cas, elle travaillait là, elle était là. Des gens des Maritimes, mais des musiciens connus, genre Félix Leblanc, Bertrand Dorace, des Îles-de-la-Madeleine, des musiciens du Cap-Breton qui débarquaient. C'était vraiment magique. T'arrivais, Saint-Laurent proche de Sherbrooke. C'est vraiment downtown, il commençait à y avoir plein de boîtes de nuit et des restaurants chics. T'es sur Saint-Laurent, là tu montes au deuxième chez Papper pis là t'arrivais dans un autre monde. C'était vraiment un autre monde, parce que je ne sais pas si quelqu'un t'a déjà décrit de quoi ça avait l'air. C'était des piles de journaux, c'était le bordel là-dedans. Faque tout le monde se cherchait une petite place, il se faisait une session principale à l'avant qui donnait sur la rue, des fois il s'en faisait une à l'arrière, des fois il s'en faisait une sur la galerie en arrière, des fois même au deuxième. Ken MacKenzie il louait une chambre, faque il y a des fois, les plus gros partys, tu pouvais avoir deux, trois, quatre sessions en même temps avec plein de musiciens, plein de discussion c'était vraiment.

JTF: Ayoye, quel magnifique chaos.

JD: Oui, c'est ça. David c'était le centre de tout ça. David est parti en 95 je pense...non 97. On a fêté son cinquantième anniversaire en 97, il était sur le point de partir, de retourner dans les Maritimes.

JTF: Ok.

JD: Mais là pourquoi j'ai dit 95, jusqu'en 95 il y avait rien, alors que là après on a vu, c'était une épidémie l'ouverture des pubs irlandais tout d'un coup. Hurley's avait ouvert un peu avant je pense, 95, mais ils faisaient pas de sessions. McKibbins a ouvert, et là il y en a eu plein d'autres qui voulaient tous avoir une session irlandaise. Faque là c'était plus, là il y en avait trop. Faque là ça a changé la scène parce que...on commençait à avoir des musiciens payés, des hôtes de session qui étaient là pis qui demandaient aux autres de venir. C'est le fun parce que ça a permis à des gens de...des musiciens professionnels de mieux vivre, mais en même temps il y avait un côté un peu...c'est pas le même esprit que quand il y a pas de leader. Les leaders de session, souvent ils faisaient leur petit bout, et après ça ils laissaient les gens tout seul. Jusqu'à un certain point, quand tu vis de ça, à un moment donné, peut-être que ça devient moins intéressant, qu'ils étaient moins dédié, je te dirais. Mais il y en avait plein. Moi je me rappelle, je pourrais pas te dire l'année exacte, probablement 96 ou 97, je me rappelle, je vivais à la campagne, je partais le samedi, mettons vers deux heures de chez nous, ça me prenait une heure venir à Montréal. J'allais à la session chez Hurley's le samedi après-midi de trois heures à six, après ça j'allais chez McKibbins de six heures à neuf heures, puis là j'allais à un autre pub qui était plus proche du métro Berri-de-Montigny, de neuf heures à minuit.

JTF: Wow.

JD: Je jouais là. J'ai fait ça un bon bout de temps.

JTF: Ah c'est incroyable, ça.

JD: Puis là t'avais des sessions, McKibbins il y en avait deux fois par semaine à un moment donné. Ça s'est multiplié, il y en avait dans le West Island...ben peut-être pas dans le West Island, mais je veux dire plus dans Montréal-Ouest. Ou, non, c'est NDG, il y en avait dans NDG, il y en avait...il y a quelques endroits dans NDG qui en ont eu. Quelques pubs...même en dehors du centre-ville il commençait à en avoir faque la demande pour des musiciens irlandais était, en tout cas des musiciens qui jouaient de la musique irlandaise était là, pis c'était vraiment plus irlandais. C'est ça qui était...et la session, selon l'hôte de session, là c'était plus juste de la musique instrumentale, ça pouvait aussi être un mélange de chansons. Il y a toujours eu ça dans les sessions mais là c'était vraiment plus comme moitié-moitié.

JD: Faque c'est ça. Pour les sessions, il y a eu des nouveaux visages évidemment qui sont apparus avec les années. Si je parle des groupes...à part des sessions chez Papper, j'allais pas tellement...j'y allais pas chaque semaine parce que j'avais un groupe dans ce temps là qui s'appelait Phenigma.

JTF: Ouais, Phenigma avec Steve Jones, je pense?

JD: Avec Steve Jones, c'est ça. C'est probablement un des derniers CD qui reste. On a fait un CD en 95, 94? Ça a été de 90 à 95. C'était un mélange. Oui, de l'irlandais parce que Steve et moi évidemment on jouait beaucoup d'irlandais mais c'était aussi assez écossais avec notre chanteuse qui chantait en gaélique écossais, Sine McKenna.

JTF: Sine McKenna, c'est vrai, ouais.

JD: Hmm. Il y avait Linda Dowker aussi, puis Golo dans le groupe. Après ça j'ai eu un band, moi je te dirais la période après 95 là j'étais beaucoup beaucoup impliqué dans la danse...avec l'école de Bernadette Short, parce que mes enfants prenaient des cours. J'ai eu un groupe qui a pas duré longtemps, 97 pis 98 avec Paul Legrand, Judy Cullins...une chanteuse.

JTF: Le nom me dit rien. C'était quoi le nom du groupe?

JD: C'était Stepping Stones. Joanne Saint-Laurent à la harpe, puis moi, on était quatre. On était beaucoup associés à Bernadette Short. Elle nous engageait pour des concerts de Noël à la Basilique Saint-Patrick, des spectacles de danse de fin d'année. Là après ça Bernadette elle s'est lancée dans les gros shows, Galway à Grosse-Île, je ne sais pas si ça te dis de quoi.

JTF: Oui, j'ai trouvé ça dans les archives.

JD: Galway à Grosse-Île. Il me semble que c'est 98-99. J'étais engagé comme musicien. Éventuellement j'ai été le directeur musical pour...je pense en 2000 j'ai été le directeur musical de la production. Toby était impliqué...il y avait comme les deux...tsé l'idée de l'accueil des Irlandais par les Québécois au temps de la Famine. Il y avait une belle complicité entre la gang plus québécoise puis la gang plus Irlande. Il y a eu ça fin des années 90. Évidemment il y a eu Siamsa School of Irish Music, qui a été créée en 91 mais qui a décollé vraiment petit petit. Moi j'ai enseigné en 93, puis j'ai enseigné plus tard aussi, je me rappelle plus en quelle année. Quelque chose qui a été marquant dans les années 90, c'est la Comhaltas Convention d'Amérique du Nord en 92 au Reine-Élizabeth.

JTF: Ouais, c'est vrai.

JD: Puis même en 92 il y a eu beaucoup de choses, beaucoup de concerts celtiques organisés à cause du 350e anniversaire de la ville de Montréal. Faque il y avait de l'argent. Pat Short a organisé plein d'affaires. À cause de Phenigma on était super occupés, on avait pleins de contrats autant du côté écossais que irlandais, faque ça c'était le fun pour ça. Puis sinon dans les années 90 ça finit pas mal là. Il y avait aussi la SPDTQ qui organisait des choses avec le thème d'Irlande, il y a eu Danse-neige avec une thématique d'Irlande, il y a eu la Grande Rencontre de 97 qui avait une composante irlandaise aussi beaucoup. C'est pas mal ça. Puis après ça on arrive dans les années 2000 que tu connais peut-être un peu plus. Moi je pense c'était plus ce bout là que tu connais moins où je pense que je pouvais t'aider.

JTF: J'ai commencé jouer du whistle en 2003, je pense. En 2004 j'avais mon premier set de cornemuse irlandaise. J'ai passé un couple d'années à Montréal, ensuite j'ai déménagé, vécu ailleurs, je suis revenu après. Faque ces années là, ça fait partie de ce dont je me souviens. Mais une chose que j'ai remarqué c'est qu'à Montréal, en tout cas pour le temps que j'en joue, que je vais dans des sessions, j'ai l'impression qu'il y a pas tant de monde que ça qui sont eux-mêmes d'origine irlandaise qui jouent de la musique traditionnelle.

JD: Pas à Montréal, non.

JTF: C'est ça. Puis justement...

JD: Je peux les nommer. Toby, qui est mort, je ne me rappelle plus en quelle année. 2008?

JTF: 2006, 7, 8, dans ce coin là?

JD: Ouais, c'est ça. Il y avait Toby qui était vraiment d'origine irlandaise. Chris Crilly, il est arrivé très jeune. Seán McHutcheon, lui aussi est arrivé très jeune. Il est irlandais. Ils sont arrivés très jeunes c'est vraiment plus des Canadiens. Pat Conroy, je ne sais pas s'il est né en Irlande, je pense que oui, parce qu'il a quand même un petit accent. Lui aussi je pense qu'il est arrivé assez jeune, quand même. Mais sinon tu en avais d'autres qui jouaient un petit peu.

JTF: Il y a quelqu'un comme Aindriú MacGabhann, qui vient d'Irlande du Nord. Mais c'est plus récent.

JD: T'avais Michael Callaghan, qui a commencé sur le tard. Il est mort en 96 d'un cancer, le pauvre Michael. Mais il s'était mis au violon. C'était le fun. Des musiciens de...je veux pas être péjoratif en disant ça, de haut niveau, là, de haut calibre, irlandais, à Montréal...on en avait des très bons là, mais...mais de haut calibre on n'en a pas eu à mon connaissance...tsé qui auraient pu comme inspirer...à Ottawa il y en a peut-être eu un peu plus...à Ottawa t'avais...il y avait un joueur d'harmonica super, puis un violoneux aussi avec un répertoire très particulier, des gens comme ça qui auraient pu inspirer, moi j'en ai pas connu. Mais ça ne veut pas dire qu'il y en avait pas. Il y en avait peut-être plus dans les campagnes aussi, dans les poches irlandaises, Inverness, Rawdon.

JTF: Est-ce que ç'aurait été des gens comme, je prends l'exemple de...un peu comme Debbie Quigley pour Toronto?

JD: Ouais, peut-être. Mais effectivement des gens d'origine irlandaise...

JTF: Ça me fait penser à ce que tu as dis, la "vraie" irlandaise de Pointe-Saint-Charles.

JD: Dale.

JTF: Dale, c'est ça. On dirait que des gens comme ça ont été l'exception plutôt que la règle.

JD: Pointe-Saint-Charles c'est quand même un quartier populaire, je pense que l'attachement des gens était peut-être plus sur les chansons romantiques irlandaise et la musique country. Comme beaucoup beaucoup des Québécois trippent sur le Western et le country. C'est plus ça la culture populaire. Le traditionnel c'est marginal encore aujourd'hui. Même s'il y a un intérêt, c'est marginal, pis ce l'était là. Faute d'avoir peut-être tsé un parent pour qui c'est super important...sinon t'as parlé de Joe Mell, tsé qui jouait, mais quand il jouait dans le ceili, on le faisait jouer mettons, il allait jouer une petite valse tranquille. Par contre il y avait une culture de danseurs un peu là tsé. T'avais des gens qui avaient appris à danser en Irlande, qui ont émigré à Montréal, qui ont retrouvé ça, il y en a quelques uns. Probablement qu'il y en a qui pourraient te donner les noms. Sinon, l'irlandais était noyé dans le celtique beaucoup aussi.

JTF: C'est très vrai.

JD: Je m'en cache pas, tu sais, comme Phénigma on jouait un peu ces deux tables là aussi tsé on était un peu...on allait plus avec cette image là de musique celtique que de se cantonner dans l'irlandais, parce que pour monsieur et madame tout-le-monde c'est quasiment...ouais sauf peut-être ceux qui trippent pub, là, tsé, ceux qui trippent chanteurs de pub là, tsé, c'est beaucoup associé ça à l'irlandais.

JTF: Je me souviens longtemps je disais à des gens que je m'intéressais à la musique irlandaise. "Ah, Bono."

JD: Ouais. U2. Pogue Mahone, les Mahones.

JTF: Les Pogues, aussi.

JD: Van Morrison *chuckles* Non mais pourquoi pas?

JTF: *chuckles* Il fallait que je passe par la musique de Riverdance, on va dire.

JD: Ouais. Puis même un petit peu avant Riverdance, t'avais toute le courant New Age, Loreena McKennitt, Clannad, puis Enya. Enya de toute façon c'est la même famille que Clannad. Il y a toute ce courant là qui était plus...ils se vendaient plus comme celtique que comme irlandais aussi. Comme pour élargir un peu leur marché, j'imagine. Mais tsé l'irlandais pur et dur là, genre Altan, ce n'était pas pour tout le monde là.

JTF: Même aujourd'hui, d'ailleurs. En parlent d'irlandais pur et dur, j'ai une question. Je vais te demander de placer les trois mots que je vais te dire en ordre d'importance pour toi. Les mots sont les suivants: "musique," "traditionnelle," "irlandaise."

JD: Dans quel ordre? Ok.

JTF: C'est peut-être pas une question évidente, mais pour toi lequel de ces éléments là serait le plus important, et pourquoi?

JD: Ok. Traditionnelle, Musique, Irlandaise.

JTF: Dans cet ordre là.

JD: Ouais. Je te dirais que de nos jours je suis beaucoup plus en musique québécoise. Quand je vais dans une session irlandaise ça revient, ça revient tout seul, c'est facile, c'est naturel pour moi parce que j'en ai joué tellement longtemps. Mais à un moment donné, je pense que c'est pour des raisons identitaires un peu, je me suis dit : "Bien là, il faut que je m'intéresse à ma musique." Puis ma musique, ce n'est pas la musique irlandaise. Il y a une influence irlandaise dans la musique québécoise, mais pas aussi important que les gens pensent généralement; moi je pense que c'est largement exagéré. La musique écossaise, puis anglaise, puis américaine, a eu autant sinon plus d'importance sur la musique traditionnelle québécoise que de l'irlandaise. Faque "traditionnelle" pour moi c'est important parce que je m'intéresse à toutes sortes de musiques traditionnelles. Je l'ai toujours fait, que ce soit de la musique française, bretonne, même old-time américaine, suédoise, j'ai joué toutes sortes de musique. Faque traditionnelle pour moi c'est important et c'est un courant auquel je me rattache. Pour moi c'est plus instrumental là. La chanson je suis un peu moins sensible à ça, même en français. "Musique" à cause de ça, plus que chanson. Puis irlandais ben ça vient en troisième à cause des deux autres. C'est sûr que mon coeur est beaucoup là. J'ai beaucoup d'amis en Irlande, j'ai mis beaucoup de temps à étudier cette musique là, à la connaître. Vraiment beaucoup. Faque c'est sûr que c'est important. Puis je pense que je peux la jouer d'une façon convaincante puis honnête, avec un certain niveau de compétence.

JTF: Avec un certain style, peut-être.

JD: Oui, c'est ça, je suis capable de savoir c'est quoi mon style, où est-ce que je "fitte" là-dedans, j'essaie pas d'imiter Matt Molloy, ou...pis c'est pas pareil si tu m'entends jouer de la musique québécoise puis de la musique irlandaise je sonne pas pareil. J'ai développé un son pour l'irlandais, j'ai développé un son pour le québécois, et c'est important pour moi de distinguer. Il y en a qui font pas la nuance puis qui vont utiliser pleins d'ornements à l'irlandaise en musique québécoise, moi non, je fais pas ça. J'en fais un petit peu, mais pas...

JTF: Il y avait un musicien qui m'avait dit qu'il avait appris l'irlandais avant le québécois, ou vice versa, selon le cas, et que le style qu'il connaissait déjà a infecté le deuxième qu'il avait commencé à apprendre.

JD: Bien oui. Ouais.

JTF: C'est toujours un risque, j'imagine.

JD: Dans mon cas c'est une démarche consciente. C'est ce que je voulais. Un peu comme Jean-Michel Veillon, qui est un flûtiste breton. Comme Jean-Michel Veillon a fait pour la flûte traversière en musique bretonne, c'est-à-dire il existait pas de tradition de flûte traversière en Bretagne. Il l'a développé, il a écouté ce qui se faisait sur les binious-bombardes, sur les clarinettes, sur les accordéons, même sur les violons même s'il y a pas une grosse tradition de violon en Bretagne. Il s'est inspiré de ça puis il a développé vraiment un style, mais de flûte bretonne. Puis moi j'ai eu la même démarche, peut-être plus tard, là, puis ça a comme abouti avec le disque qui j'ai fait

avec David Boulanger, le violoniste de la Bottine, en 2010, ça fait pas si longtemps. Ça a abouti avec ça.

JTF: Il y a quand même un certain niveau de souci identitaire, ça se comprend absolument. La musique a-t-elle changé beaucoup depuis que tu as commencé à la jouer?

JD: La musique irlandaise à Montréal?

JTF: Ouais.

JD: Quand j'ai commencé à jouer, la musique irlandaise c'était beaucoup le style Sligo, à cause de Jean Carignan, à cause des grands noms aussi de Coleman et Morrison qui ont perduré, qui perdurent encore, il y a des sets de Coleman qu'on joue encore; on les joue peut-être pas comme Coleman mais c'est les mêmes tounes dans le même ordre. Il y a un effet durable de ça. Mais c'était le son un peu...puis même en Irlande à cette époque là c'est le son qui était valorisé, qui était...puis je pense que...c'est peut-être ma découverte de la musique irlandaise qui me fait dire ça, mais après ça on dirait qu'il y a commencé...ça c'était devenu *le* son irlandais, puis là il y a eu des distinctions qui ont commencé à se faire même en Irlande. T'avais le County Clare, t'avais le sud, le Kerry, qui était vraiment différent, t'avais le Donegal. Puis t'as vu des groupes régionaux apparaître comme Altan qui était vraiment un son Donegal. Ils pouvaient jouer des tounes qui venaient d'ailleurs en Irlande mais ils les jouaient à la façon Donegal. T'as eu le style Galway, t'as eu de monde qui ont commencé à faire d'autre chose. Faque la palette de couleurs de la musique irlandaise même a comme élargi pis on l'a vécu ça ici. C'est sûr que je t'ai parlé d'après Carignan mais c'est Barde et Bothy Band, tsé, c'était ça là, on voulait toute être des Bothy Band. Est-ce qu'elle a évolué après? <oi je te dirais que c'est drôle, parce que quand t'entends des gens qui commencent dans la musique irlandaise, ils vont jouer Morrison's Jig, puis The Butterfly. Mais c'était pareil en 1980 là. C'est parce que c'est des belles tounes de débutant, ils aiment ça, tsé. Faque c'est spécial pour ça. Ça, ça change pas. C'est comme si des tounes intéressantes pour les débutants...je pense que dans le but pédagogique ou parce que c'est des belles tounes ou ils les trouvent attirantes, on commence avec le même genre de tounes. Là quand tu progresses, c'est sûr que tu veux découvrir d'autre chose. Ce que je remarque par rapport à mon expérience irlandaise là, je suis allé quand même souvent en Irlande, je pense que je suis allé douze fois en Irlande. En Irlande c'est sérieux la musique traditionnelle. C'est très sérieux. Au Donegal un peu moins, ça rigole plus, mais ailleurs là des fois c'est quasiment une religion là leur affaire. Moi je trouve qu'ils sont...tu peux tomber dans des sessions de puristes là pas à peu près là tsé, on dirait qu'ils sont pas là pour avoir du fun. Alors qu'à Montréal il y a toujours eu ça, il y a toujours eu un côté bon vivant, accueillant. "Ok t'es nouveau, regarde t'es pas obligé de prendre la vedette, t'es nouveau, tu connais pas trop ça." On peut parler aux gens puis dire: "Bien regarde, c'est pas comme ça que ça se passe, là" s'ils comprennent pas. Mais il y a toujours eu cet accueil là aussi aux autres styles musicaux, oui et non là, des fois oui des fois non, ça dépend des gens. Mais fondamentalement je te dirais qu'il y a un côté c'est ça joyeux, accueillant, qui est le fun. Même les gens d'ailleurs qui viennent nous le disent...À Ottawa ils sont plus réservés, c'est Canadien-anglais, c'est plus réservé. J'en ai vécu moi des sessions à Ottawa où est-ce que ça parle pas entre les tounes, c'est gênant là. Faque là tu t'empresses dans ce temps là de partir un autre set parce que c'est gênant. Je dis pas que c'est toujours comme ça mais...pis je connais plein de musiciens à Ottawa je les aime beaucoup, je dis pas ça pour parler contre eux mais j'en ai déjà vécu des

sessions comme ça que je trouvais embarrassantes. Faque oui la musique a changé parce que ça a tellement proliféré la musique irlandaise, c'est devenu un élément de culture internationale. Ça commençait à l'être quand moi je m'y suis intéressé. Mais tsé avec les pubs irlandais qui ont ouvert à la fin des années 90 c'était comme...c'est les pubs clé-en-main. C'est vraiment ça. Tu veux te partie un pub irlandais, ça vient avec toutes les décorations, puis ça te prend ta session. Il y a une culture internationale, il y a sûrement des gros "hits," puis ceux qui sont plus dans "on va être spécial" ils vont rechercher des affaires un peu différentes, ils ne vont pas être intéressés nécessairement par ça. J'ai vu des sessions que moi je trouve horribles, une place Bretagne, je ne dirai pas le nom, une session, le gars tout ce qu'il fait c'est son répertoire super rare de tounes irlandaises que t'aurais de la misère à trouver sur disque, qu'il fait puis qu'il impose à tout le monde. Puis là les gens de la place ils apprennent les tounes tranquillement. Il joue super bien, c'est super beau ce qu'il fait, mais c'est totalement pas inclusif. T'as des gens d'ailleurs qui arrivent. Moi je suis allé, j'ai pu jouer peut-être un set sur trois heures.

JTF: C'est long longtemps.

JD: C'est des sessions élitistes. Moi j'ai pas vécu ça tellement, il y en a un petit peu de ça là, mais c'est des sessions privées. Puis j'ai vu ça arriver, une session dans un pub qui n'était pas à Montréal, je ne dirai pas où, c'était ailleurs au Québec, où est-ce que les gens voulaient garder ça un peu "entre nous." Moi je leur ai dit carrément: "Écoutez, si vous voulez une session privée, faites une session privée. Allez-pas dans un pub."

JTF: Bien oui, c'est ça. Ou sinon formez un groupe et jouez votre répertoire.

JD: C'est ça. Mais tu peux pas commencer à dire: "Toi tu joues, toi je joues pas." Woah. C'est sûr que quelqu'un qui arrive avec un djembe et qui joue super fort, on peut lui dire. Mais je pense que c'est ça le compromis. C'est un lieu public, et c'est un partage aussi. J'ai vu des sessions réservés dans un pub, mais c'était dans un cadre d'école de musique. Je ne sais si t'es déjà allé à East Durham. Les Catskills.

JTF: Non, je ne suis pas encore allé. J'aimerais ça y aller.

JD: Ouais, c'est une belle semaine de musique irlandaise. Eux ils ont des sessions aux vitrines, je dirais. Il vont inviter cinq ou six musiciens, souvent des profs, puis là le gens, peut-être pendant une heure, ça va être la session des profs. Faque c'est comme pour que les autres apprennent c'est quoi une session où on s'écoute, où on se relance, de voir qu'est-ce que ça peut être une belle session. Et après ça ils ouvrent à tout le monde. C'est une autre formule. Ou la formule des slow sessions, mais ça, ça a commencé même à la fin des années 80 là. Je pense qu'il en avait déjà de ça, genre la première heure c'est lent. Ça s'est vu.

JTF: Maintenant je sais qu'à Montréal il y a peut-être même plus de slow sessions que de sessions entre guillemets "rapides."

JD: Ouais. Ça c'est un peu plate. Ça c'est un peu le risque quand il y a trop des débutants, c'est qu'ils savent pas c'est quoi...Je ne voudrais pas dire une vraie session là, mais quasiment, tsé.

L'étiquette de session, je veux pas rentrer là dedans là. Il y a des livres qui ont été écrits là-dessus. C'est intéressant. J'en ai vécu tellement des sessions dans ma vie que...les premières années que tu vas dans des sessions, tu veux tout apprendre, tu enregistres, tu fais des listes de tounes, t'attends le moment où à un moment donné la session va vraiment...tsé, un moment magique, des fois dans une session ça peut durer quelques minutes, mais c'est rare que ça dure toute une soirée. J'ai déjà vécu ça, mais c'est rare. Tu y vas pour ça et tu trippes, ça ça dure peut-être trois ou quatre ans. Après ça, ok, une autre session. Mais moi quand j'ai commencé c'était une fois par mois, faque tu l'attendais-tu la session?

JTF: Eh oui.

JD: T'as voulais, là, tsé. Asteure, t'en as je ne sais pas combien à Montréal, je ne sais plus, il doit y en avoir trois ou quatre sessions?

JTF: Au moins, ouais.

JD: Trois ou quatre, faque tu peux la choisir, puis c'est chaque semaine. Faque ça devient un peu moins stimulant, à moins que tu retrouves tes amis. Ça devient plus, puis ça c'est important la fonction sociale de cette musique là, qui est essentielle puis qui la distingue des autres musiques...je suis déjà allé dans des partys de musiciens baroques. Mais ils ne font pas de musique.

JTF: Non, c'est ça.

JD: Ils écoutent du "dance music" ou de la radio, ou je ne sais pas quoi. Puis ils parlent, puis ils mangent, puis ils boivent, mais ils ne font pas de musique ensemble! C'est juste des musiciens. Pour nous en musique traditionnelle, c'est une aberration. C'est intimement lié, le social et faire la musique. C'est la musique qui nous unit. On s'intéresse les uns aux autres, mais on ne peut pas imaginer...

JTF: On a tous des histoires de découvertes, d'immersion premières dans cet univers là. Je me souviens ça m'avait pris une couple d'années, je me souviens quand j'avais commencé à aller aux sessions entre autres, avec Andi et Bob, c'était au début quand je commençais à jouer, dans le coin de 2004, 2005. Je suis revenu après une couple d'années ailleurs en 2011, 2012. Je crois que c'est soi Bob ou Andi qui m'a dit: "Ah, ton jeu s'est vraiment amélioré." Puis là j'ai pensé: "Attends une minute. Il était-tu si poche au début?" Ben oui.

JD: Je t'en ai pas parlé de ça, dans les années 80, je suis allé passer trois semaines en Irlande.

JTF: Trois semaines?

JD: En février 82. Les gens quand je suis revenu ils m'ont dit: "Eille. C'est pas pareil, là." J'étais allé dans plein de sessions en Irlande, j'ai entendu différents styles. J'ai vraiment monté d'une coche. J'avais pas tant de mentor que ça à Montréal pour m'orienter. Je jouais de whistle et de la flûte traversière. Il y avait Toby, mais Toby venait, puis il venait pas. Il était plus ou moins là. Sinon il n'y avait personne, j'étais tout seul. J'étais tout seul, il y avait quelques joueurs de

whistle, mais ils étaient pas si “hot” que ça. Tsé, t’écoutes des disques, ok. On dirait que le contact avec des bons musiciens ça te fait progresser. Beaucoup.

JTF: Absolument. Puis pour la flûte à Montréal, parmi les très bons il y avait j’imagine Brad Hurley, mais je ne sais pas...

JD: Brad il est arrivé...quand est-ce qu’il est arrivé, Brad? Il est arrivé tard, là. Moi je l’ai rencontré quand il restait aux États-Unis, je pense. C’est quand il s’est marié. Ça ne fait pas si longtemps. C’est peut-être vers 2004 qu’il est arrivé au Québec. Il était peut-être au Vermont avant. En tout cas il était aux États-Unis, je suis sûr. Non, il y en avait pas tant. C’est venu à un moment donné, il y en a eu de plus en plus qui se sont intéressés. Je te dirais que parmi les premiers à la flûte traversière il y a eu Isabelle Doucette, elle ne reste plus à Montréal, qui a commencé à la flûte traversière fin 80, début 90, elle était très jeune quand elle a commencé. Puis t’as une bonne joueuse, Marie Marceau. Qui sont venues plus tard, c’est des filles du même âge. Puis Seán McHutcheon qui joue depuis longtemps. Mais Seán, dans les années 80, je me rappelle j’avais fait un party quand je suis déménagé à la campagne, puis Sean était venu. C’était un des rares qui jouait. Mais il jouait plus du piccolo que de la flûte traversière. Il avait une flûte traversière, mais il n’en jouait pas souvent. Puis il venait de temps en temps dans les sessions, mais très rarement. Puis sinon, je ne veux pas oublier personne, mais, non je n’avais pas d’exemple.

JTF: Faque il n’y avait pas de mentor, donc ça t’as comme obligé d’aller chercher des modèles ailleurs. Ce voyage là en Irlande, c’était-tu pour découvrir de la musique?

JD: Oui. Tout à fait. Ça a été très profitable. J’étais allé en Écosse aussi, dans le Northumberland, puis en Bretagne. Le même voyage, j’étais parti longtemps.

JTF: Deux semaines?

JD: Non, j’étais parti un mois et demi, je pense. C’était un long voyage.

JTF: J’ai hâte de pouvoir faire des longs voyages comme ça à nouveau.

JD: Je n’étais pas vieux. J’avais 20 ans.

JTF: Un bon usage de son temps de 20 ans. Ah oui, absolument. J’ai en masse de quoi réfléchir. Merci encore une fois, vraiment beaucoup, de m’avoir rencontré.

JD: Ça me fait plaisir.

JTF: Et on se reverra sûrement dans une session à un moment donné, que ce soit à Montréal ou ailleurs.

JD: Bien oui.

[END]

Interview with Alan Jones

Alan Jones: I'll ramble a bit and then you'll extract what is good for you.

Jérémy Tétrault-Farber: Yeah no problem at all. So here we are today Wednesday December 13th 2017, I'm sitting here with Alan Jones. Alan, thank you for agreeing to meet with me.

AJ: It's a pleasure Jeremy. I recall those early lessons on the uilleann pipes, how you suffered coming here.

JTF: *laughs*

AJ: Suffered the lessons.

JTF: I'd forgotten how steep the hill was coming up from the metro.

AJ: *laughs*

JTF: I do have nice memories of those years. I'll begin with a question that might go a bit far back. How were you first introduced to Irish traditional music?

AJ: This is a very easy question for me to answer. When living in Britain, I was listening to folk music. I'd started to go to folk clubs, local folk music clubs. In Britain it's more, certainly in England and Wales, it's a folk song tradition, not a folk music playing or...it's not an instrumental tradition. It's a song tradition. But in coming to the local folk clubs, I heard somebody playing some Irish jigs on a...or maybe some reels as well, on a banjo and a mandolin. And I said: "Oh I like that, that's happy music."

JTF: *chuckles*

AJ: Then I got talking and then I learnt that the folk music was being broadcast, it was a weekly folk music show on the radio. And on one of the broadcasts I heard the great travelling piper Finbar Furey. On the radio, on BBC radio. It was called, Folk on Two, or something folk. It was folk music radio program. And when I heard this, the sound of the instrument and the playing blew me away. "Wow. My God, whatever's that incredible instrument what an amazing set. I want one of those, I want to play that, I want to know more about it." After that they said what it was, so I went to a local record shop in my hometown and I ordered the record that they'd played this music from. So that's how I discovered Irish music. Through the piping of Finbar Furey, about the same time going to local folk clubs and hearing a few jigs and reels played on banjo and mandolin. So I get the record and I read this and I find out that, then I get really into trying to see if I can get a set of pipes. Well forget it.

JTF: *chuckles*

AJ: This is the late 60s and early 1970s, it was just the beginning of the Revival.

JTF: Yeah.

AJ: So, that so-called Celtic music Revival hadn't really started, or was just...I mean, I was involved, and I didn't know, I was probably part of that Revival. So I don't know, one thing led to another and I asked people at the folk club and nobody seemed to know anything about Irish pipes, nobody knew anybody who played or made...so I had a friend who was involved with folk music collecting records, and we ran our local folk club. And he had a recording of the great

Billy Pigg, the Northumbrian piper. And I thought, well, if I can't get Irish pipes, and I've written to Ireland, I think I got a name like Dan O'Dowd, or Matt Kiernan, these names are coming to me, I'm talking to people.

JTF: Yeah.

AJ: And so, and maybe that I got those names after I became a member of the Northumbrian Pipers Society, can't quite remember. But this was all happening in a similar kind of period. So, I wrote to Ireland, didn't hear anything back. Nobody knew who made these instruments, who played. So I heard this record of Billy Pigg, and I thought well if I can't get Irish pipes maybe I can get Northumbrian pipes. I was aware of Scottish pipes, the Highland pipes they didn't grab me in the same way, it was the sounds of the uilleann pipes and the Northumbrian pipes. So, um, then I started doing the same thing, would anybody know anything about the Northumbrian pipes, nobody knew anything...the tradition wasn't so well known out of the region. But I'd heard that LP so I got that LP so, I was aware of uilleann pipes, I was aware of Northumbrian Pipes. And eventually I got to meet Alistair Anderson, a concertina player from Northumberland who was also...I don't think at that time was playing the pipes in concerts. but he was a regular performer in the folk clubs.

JTF: Yeah.

AJ: And he was from Northumberland. And I asked him and he said, he writes to this person and he gave me a contact for the Northumbrian Pipers Society.

JTF: Ok.

AJ: Who happened to be that man's wife at the time she was the secretary.

JTF: Ok.

AJ: So I wrote off and I got one page, something on the front something on the back, and there were two names on there of Northumbrian pipe makers. So I got Northumbrian pipes from one of these makers. I had to wait a year before I could get the instrument. You mean you can't go to the music shop and buy one?

JTF: *chuckles*

AJ: You know? And through that community I got connected eventually with people who knew something about Irish pipes. And I met a guy called Jeff Slaven who had made some Irish pipes. Somebody in the Northumbrian piping community led me to him. And he would connect me with *Na Piobairí Uilleann*. So that's through him I became a member of *Na Piobairí Uilleann*. And in 1979, I went to Ireland for the first time. In April 79. And I emigrated to Canada in May 79. In April 79 I met Séamus Ennis in Ireland.

JTF: Hoh!

AJ: So that was great. I heard him play live. And then I met Séamus, I met a few other important people...*Na Piobairí Uilleann*, Bettystown, Annual General Meeting.

JTF: Ok.

AJ: So it was an AGM, and there were people making, you know, I won't bore you with names of different people, but Séamus Ennis was there. That's where I met Séamus. That was great. And you know where I met him? I was introduced to him and he said to me, he shook my hand

and says “It’s a great honour to meet you.” To meet me. But it was...Au contraire, you know
laughs

JTF: Oh of course. I mean, goodness.

AJ: He was quite a character yeah. I’m very proud to say I met Séamus Ennis and I sat down and I was chatting with him, you know.

JTF: That’s incredible.

AJ: Yeah it was great. Great. That’s how I got involved. And then once you get to know, you know, you learn a bit here, a bit there. And now I’m over here. When I was a member of *Na Piobairí Uilleann*, I asked for members’ names, and there were some members’ names in North America, and I started connecting with those people.

JTF: Ok so I guess *Na Piobairí Uilleann* was one of the key organizations that helped you along at those early stages.

AJ: Certainly, yeah. Yeah, it definitely helped, yes. Definitely.

JTF: Yeah, for the contacts I guess.

AJ: Yes, yeah. You know the name Breandán Breathnach, right?

JTF: Of course, yeah.

AJ: I met Breandán Breathnach, I met Seán Potts, Seán Potts of the Chieftains, I went to some Chieftains concert. He was great helping me when I was in Ireland. He introduced me to Paddy Moloney. You know, one thing led to another, you were in the network meeting the right people.

JTF: And of course I guess the music followed you when you did emigrate.

AJ: Yeah, you know, it gives you a reason to connect with people, find out what’s happening. You know, I ended up on the Liam Daly show because I was looking for Irish music. And I had a contact, Pat Short, who was the person to connect with for Comhaltas here in Montreal. So he was the very first person I had a contact with, it was Pat Short.

JTF: And how did you get to play on the Liam Daly show?

AJ: Just after coming here, I forget how it happened, but I heard about...I don’t know if I heard about the Canadian Celtic Congress, which was Scots, Irish, Breton, people interested in things Celtic here, it was like an association. I’m not sure if I met them first or at the same time or after...somehow within the first week or two. I ended up at the Black Watch, being filmed for a program playing Northumbrian pipes. It was a TV program when it was being done, and then there I met a girl called Sine McKenna. Sine McKenna was a Gaelic singer, her dad was of Scots-Irish descent. The McKenna florists, here, it was that family. He had a business right near the Cote-des-Neiges cemetery at the time. Sine was singing in Gaelic. And so through Sine...Sine was actually going on the Irish show, and she put me in touch with Liam. And that’s how I ended up on that show, through Sine McKenna, that I’d met at the Black Watch.

JTF: And you'd play mainly Northumbrian pipes on that show?

AJ: I think at that time I was playing Northumbrian pipes mostly, yes. I may have had Irish pipes, maybe they weren't up and running, I think.

JTF: Ok.

AJ: You know. The reeds, reed issues and stuff.

JTF: Yeah.

AJ: Especially coming here to this climate.

JTF: Yeah I know, it's the best climate for uilleann pipes * chuckles* Ah, so many stories there.

AJ: Yeah.

JTF: If you came here in 1979, at what point did you get your first set of uilleann pipes?

AJ: I think it was sometime between 76 and 78. A couple years before I came over.

JTF: And you've been playing those pipes for a good long while, you still play them.

AJ: On and off. Yeah.

JTF: Yeah. Why have you kept them playing for as long as you have?

AJ: Just a passion. I think my mentality, and I think it's very much more European than North American, is when you start something, it's for life.

JTF: Ok.

AJ: You know I never...just a passion too. I don't give things up easily. I don't take on new interests. But if I take on new interests, I don't tend to give up the interests I already have. I've just a passion for it, just to discover the pipes, such a great passion for the pipes and of course, you know, collecting and all that. Meeting different personalities.

JTF: Yeah.

AJ: Reason to go places you wouldn't go, because you know somebody who's involved with the pipes. I used to go down to Philadelphia and Baltimore and, I suppose maybe New York and Boston a bit. Definitely Baltimore and Philadelphia. There were get-togethers, Irish piping get-togethers, tionols. So I started going to those. I met some well-known folks there.

JTF: Yeah, I mean it's kind of fascinating to think about so many connections you can encounter just in one specific city in North America. I mean it's a huge continent. I'm thinking of the Irish traditional music scene or environment so to speak in Montreal. Was it already kind of vibrant when you were...

AJ: A little bit, there was the Old Dublin pub. This was where Pat would go. I think they'd have some sessions there at that time. Because I'm not a drinker I haven't been big on pub sessions. But I have gone, you know. Here and there, I don't go much. Now I kind of like playing in the

kitchen or at home here. Not so much a session person. And my music tends to be a spectrum of a lot of repertoire from the Northumbrian pipes, from Breton pipes, border pipes, Irish pipes, Scottish pipes, French. You know there's this whole repertoire across a spectrum of the different pipes that I have collected.

JTF: Yeah. I know you told me you had a few, you have a few hundred sets, over 300?

AJ: 300 or so, yeah. No they're not all here. They're in Britain. Because I gave some exhibitions in Scotland, brought some pipes and didn't bring them back. Because the climate was too harsh. And it was problematic, couldn't keep them from shrinking and things falling off, reeds not working, bags drying out, bagpipes, uilleann pipes don't work here, after a winter they often don't work you know.

JTF: Yeah no, that's very true. Is there a certain type of pipes that you'd prefer more than others, or is that even a fair question?

AJ: I think the uilleann pipes are right up there. Pretty much number one. You could say the Northumbrian pipes too.

JTF: Yeah.

AJ: I like all of the pipes. If I had to choose, probably the uilleann pipes would be right up there.

JTF: Yeah I know. I would be tempted to agree myself.

AJ: They're very expressive. You know...very evocative. They're the most expressive instrument, you know.

JTF: I agree.

AJ: Incredibly expressive. In the right hands.

JTF: Yeah I know. That's for sure. And is that expressiveness why you play, or you chose to play Irish music to begin with?

AJ: I liked the music. And of course I think with the uilleann pipes that attracted me and then the Irish music came with it.

JTF: Yeah.

AJ: It's so much easier now to get information and get the instruments. It's still difficult to get the instruments from the best makers, because everyone wants their instruments. They have long waiting lists, sometimes you can't even get on the waiting list. But I was thinking of a point that I just missed...when I got involved it was much more difficult to get the information. Now it's much easier with the internet, with the click of a button you can get a lot of information, there's all these videos, Youtube things, you can see people playing. "Oh yeah that's how he does, oh yeah that's the position." I've had two, maybe three lessons at most in my life. That's it. The rest has been just self-taught, you know.

JTF: Wow. That's really cool.

AJ: Yeah, I get frustrated that I'm not progressing more, but anyway. I still have a passion for the instrument.

AJ: I met a guy called Peter Riley through *Na Piobairí Uilleann*.

JTF: Yeah.

AJ: I emigrated on the Tuesday, and on Friday...I was here in Montreal for the first time on Tuesday, I had a few days off, and they said, you know, you start on the Monday, on the Friday I flew down to Peter, I flew to Boston and then up to Portland, Maine. He came to meet me and we went to his house for the weekend. And he was making practice sets, and uilleann pipe reeds. So Peter helped me a lot too.

JTF: Wow.

AJ: Again it's some good reeds, I think I have a Peter Riley reed in the bass regulator of my D set there *points*

JTF: Ok.

AJ: Still there and the reed's probably been in that set for about 30 years *chuckles*

JTF: My goodness, wow.

AJ: Yeah.

JTF: It hasn't cracked or anything, that's fortunate in this weather. And in terms of Montreal itself. You said yourself you're not much of a session goer.

AJ: I used to be a bit more, but not so much.

JTF: Yeah. So where have you played? In what kinds of places have you played most of your music since you've been in Montreal?

AJ: Well I've done everything. I've done TV, I've done radio, I did go to the sessions, I do concerts, play at churches, played for different events. It's here, there and everywhere. You know. Everywhere.

JTF: Even in the kitchen as well.

AJ: I love to play in the kitchen here, yeah. One of the reasons the session scene doesn't appeal to me because I'm not a drinker. I'm not really into alcohol. I couldn't have been a drinker and collected all these pipes, because both are expensive occupations. The sessions I enjoyed at one time, it was nice. I also feel I don't have a big repertoire. So I tend to feel a bit inferior in sessions when there's a lot of tunes that I may not know, but even so. You know, I've done sessions and played with Belfast Andi, played with Paul Legrand, you know. Good players. Did concerts with them. You know, with a lot of other people, Joanne St-Laurent my harpist friend. We played for many years with Ralph Thomson, fiddler from England, very good at Scottish, Irish and Quebec, French-Canadian traditional music. Good playing.

JTF: Yeah and did you organise any kind of formal bands? I seem to remember the name Agincourt.

AJ: Agincourt, yeah.

JTF: Agincourt. That's right.

AJ: Yeah.

JTF: So other than Agincourt, what bands were you a part of?

AJ: One thing that I've been surprised at is I haven't been invited by the local traditional musicians to be part of much. Although a fella phoned me here, when you first came in there. He's a professional flute player and he does give me gigs. He put me in touch with this gig for playing with Ginette Reno at the Bell Centre, Isabelle Boulay on television, that was with the uilleann pipes. So it's been a surprise to me that I haven't been invited to be part of groups, but...no, I've had one or two invites. I've done professional gigs with my pipes in studios, TV and stuff. Composers, Michel Cusson. I've recorded for him. I've played for the movie *Love and Savagery*, you know I mentioned some of these artists and in traditional music circles. I did *Ireland on the Saint Lawrence*, I did the pipes with Desi Wilkinson, the flute player. That was French-Canadian and Irish music. And the connection there. It was called *Ireland on the Saint-Lawrence*.

JTF: I think I might have been at that concert.

AJ: Oh right yes. I'm not sure how long it could....15 years ago or something like that.

JTF: That would be about right I think.

AJ: Ok, all right.

JTF: Wow that's really something.

AJ: Yeah.

JTF: As you said it's a very complex tradition that has developed over the course of centuries in terms of Irish traditional music. Just to begin picking it apart a little bit, if I were to give you these three terms, and ask you to place them in order of importance to you. The terms are "Irish," "Traditional," and "Music." So which of those three would be most important to you?

AJ: You say Irish traditional? Well I suppose music. Because without music...you've said Irish and traditional...that could imply any...could it...other things, other than music, so...Music. You know, I've studied classical guitar. I was a drummer. I've played different kinds of music. I've played jazz. I've played pop music in pop groups.

JTF: Ok.

AJ: I studied classical guitar, I've played folk guitar, then I got into the pipes. So it's hard to say because I think of all three together. Yes, I play Irish traditional music, but music would be I suppose most important for me.

JTF: No fair enough. And if you had to pick a second and third place from "Traditional" and "Irish," what would you say?

AJ: Traditional.

JTF: Ok. And why traditional?

AJ: Because I play Northumbrian traditional music, I play Scottish traditional music. I like traditional music. It's my passion. Now that doesn't mean that I...obviously people composed it, but I don't want composers' names against it. There are many composers that write great tunes but it's in that style, the traditional music. That particular tradition. Irish. Scottish. Breton. Whatever. And I met the Bretons here and got interested in Breton music. And then through the Breton community I learned about French piping. So I got that connection that led me into the French piping world, you know.

JTF: Yeah.

AJ: It's pretty amazing.

JTF: No it really is. And in terms of...speaking of connections you've made over the years. I know you've helped bring a bunch of really well known pipers to Montreal. I remember the concert by Paddy Keenan at the Château Ramezay.

AJ: Yes, yes, I used to put on concerts. I did a number for Paddy.

JTF: Yeah. And when did you start putting on those concerts?

AJ: Well I'll start in 1985.

JTF: Yeah?

AJ: Well, in the early 80s I was travelling down to Burlington, Vermont, 100 miles from Montreal. And I was going to the folk and traditional music concerts with groups like Ossian and Battlefield Band, and Silly Wizard. These were touring professional groups. And so I got to travel between here and Burlington. I discovered the Lake Champlain islands, and discovered this little village on North Hero Island, on the shores of Lake Champlain, fell in love with it. Beautiful. Because where I come from it's rural, and it's picturesque and there are mountains. There was that, plus the lake. And I was missing the pipes and I said: "Well if I can't go to the pipes," I had a full-time job in the aerospace industry, that how I came here. I had a job offer. And I said: "Well if I can't go to the pipes, I'll bring the pipes to me." So in 85 I started an event initially with Northumbrian pipes, and then it started to grow because I have this natural tendency to be a catalyst to bring people together who have like-minded interests. So starting with the Northumbrian pipes with Richard Butler, the Northumbrian piper, a great great player, one of the great players. We started that in 85 and it started to grow, and people started to know about it. Then, my passion for Irish music, for the uilleann pipes. I got to meet Paddy in the early 90s down in Massachusetts. I was aware of the uilleann pipes, I'd met Tommy McCarthy in London, having met Joe McKenna. I started putting on concerts for Joe and Antoinette McKenna.

JTF: Ok, yeah.

AJ: Pipes in Montreal. And I actually took them one time to Jean Carignan's house. We had afternoon tea at four o'clock in the morning at Jean Carignan's house. There was Joe and Antoinette and Jean Carignan was trying to show Joe how Michael Coleman played certain things and Joe would try it on the pipes. So I was putting on concerts, I'd started my convention in North Hero, I was going to the concerts in Burlington, Vermont, so I was expanding my connections, my knowledge. So after doing the convention for 13 years in North Hero and one year in Essex, New York, I then started to put on concerts here. I discovered the Château Ramezay, through Joanne the harpist. We were getting some invites to do Irish music for Saint Patrick's Day, and discovered this wonderful building and then found out that I could, you know, hire one of the halls and put on these concerts. Usually Monday nights because the hall was cheaper. So at the time, David Power, Paddy Keenan, Jerry O'Sullivan, you know, these are some of the people I put on. I became very friendly after meeting Paddy down in Massachusetts. Because I was a big fan of him and his music, having heard it along the way.

JTF: Of course, I mean he's a really friendly guy, I only met him once in person I think..

AJ: And you know, for me Paddy Keenan is definitely, for me, the greatest living player of the Irish pipes. His virtuosity, his tenacity, you know, how he started playing, he was making reeds

before he was even playing. You know, because he was travelling around Ireland with his dad, they were Travellers.

JTF: That's right.

AJ: His mum was from the fixed community, she wasn't a Traveller. But he travelled with his Dad, and his Dad was into the pipes, he knew Johnny Doran, great Irish piper. And so, Paddy was saying, you know, he was scraping reeds as a little boy and he probably was making reeds before he was even playing the pipes.

JTF: *chuckles*

AJ: And then of course you know along with his great playing and his reed-making, so, I was totally infatuated with his incredible virtuosity, and I felt privileged over the years because I put him on in concerts, I invited him to the pipers' convention in North Hero. We got to know each other. You know. And I have the greatest respect for Paddy's playing. His performances were magical, if you've experienced it. A Paddy Keenan concert, and being in Paddy's presence, you've experienced something very special, you're very privileged.

JTF: Yeah, I would have to agree.

AJ: Yeah.

JTF: Yeah I remember that concert at the Château Ramezay.

AJ: Yeah.

JTF: I think David Power was on, and then a few months later it was Paddy Keenan.

AJ: Yeah yeah, I did Paddy a couple of times.

JTF: Yeah, but that was incredible.

AJ: It's magical isn't it.

JTF: Oh yeah.

AJ: He creates this magic, it's hard to put your finger on it, you have to...you know, even people that don't know about the pipes, don't necessarily like pipe music, when they hear Paddy's music, I've done this a number of times, I say: "Listen to this," and you introduce them to his music, they all say: "Wow that's fabulous."

JTF: Yeah.

AJ: That's fantastic. There's a lot of people who'll say now: "Oh, it sounds like Paddy Keenan." And the thing is Paddy set the standard, he was the first to introduce that style of playing. And people said it sounded like Paddy Keenan, are basically copying what Paddy was the instigator of. Or the innovator. That's how I see it anyway, Jeremy.

JTF: So by the mid-1980s or early 90s, you were putting on concerts in Montreal on a regular basis?

AJ: No. From time to time. I did the annual Pipers' Convention in Vermont, North Hero, Vermont, 65 miles south of Montreal, in the Lake Champlain islands from 85 to... I did it for 13 years after that. So that was when it was expanding and, and I was inviting Jerry O'Sullivan, and Paddy Keenan, these were the highlights of the weekend. Jerry and Paddy playing on the porch of the church overlooking the lake. And this was...everybody: "Oh you've got to catch this, don't miss this, don't miss this." So from that, then I started to do some stuff here and that's when I started to do the Château Ramezay concerts.

JTF: Yeah. It's been an occasional event for you, I guess? Organizing all those events?

AJ: Yeah. Now in more recent years. I had a kind of negative experience with my convention. With, you know, some things happened that weren't so great for me, so I've backed off organizing. Like when I was putting on those piping concerts at the Château Ramezay, I was ok with doing that, you know, one-off, but I wasn't so keen on running that festival-type weekend, you know. So I don't organize much now, I put people in touch with one another. I connect people, I like to meet people, but I tend to be more interested in just performing, which is less responsibility.

JTF: Yeah, it's a very different kind of responsibility.

AJ: And also when you organize, you know, the one thing I never had time to do was play my pipes, you know.

JTF: *chuckles*

AJ: It took six or eight months of my year to organize that event, you know.

JTF: Yeah. It takes the fun out of it. I know what you mean. So for you personally, then, what does it mean to play this kind of music?

AJ: Oof, what does it mean? Well, I have this internal passion for it. I have this internal passion for the pipes, it makes me feel good, it's a lot of work, it's not a thing that people say: "Oh, you're lucky, you know you have your music." But as you know, you play music yourself, it's a lot of effort, well it doesn't come for free, you have to work at it.

JTF: Yeah for sure.

AJ: What I find...let's say for example when I'm playing a really great set of Northumbrian pipes. I can get a bit homesick sometimes and it connects me with my homeland, my home country. So I think the Irish music it sort of connects you with something else. You know, when you emigrate, it's a special experience. The emigration experience is not easy, and even the connections with the Irish community here. Having those connections made my emigration easier, and it helped me to integrate into the new society that I'd emigrated to.

JTF: Yeah. Did you already have contacts before your arrival here?

AJ: Like I said, Pat Short. Not too many.

JTF: Yeah.

AJ: And I was a member of *Na Píobairí Uilleann*.

JTF: And that was it?

AJ: And I had names. Somebody in Seattle, somebody in Maine, somebody in New York, Philadelphia. I'd just arrived so I hadn't realized how big the continent was.

JTF: *chuckles*

AJ: So, at home, you know, 100 miles is like 500 miles here.

JTF: Yeah pretty much.

AJ: But I did connect through the music, coming here, it helped my emigration and helped to settle here. Something you know that you've come to... When I first heard the Scottish pipes here I said: "My God, you know, I'm three or three and a half thousand miles from home, and I'm hearing something that I can connect with or recognize." It really made a difference. The pipes helped me with my emigration. And then of course I met people through those communities. It really made a difference. If I hadn't had the music. I think it would have been a tougher emigration, tougher settling in, in the new country. I really do.

JTF: And in terms of that distance, it was interesting what you said just now. 100 miles back home being 500 over here. Or vice-versa. Given that North America is so huge, has that been a problem in terms of how people connect through music? Has that distance ever been a problem?

AJ: Interestingly, North Americans don't view distance in the same way. Like for, say, a person in Britain or wherever. I hardly ever went to London. My God, London? It's 120 miles away. My God it's so far. But when I came here I find North America... North Americans just move around and travel hundreds of miles and get on a plane and fly and move. Back home, people basically stayed in their communities and didn't travel as much. I mean of course we've progressed with communication and travel and people are travelling more, but really even now, they don't think like the North Americans who readily travel five... you know I would have people come to my convention in Vermont, they'd come from California, they'd come from Seattle. They'd come from Philadelphia, they drive and say: "Ah that's only a nine- or a ten-hour drive." I remember one time when Paddy came to my convention, the first or second time he'd driven up from Kansas. He said it was a 17-hour drive. But I mean he's a Traveller. His life is on the road. Oh I mean the distances are staggering.

JTF: A 17-hour drive, that's something.

AJ: *chuckles*

JTF: The most I've ever driven is 10 hours.

AJ: Yeah.

JTF: I mean with a few stops along the way.

AJ: I've driven to and from Nova Scotia. That's a haul.

JTF: Yeah that is.

AJ: That's a 14-hour.

JTF: Oh goodness.

AJ: Yeah, two days for me. Not one.

JTF: Oh for sure.

AJ: I did it one day, I did 21 hours in one day, and I was wiped for three or four days after. I've been to Fredericton, New Brunswick to buy some chanters from a guy who'd come from Cape Breton.

JTF: Ok.

AJ: And then I drove there and back in the same day. You're wiped after.

JTF: Yeah.

AJ: 17 or 18 a day that's ok for me. Just stop, take a nice hotel.

JTF: Exactly, just take it easy after that.

AJ: So really the music definitely helped my emigration. The Irish music. Playing the pipes. Connecting with people. You know, like-minded people, common interests. Although I do find in Montreal it's pretty fractured, you know the Irish societies in Montreal. There are different sessions...people playing in this session don't necessarily play in that session. These people don't play with those people because maybe there's a difference of level of performance or knowledge of tunes. I don't find it...let's say you've got the United Irish Societies, the Saint Patrick's Society, you've got you know Concordia's Irish Studies Department, when I go to different events, or different things, I don't find that those communities are necessarily so homogeneous. You know, this community might not know what that community is doing. Although they're all part of the Montreal Irish community. I'm reading a book about William Hingston. And you look back into nineteenth-century Montreal, and the same issues are there, you know. The religion, the politics of language, the divides, you know, between the French community, the English community, the Irish Protestants, Irish Catholic communities. You know, it's all of the same things that we've been discussing and dealing with and seeing. You know the communities don't necessarily all come together. *chuckles* So I think it's a little bit like that in the music, Jeremy.

JTF: Yeah, I know, I can easily see that.

AJ: You know yourself, you play, I mean you've probably seen a little bit of that right?

JTF: I have, yeah. I mean it's nice to see a multiplicity of either sessions, events...microcosms you could even call them that. But it's nice when people can go from one to the other without any hindrance, smoothly. But you're right, sometimes a warmer welcome is to be found in some places than others.

AJ: Yeah, and I myself, Jeremy, as a person who has this natural tendency to be a catalyst to bring people together, I like to be able to go around and be on good terms with people. There is a lot of politics out there.

JTF: Yeah.

AJ: And I like to try to be above the politics, and I like to be on good terms with people.

JTF: Of course.

AJ: Yeah.

JTF: It just make sense. Has there been much politics with regards to traditional music in Montreal?

AJ: I would say so, yes. Yeah, different musicians don't necessarily want to perform with other musicians.

AJ: But it can be a fractured community. You know I've had an article written in the Saint Patrick's Society newsletter, but you know I never really heard of anybody through the Saint Patrick's Society. There was a lady who got my name and...it could have been through Liam Daly I don't remember. And then she talked to me, and had a little article written about me. But nobody even really communicated with me from that society other than the editor who was writing up this article. That was the only contact I've ever had.

JTF: And if the music community is fractured, and the Irish community is fractured, is there a lot of overlap between the Irish music community and the Irish community in Montreal? Or are they kind of distinct groups?

AJ: I don't know if, you know, necessarily everyone in the Irish community really connects with the music. I mean there are certain key people, it's great having Gearóid in town, you know. It's been very good. I took some of his courses when I was doing my Fine Arts degree, Music degree. Fabulous, you know I learnt a lot, it was great. I sometimes think about it would be really nice and I thought about this. Maybe to try to be the catalyst to have another uilleann pipers' gathering here. Why not, you know? Maybe that's something to do for the spring.

JTF: That would be really cool.

AJ: Why not? I mean you're playing the pipes. We've got Fiachra O'Regan. He's touring at the moment. He's not very available, but he might come. Maybe if Paddy was back over or Gearóid 's playing...

JTF: Since I came back to Montreal from being outside of Quebec, uh, I've helped start four people on uilleann pipes.

AJ: These are people I don't know, Jeremy, or do I?

JTF: You might know some of them. Alexis Kelly.

AJ: Oh Alexis yeah, yeah, Alexis was in the...yeah....I met Alexis at a couple of events recently.

JTF: Yeah I know there's a few others. Olivier Craig-Dupont. He plays in sessions.

AJ: Alexis....well, yes Olivier. He helped me with a bass drone reed there. Yes Olivier I've met.

JTF: Ok.

AJ: Alexis, of course, he went to Ireland, did the pipe craft thing.

JTF: Yeah.

AJ: We need him here, you know.

JTF: Yeah, yeah, I would say so.

AJ: For pipe maintenance, fixing things, and making reeds and that.

JTF: So you were saying before that there doesn't seem to be that much explicit or maybe direct interest by the Irish community in Irish music.

AJ: Generally I don't think so.

JTF: So it's mainly other people playing this music then.

AJ: It's interesting, yeah. I think there are a lot of people. I mean, Paul Legrand he's from Normandy, I'm from the Welsh borders, yourself...

JTF: Yeah.

JTF: In terms of how the music itself has evolved...or maybe how you've maybe witnessed it in Montreal since you've arrived here. Has it changed? Or have the people who play it...have they changed that much?

AJ: I think there's a core of people that doesn't change but, I think in the sessions... You know, people come, they're there and then they move on and then new people come. And they're there, and they move on. So I think that there are a couple of core people, maybe who are in the sessions, but some of the sessions I used to go to at Hurley's, I don't think there are so many of the original people that would have been playing.

JTF: And who were some of the original people? Do you remember?

AJ: Well of course, Andi. Andi would be there. Aindriú MacGabhann. Paul Legrand. There was a Breton guy called...ooo, I've forgotten his name. He was playing flute.

JTF: Erwan?

AJ: Erwan? Yeah that might be...

JTF: I don't know his other name though.

AJ: I don't know if it's Erwan...yeah I think it's Erwan, I think it is, yeah.

JTF: Yeah.

AJ: He was playing Irish traditional flute. There's some bombard players. There was a lady from Mexico, I forget her name. Erwan's girlfriend that he ended up marrying...

JTF: Debbie?

AJ: Might be Debbie.

JTF: Haines or Hayes...

AJ: Yeah something like that. Playing the *bodhrán*, she would come to the sessions. Joanne St-Laurent used to go some of the time, Ralph Thompson on fiddle, I would talk Ralph into coming down when I was going there with my pipes. There was Golo, Reinhart Goerner who was a buddy, who knows Gearóid well. His wife Jocelyn, she's American, I think American-Irish from Chicago area she played flute, she would come. Jean Duval, of course. These were people that immediately come to mind. You know there were a lot of people around the earlier sessions. Oh, Bob Cussen who plays with Andi.

JTF: You're right a lot of these names are...I mean I recognize some of them...Some of them still do play in sessions.

AJ: Yes. I think a lot of them don't necessarily go to the sessions anymore.

JTF: Yeah.

AJ: I haven't been to a Hurley's session in years.

JTF: Yeah.

AJ: Of course there's Fred Graham. Fred, you know, is from Northern Ireland. And his son is a professional percussion player. Graham. He doesn't play kit drums so much as all these unusual percussion instruments. Fred is now playing with the Irish Rovers, but he would come, you know, play his *bodhrán* from time to time at the sessions. And then there's newer sessions, Fred still goes to that. I think Paul still runs a Saturday session. Joanne St-Laurent...oh there was Toby Kinsella. I forgot about Toby. Chris Crilly, these were members of the group Barde. They'd come to the sessions. Elliot Selick from time to time, he was a fiddler in Barde. Elliot Selick. These were some of the people that used to be around when I was going to the sessions in the 80s and 90s.

JTF: Wow. That's really interesting. As you said people really do come and go.

AJ: Yeah. They may still be playing the music but they may not be going to the sessions. Like I'm still playing the music.

JTF: Of course yeah.

AJ: But I don't go to the sessions. There's a session here at the Old Orchard on Saturday afternoons.

JTF: Yeah.

AJ: I think it's a bit of a slow session.

JTF: Yeah.

AJ: I always say: "Oh I should go, it's an eight-minute walk."

JTF: Yeah.

AJ: I don't go *laughs*

JTF: *chuckles* There you go.

AJ: I should go but...I should make an effort, you know.

JTF: Life gets in the way sometimes.

AJ: And also I'll tell what does happen I think Jeremy is, when people get to a certain standard, like if it's a beginner session, or a slow session, they're not so inclined to go.

AJ: I don't want to paint a picture that everything is fractured, the music brings people together. The communities bring people together. You have a common interest, interest in the culture, I think when you're in a new country like I'm in... it's nice to connect with things you know. And this music has definitely connected me with something I can relate to, something I'm involved in, and meeting like-minded people.

JTF: And your work in helping foster those connections has really been noticed, you've just recently received the Liam Daly Heritage Award. Congratulations again on that.

AJ: Thank you.

JTF: If you don't mind me asking, how did you feel when you were told that you'd won that award?

AJ: Well because my name was put in over a number of years I thought, well, it's very nice. I suppose it's competitive. It's nice...I think my wife Patricia was more proud than I was, but it's nice. It's nice to get a little recognition for all your efforts. I had a similar thing with the Thistle Council, which was the association of Scottish communities. I got an award there.

AJ: It's two blocks to the Black Watch, Jer, I go to the Black Watch.

JTF: Yeah that's right.

AJ: Because hey, might as well take advantage of what's here.

JTF: Yeah of course. It just makes sense.

AJ: So I got to play Highland pipes here, I learned Highland pipes here.

AJ: Ken MacKenzie, professor at McGill. I took lessons with him, I managed to get a few pipe lessons in through having Ken as my teacher when I was doing my music degree. So that was nice, got nine credits doing Highland pipes, you know.

JTF: That's pretty cool. Oh boy, here's to music, here's to bagpipes.

AJ: *laughs* Yeah. And here's to our friendship, great to be in touch.

JTF: Absolutely.

AJ: Thanks for your interest in interviewing me.

JTF: And thank you for agreeing to the interview.

AJ: It's a pleasure to be part of this great project.

[END]

Interview with Steve Jones

JTF: Today is Wednesday January 17th, 2018, I'm sitting here with Steve Jones. Steve, thank you for coming here.

SJ: It's a pleasure.

JTF: I guess I'll begin from the start. How were you first introduced to Irish traditional music?

SJ: I think it was...you know I grew up in England, so I heard...I quite liked the folk rock groups that were going in England in the late 60s and 70s, like the Fairport Convention and Steeleyed Span. They played a bit of Irish music, which I liked but didn't take too much notice of. I played violin at school. I didn't get to much of a very high standard, but I had a few years of violin instruction at school. And at university I used to jam with a few friends, folky type things, learnt a few tunes. Tried to learn some Irish tunes off a Steeleyed Span record. Failed. And started going to folk clubs when I finished university in the late 70s. And at that time I fancied myself as a singer-songwriter. But in the English folk clubs which were a very thriving scene in England in the 60s and 70s, almost every town had a folk club. And they would meet at least once a week and it'd be professional. There'd be a circuit of professional touring these clubs. And some would be English singers and musicians, there would be a fair number of Irish and Scottish musicians as well. So if you went to these folk clubs you got exposed to a lot of traditional music. And after struggling with the guitar for a while...long story...but I sort of realized that the fiddle would be more of an asset to me. So I started trying to play traditional music on the fiddle. And first out of books. And then strangely enough I ended up sharing an apartment with a French guy who was in England as a teaching assistant. And he had all the Planxty records and all the Bothy Band records that existed. So I was listening to all kinds of folk music but then these records kind of wormed their way into my consciousness, I suppose. And I started really liking them and then I started exploring the fiddle music more. I bought the records of several fiddle players. The one that really got me going was Máirtín Byrnes, who was a Galway fiddle player. Máirtín Byrnes, who was resident in London but unfortunately he had gone back to Ireland by the time I got down to London. Then I started trying to...I was living about an hour outside London but I decided I'd take the train down in the evenings and go to Irish pubs in London. It was a very thriving Irish music scene in London at the time. I think you could probably say there was better Irish music in London in the 1970s than many places in Ireland. It was really...there were people from all over Ireland, there were people like Bobby Casey, and Danny Meehan, and Jimmy Power, even Mike O'Gorman, but I missed him really. So I started going to Irish pubs and I didn't talk to anybody I just listened, spellbound.

JTF: *chuckles* And when was this? In what year was it that you began taking an interest in...

SJ: It would be late 70s. I think I moved to London actually in...I finished university in 75, so I was messing around with the folk club scene 75, 76, then I moved to London in 77. I got a job in London. And going to folk clubs, there I met another English guys who were really interested in Irish music, another fiddle player. So I started learning more of that. And then 1981 was a key year for me when a friend of mine that used to play with the Scottish guy said: "Steve there's a good session just around the corner from your place starting up on Sunday nights." And I went

there. And it was a very small session. There was a great fiddle player from Donegal, Danny Meehan. He's a bit of a legend. And he used to play there every Sunday night, it was his session and among the musicians there there was a very good flute player from County Clare called Michael Hynes. And they were a great duo. And I actually used to go sit at their elbows, and Danny would coach me a little bit, tell me when I was making a terrible balls of a tune.

JTF: *chuckles*

SJ: He'd give me these old cryptic hints which I went away and scratched my head about.

JTF: *chuckles*

SJ: So this was early 80s.

JTF: Ok. And you've been playing this kind of music for a good while now. Why have you kept playing it for so long?

SJ: It's fun. You know it's very social. I suppose a lot of my social life revolves around Irish music. After 81, after that period I told you about, I actually went to Australia and I spent four years in Australia, and I toured around quite a bit there, and I found that the fiddle was...it was like a passport. You know, if you could play a bit of Irish music, if you were travelling, as I travelled, you know, all around Australia, and everywhere you went people would say: "Oh you're going there next? You must look up so-and-so." And you had a place to stay and it was almost like a youth hostel circuit, you know.

JTF: *chuckles*

SJ: There was a welcome for you everywhere. So it was my introduction to the fiddle...it was a passport...it would open doors for you, you know. So you know when I was in Australia, it just so happened that within about six weeks I'd met almost everybody in the country that played Irish music you know. It was fantastic. So you get addicted to it.

JTF: I can vouch for that, certainly. So you were in Australia for...for those years...did you go back to England for a while before then coming to Canada?

SJ: Yeah that's right.

JTF: Ok.

SJ: I was intending to actually emigrate to Australia but they threw me out and made me apply from outside the country. It took a long time, and while I was hanging around waiting for my Australia visa, which eventually came...

JTF: *chuckles*

SJ: I met a girl from Montreal. So I ended up here instead.

JTF: The rest is history.

SJ: Yeah.

JTF: Wow, fair enough. Fair enough. What year was it when you first came permanently, or for a visit, to Montreal?

SJ: I think I visited in 86 and I arrived in 87 and never went back.

JTF: Ok. And what was the Irish traditional music scene like when you first came here?

SJ: Well it was mostly played by...unlike today, it was mostly played by younger people.

JTF: *chuckles* Yeah.

SJ: Like I was in my early 30s and...I suppose somebody told me...I met somebody in London who was from Montreal, and she was more into the country music scene, but she told me about the session that happened at a place called La Taverne, which was on the corner of...it was on St-Laurent, near the corner of Sherbrooke.

JTF: Ok.

SJ: And for the first couple of years that was *the* session.

JTF: Ok.

SJ: And I just wandered in there one day and there was just a bunch of people sitting around pplaying Irish tunes. In fact it was strange because there was a fellow, he's still around, I don't know if you've ever met Guy Berniquet.

JTF: The name rings a bell.

SJ: He's a percussion player but I haven't seen him for years. In the sessions there were people who wanted to play Québécois music and there were people who wanted to play Irish music, and the Irish music tended to win out all the time. So Guy introduced this system whereby one Wednesday it would be Irish music, the next Wednesday it would be Québécois music until 10:30, and then it was free-for-all which meant basically Irish music.

JTF: *chuckles*

SJ: So you'd have to keep your Irish tunes in check for the first half of the session.

JTF: *chuckles*

SJ: It was alternate Wednesdays.

JTF: Ok. So there was already kind of a...I don't know if it's fair to say tension...certainly a distinction being made between Québécois and Irish music.

SJ: I didn't perceive it as tension...I think it was...I suppose that people who wanted to play Québécois music, they might have liked Irish music, but they didn't want Québécois music to get completely submerged, which was what was happening. And that lasted probably a couple years until about 89, and that tavern changed hands and we went to another tavern, and then I don't remember that. It was pretty much all Irish music.

JTF: And I think it was the early 90s that the Irish pubs, pubs like Hurley's and McKibbin's as well, began opening up. Did that change things at all? Or did it just provide different venues for the music to be played?

SJ: I think it did change things because then you got these sessions happening where you had paid session anchors which wasn't the case. What happened to the sessions...for a couple of years they were at this Taverne place. They moved up to a place called Le Bifteck St-Laurent, which was on St-Laurent. It slays me now, you go to the sessions now, and by 11 o'clock 90% of the people have gone home. Now there's a few hardcore people who'll play until late at night or midnight. And maybe half past midnight. But I remember in those days at the Bifteck St-Laurent, we were sitting there until two or three in the morning.

JTF: My goodness.

SJ: And then go to work the next day. But we were younger I guess.

JTF: Yeah those were the days.

SJ: *chuckles*

JTF: *chuckles*

SJ: Then we went to a place called Brasserie des Pins. I can't put years on it, this is probably a couple of years in each place. And then we started having trouble with the landlord there, and so what happened was that Dave Papazian, who was a very important figure in the Irish music scene in the late 80s, David Papazian said: "Let's have a session at my house." He and Ken MacKenzie shared a flat on St-Laurent at the time. And upstairs...so you had these fancy sort of mafioso type restaurants and antique shops, and then there was this little door and you'd go up into this other world, this little apartment above on St-Laurent. And Dave had sessions there every Wednesday night for, I don't know, at least 10 years. I don't think we took much notice of the Irish pubs for a while.

JTF: That home session was already there...

SJ: That was the place to be.

JTF: Yeah.

SJ: And that's where all the visiting musicians would drop in you know.

JTF: Ok.

SJ: So I don't know quite when it started happening but then...I suppose late 90s, you started to get people like, you know, Belfast Andi and his acolytes, and Paul Legrand would be hosting. But these were guys who didn't have much other livelihood except music, and they'd be playing at Hurley's and McKibbins, and getting paid for it. But in the first number of years I was here, there was nothing like that. It was all...we were all in it together you know.

JTF: And in terms of performing bands...if the session musicians were not professional musicians, or people who didn't earn their living that way...Were there ever that many professional bands that toured or that performed, that did gigs regularly?

SJ: I guess at some point in the 90s you did get...there were people who started playing in the Irish pubs. I can think of people like Kirk MacGeachy. And Dave Gossage. In fact when I first arrived, Kirk MacGeachy had a band called Orealis. That was Kirk, and there was a half a dozen players. Jim Stevens. There was a girl who played keyboards, Renée Morin, who I got to know very well later on. She's in New Zealand now. She was quite avant-garde because she played synthesizers. So it was quite a modern sound I guess. So there was them. And they were probably about the only band I could remember at that time. But then when Hurley's and places...Hurley's particularly started having bands playing several nights a week. You got other people sort of filling the gap.

JTF: People as you said like Dave Gossage who's been in that circuit for a little while I think.

SJ: Well yeah. I'd say Dave has been doing this for 25 years, yeah.

JTF: Yeah. Quite a little while, my goodness.

SJ: And he's not originally a Celtic musician, he's a sort of a rock-jazz musician...

JTF: Yeah.

SJ: A very good one.

JTF: That's right, yeah.

SJ: But he's made a good living out of Irish music.

JTF: He certainly has. And at what point after you came to Montreal, or maybe even before then, did you encounter the band Barde?

SJ: Oh Barde were history by the time I arrived actually.

JTF: You're right, they would have been, yeah.

SJ: But strangely enough...my ex-wife who I came to Montreal for had both Barde's LPs. So I was looking into that. So I read all these names, Chris Crilly, Elliot Selick and the rest of it, Toby Kinsella. And I listened to the records. And that sort of...ok, pretty derivative, you know there's tunes that are recycled from Planxty, the Bothy Band, what else were they supposed to do? Anyway...but actually one of the first sessions I've ever gone to in the Taverne was also during my first big snowstorm in Montreal.

JTF: Ok.

SJ: Sat in the Tavern all night and came out and there was...15 inches of snow had fallen while we'd been in there.

JTF: *chuckles*

SJ: And Elliot, who was an ex-Barde member, gave me a ride back home, and we had to dig his car out of the snow. I'd never seen anything like it.

JTF: It must have been a shock.

SJ: *chuckles*

JTF: My goodness.

SJ: So I met the musicians and I met Chris Crilly, and then Toby, pretty early on too, you know.

JTF: And that time I think some of them...certainly Toby was involved with a radio show.

SJ: Centre-Ville.

JTF: Yeah, Radio Centre-Ville.

SJ: Yeah.

JTF: Did you listen to that show at all, or was that on your radar?

SJ: I didn't listen to it much. Listened to it occasionally. Yeah. I might have been a guest there once or twice. Actually, talking of radio show, Brendan Walsh, who is an important person in a way because he founded the Siamsa School...Brendan Walsh got me to collaborate with him on Saturday morning Irish music radio show on 92 something FM. I can't remember the name of the station. I did that for about a year. A commercial radio station. I've got tapes of it somewhere. I could probably find out what the name of the radio station was.

JTF: That's really something. That's something I really hadn't thought of until I started digging around in the archives, and it turns out there were actually some Irish Montreal TV shows and radio shows.

SJ: Liam Daly, right?

JTF: Yes. That's right, yeah I have some of the DVDs.

SJ: I was on his show once.

JTF: Yeah.

SJ: A couple of times actually.

JTF: Alright.

SJ: Yeah. It was...I remember I did that once with...with Jean Duval and Guy Berniquet.

JTF: Ok.

SJ: Particularly I think because...I don't know if you know, but in 89 I self-published a book about an Irish singer. Packie Manus Byrne from Donegal. And I ended up doing that here because I'd finished the manuscript before I came to Canada, and I was hoping to get it published by an Irish or a British publisher. They took a long time responding, and Packie Manus the subject of the book, it was his autobiography. But you know, I'd transcribed it all from tapes. He got very sick one winter, and I thought he was on the way out. And I thought, I gotta get this book out so I published it myself. *chuckles* I needn't have worried because he lasted another 25 years after that.

JTF: *chuckles*

SJ: So I think that opened a few doors for me. Probably went to Saint Patrick's receptions because of that. And Liam Daly invited me on his TV show to talk about the book and stuff like that.

JTF: Wow. That's really something.

SJ: Yeah. Brendan and I...it was a commercial radio station...I'll probably remember it as soon as I go home.

JTF: Yeah.

SJ: But it was 92 something FM. And it was sponsored by a friend of Brendan's who had a chicken wings restaurant.

JTF: *chuckles*

SJ: And he was the sponsor of the show, because it was a commercial radio show, so he was the main sponsor and we had to talk about chicken wings several times during the hour. And we had this co-host, who was a guy who knew nothing about Irish music. We had to suffer him, but we got to play the music that we liked for a while, until they closed us down. So it was kind of fun.

SJ: At that time, when the Irish community like Bernadette and company, or Comhaltas I suppose, when they wanted to organize a dance or a céilí, they would always bring in a band from Ottawa or Toronto.

JTF: Is that right?

SJ: They would, yeah. There was probably a more active Comhaltas bunch. But there was a wonderful guy, he's sick now and all and he doesn't come out anymore but... Willie Fahey, who was I think from Galway, and his wife Anna, were very keen dancers. And Willie must have seen us playing somewhere, I don't know where. And he said to Comhaltas, he said, these boys can do the music for you. They should form a...so we formed the Montreal ceili band.

JTF: *chuckles*

SJ: And championed by Willie. It was namely me, Jean Duval, and Bob Cussen, and Golo. And maybe a couple of other people. We played for quite a few ceilis in the basement of the church on Saint-Antoine street where Bernadette was giving dance lessons at the time. And then when the 92 convention came, Willie made a big push for these Montreal musicians to actually provide the music for the big Friday night céilí. Which was a huge honour. And a bigger gig than any of us had ever done. It was the Queen Elizabeth hotel and there were I don't know how many hundred people dancing. They did bring in a very experienced accordion player from Toronto called Ena O'Brien to sit on stage with us and make sure we didn't screw up.

JTF: *chuckles*

SJ: But...so that was the first time that local musicians had played for anything big, for Comhaltas anyway. And it was all through the championship of Willie Fahey.

JTF: That's incredible. And did this Montreal céilí band give birth in a way to the Siamsa céilí band?

SJ: I think it morphed into the Siamsa céilí band. Because when Siamsa started holding céilíthe at...for the first couple of years it was at the NDG Legion. And Bernadette was doing most of the calling, and there was the same handful of musicians who were providing the music. I don't know if it called itself the Montreal ceili band, I don't know. I remember doing an interview for the *Gazette*. I told the reporter from the *Gazette*, called Charlie Fidelman, who still writes for the *Gazette* I think, interviewed me on the telephone and asked me about the Montreal céilí band and who was in it. And I said well it depends who shows up.

JTF: *chuckles*

SJ: And she said: “Oh really?” And she says: “Well, when do you practice?” We don’t.

JTF: *chuckles*

SJ: Anyway, so...that was pretty loose in those days.

JTF: Is the Montreal [Comhaltas] branch still around today, do you know?

SJ: It must have faded into oblivion at some point because....Seven or eight years ago Donna-Marie Sullivan tried to revive it. And she tried, but I think she gave up because she found, perhaps, you know, the membership wasn’t enough or it wasn’t generating enough revenue. And apparently, according to Donna-Marie, I think the head office had expectations of...she had to funnel quite a bit of money towards the head office in Ireland. And it became too onerous. I don’t know quite when it fizzled out, but it must have fallen into complete inaction because as far as I know, Donna-Marie applied to revive the branch.

JTF: I don’t know if it was the branch president or something...something to do with the leadership of the branch. And I remember her stepping down, but I don’t know what happened after that.

SJ: I think i just kind of fizzled out.

JTF: Yeah, I mean, like some sessions do I guess, like some bands do. It happens.

SJ: Yeah.

JTF: I think it’s safe to say there’s always been kind of a core group of people who’ve been thoroughly devoted to the music and to seeing it thrive. Have the Irish organizations in this city, the UIS, the Saint Patrick’s Society, those groups...what have you noticed about their involvement with the music?

SJ: Well Saint Patrick’s, I know the Saint Patrick’s have supported Siamsa financially. From the very beginning. And quite substantial contributions, something like \$1000 a year. But there were so many Irish societies and...there’s one called Innisfail. Innisfail something. And they held ceilis of their own, but they were very much social evenings I suppose, like the kind of *céilí* you would have in Ireland where, yes, there was music and dance, but the main point was for neighbours to get together and you know...music and dance would be part of the evening but, not all of it you know. So yeah the Innisfail group. John MacDonagh...Great big tall guy. He’s getting on now. But at that time his father was still active. It might have been...I can’t remember his name. But he was still good up to dance a step, you know, in his...I think his late 80s, early 90s. When we would play, they would invite us to provide the music for some of their ceilis. And Willie Fahey

was a big part of that scene as well. Innisfail. So the Irish societies, apart from Innisfail and the Saint Patrick's financial contribution, I don't really remember anything.

JTF: Yeah. I know that's what other people have told me that the Saint Patrick's Society's been the main, if not only group that's helped out Siamsa over the years. Which is kind of interesting, because I'd be curious to see how many...I mean those societies represent one segment of the Montreal Irish population, which is not the same necessarily as the Montreal Irish music population.

SJ: No. Probably they didn't relate to us very much because we were all, you know, Canadians and Brits and French kids you know.

JTF: Fair enough.

SJ: I think what also happened was that in the late 80s, you had people like John McDonagh's dad and Wille Fahey and Pat Conroy who were immigrants from Ireland. But they were getting old, and because I think the language shift in the 1970s with the Parti Québécois and all the rest of it, there was no rising generation. There were no more Irish immigrants. So they gradually got older and became sort of isolated, you know. There's not Irish young people coming in to work in Montreal. And there was one guy who used to get up and play a few tunes on the box called Bill Flaherty, I think his name was. And he would always do a few spots at the *céili*. But he retired and he went back to live in Ireland. Willie is now very old, Pat Conroy must be in his late 80s. So this generation just got orphaned, I suppose. The vacuum, if there was one, was filled by people like us who had been turned on to Irish music by the Bothy Band, basically. So most of us didn't have a particular connection with Ireland. Dave Papazian had spent quite a bit of time in Ireland, knew many Irish musicians, and I had a connection with Irish musicians in London and people like Packie in Ireland. But a lot of people who were playing the music had never even been to Ireland, you know.

JTF: Yeah. There's a lot of different dimensions to this music, and I'll ask you to think about a few of them. I'll name three words and I'll ask you to rank them in terms of their importance to you personally.

SJ: To me personally?

JTF: Yep, to you personally.

SJ: It doesn't have anything to do with Montreal?

JTF: To you personally. The words are: "Irish," "Traditional," "Music." It might be an odd question, but how would you rank those terms?

SJ: In importance?

JTF: Yeah. To you personally.

SJ: Well music is number one. For sure. Because if I wasn't playing Irish traditional music I'd be doing some other kind of music for sure. Music. Music has always grabbed me. It's just I found my home in Irish traditional music. But if I'd never come across Irish traditional music I'd be doing something else for sure. So music number one. Yeah, probably traditional number two.

JTF: Ok.

SJ: Because you know I started in England, I started playing from Morris teams and playing sort of ceilis, I've played in ceili bands in England, in parallel with my interest in Irish music. And the so-called ceili bands in England were actually very Scottish-influenced. And we'd play a few Irish tunes but a lot of Scottish music. And so I guess if I'd never fallen in love with Irish music in particular, I'd still be playing traditional music of some kind. It might be French, it might be Scottish, you know. But then, once I'd discovered the Irish part, then that took precedence over all the other traditional genres, if you know what I mean. And it's the reason why I don't really play Québécois music, although I'm playing more of it now, and I'm actually teaching a Québécois music camp in the summer now but...I was fiddle player, you know, until an injury prevented me from carrying on. And when I came here I made a deliberate decision not to get too much into Québécois music because I thought you couldn't really...I mean some people do...but I thought you couldn't really master more than one style, you know. I thought if you really wanted to become an Irish musician, then you played Québécois, your Québécois would sound Irish, and if you played lots of Québécois and you played Irish, you'd sound Québécois...and I wanted to be...It's stupid really, but...

JTF: I can understand, for sure.

SJ: So I don't know if that helps you with the ranking.

JTF: Yeah.

SJ: Music came first, traditional came next, and then came Irish, then it all became one!

JTF: It all became one, exactly. It all became over the years a big part of who you are, and who you were, and who you still are. Coming back to what you were saying before about that orphaned generation. If they were orphaned, and other people without necessarily an Irish background, genetically speaking, were becoming the music's ambassadors or torchbearers, I'm thinking of the Olympics coming up next month. Have those new torchbearers changed the music substantially you think?

SJ: In Montreal?

JTF: Yeah. Or in Quebec generally. What have you noticed?

SJ: One of the problems with wanting to play Irish traditional music in Montreal is that there's such a...there's such a cultural mix here which on the one hand is fantastic...because you can go to a party, and you'll be rubbing shoulders with Quebec musicians, and Cape Breton musicians and Irish musicians, and it's all incredibly friendly and incredibly accepting. That's the good part

of it. The bad part of it, is that you go to a session like the Wednesday night session at Fiddler's Green and there'll be 30 musicians there, and there'll be very few that you, as an experienced Irish musician, would actually want to sit in a corner and enjoy a few tunes with because they have a different style, or they have...they're interested in too many...you know, they're too eclectic...or they don't care whether they sound Irish or not, you know. Whereas if you've spent 30 years trying to play at a standard where if you sat in with an Irish musician they wouldn't notice until you opened your mouth, they wouldn't notice that you weren't Irish.

JTF: *chuckles*

SJ: And then, you know most people in the Montreal sessions, it's anything goes. So there's a few of us that don't really go out to public sessions anymore because we're not interested in hacking through tunes like that, you know.

JTF: I completely understand.

SJ: So that's...does that answer your question?

JTF: Yeah it certainly does. I'm thinking about what Jean Duval researched actually about compositions. Or composers I should say. Do you know if a lot of composition of traditional tunes or tunes in a traditional style...has a lot of that happened in Montreal since you've been here?

SJ: In Irish music?

JTF: Yeah.

SJ: *shakes head*

JTF: Not that much?

SJ: No. Not really. Jean Duval in an incredibly prolific composer, and I played...you know I'm a very good friend of Jean's. He was one of the first musicians I formed a sort of bond with and we played in a band until about 1995 until I had to stop playing the fiddle.

JTF: What that Phenigma?

SJ: Yeah.

JTF: Yeah, yeah.

SJ: But we played a sort of...that was kind of a Celtic band, because we didn't play that many pure Irish sets, but we played a lot of Jean's compositions.

JTF: Ok.

SJ: And we had this singer who only wanted to sing in Scottish Gaelic.

JTF: Ok.

SJ: *chuckles* So Phenigma was a bit of a mix.

JTF: Yeah.

SJ: There was...but..how did we get started on this? Composition.

JTF: Yeah.

SJ: Some of Jean's compositions had a bit of an Irish flavour, but they were different...they were Jean's tunes and they were great tunes but...

SJ: Now there's one tune that Jean composed that has really gotten into the Irish tradition around the world. I don't know if you know it, *The Caucus Reel*.

JTF: *The Caucus Reel*. I might recognize it if I heard it.

SJ: *lilts part of *The Caucus Reel** It's a flute tune and...Again Jean and I, in the early days, apart from the scene in Montreal we used to every year we'd go to the Comhaltas conventions, the big North American Conventions. One year it was in Montreal, though most of the time it'd be in the States. And one year it was being held in Secaucus, New Jersey. And we drove down, and we'd stay in a hotel, play sessions until three in the morning, and then have a few hours' sleep, get up and play more...they were great, those conventions. We didn't have anything to do with the official part, the meetings and the delegates and all the rest of it, we'd just go for the peripheral activities. And I think there was a workshop, flute workshop, given by Mike Rafferty, who was a flute player from Galway who was living somewhere down in New England and he must have been in his late 60s, early 70s at that time. And Jean met Mike Rafferty. And we played some session until late into the night. Jean is an early riser, I was lying in the bed, completely sort of out of it. And Jean started composing a tune, and he said: "I'm going to write a tune for Mike Rafferty." And it didn't take him long, he wrote this tune, and he said: "Have you got any ideas for the name, Steve?" And I said: "Ah, we're in a gathering at Secaucus, why don't you call it *The Caucus at Secaucus*?" And he said: "Yeah, great." *The Caucus at Secaucus*. He gave it to Mike, Mike recorded it, changed it a bit, but he recorded it, shortened the name to *The Caucus Reel*, and it's been on any number of Irish CDs now, it's been recorded by at least a dozen people. So that's, you could say, that's one example. It is a kind of pentatonic tune, and I think he really wrote a tune that would fit the flute. It would sound Irish and fit the flute. He hit the bull's eye with that one. I think some of his less traditional tunes are actually more interesting. But...So he's the main guy, I don't really know of anybody else. I mean I've written half a dozen tunes but, most of them are not dance tunes actually. Most of them are more marchy or waltzy type things. So, no, not much composition going on.

JTF: Ok.

SJ: Did you meet Kerri Brown? Kerri Brown was a girl who was here for a while, she's out west now.

JTF: I don't think I did. The name doesn't ring a bell.

SJ: She thought there was so much interesting composition happening that she decided to make a CD of tunes by Montreal composers.

JTF: Is that right?

SJ: It's called Composium. She did the recording herself on her little Mac laptop with pro tools, and I would think most of the composers, I have it somewhere, most of them, that was probably in the late 90s, maybe early 2000s. And most of the compositions on it were by Québécois players like Olivier Demers and Christophe Comte.

SJ: Christophe's got a set on that and actually people kept telling him: "Christophe, one of those jigs sounds awfully familiar." And everyone's saying: "It sounds awfully familiar." He said: "Well, I composed it." And it became such an issue that I went onto an international forum, and I said: "Look, there's this...my friend...does this tune he's composed actually exist?" And so I posted a recording of it. They said: "Well, yeah, Martin Hayes recorded it, it's called *The Cat in the Corner* (or something)...And then I played *The Cat in the Corner* to poor Christophe and he said: "I can't believe it." It's identical!

JTF: My goodness.

SJ: It had gotten into his subconscious. But he thought he'd composed it.

JTF: Maybe, wow. I mean you know there are only so many combinations of notes, I guess.

SJ: *chuckles*

JTF: That forum you went on, was that thesession.org?

SJ: No it wasn't. It was kind of a private one that we started.

JTF: Ok.

SJ: It might even have been Brad Hurley who actually identified it. So he wasn't very international. But I probably questioned lots of people and they said: "Yeah, it sounds a little bit like this, sounds a bit like this." And then Brad said: *knocks three times on the table* *Cat in the Corner*.

JTF: There you go.

SJ: *chuckles*

JTF: Ok. Because I remember coming across Brother Steve's Tin Whistle page years ago.

SJ: *chuckles*

JTF: When I was first getting into Irish music, into the pipes, into the tin whistle. And I only realized after I started playing pipes, after running into you at some sessions...well wait, that's Brother Steve.

SJ: *chuckles*

JTF: How long has that website been going?

SJ: I started it in about 2001, I think. At that time you see, I was forced to give up playing fiddle by what turned out to be focal dystonia, which is a horrible condition that you don't want to know about.

JTF: Hmm.

SJ: But I was puzzled for years, I couldn't figure out what was wrong with me, nobody else figured out what was wrong with me either. So during that time I couldn't play fiddle to my satisfaction so...and I didn't know what I had, so I didn't what to take up another instrument, so I just concentrated on the tin whistle. And then, you know, the world wide web started happening I suppose in the late 90s, and I started checking out things and then I found there were all these people, enthusiastic beginners, posting stuff about whistle playing and saying: "Hey, listen to me i learned to do rolls." And I'd listen to it and I'd think: "No you haven't."

JTF: *chuckles*

SJ: So I thought, I wonder if I could...I wonder if...this is the early days of the world wide web. Could a web page...actually this is before Youtube, you know.

JTF: Yeah.

SJ: Could a webpage, be it multimedia, could it provide written text, sheet music and recorded examples to help people? So I just did a page on how to play rolls. And so it expanded from there. So I started that in about 2001 and I kind of...I worked on it for two or three years and I haven't done anything to it since. But it's still there.

JTF: Yeah.

SJ: And people still write and ask me questions sometimes.

JTF: *chuckles* I think it was Robin Beech who was telling me about the Montreal Session website.

SJ: Yeah.

JTF: Which...

SJ: Actually Gord Fisch put together, yeah.

JTF: Yeah. Were you involved in crafting that website at all?

SJ: Not at all.

JTF: Ok.

SJ: No it's Robin's baby, really.

JTF: Ok. Fair enough.

SJ: Robin's very...he's a very enterprising guy, he's a clever guy.

JTF: Absolutely. I find it fascinating that these, um, these different babies of yours, both your website and his website seem to have really drawn people to this kind of metaphorical Montreal space online. Because, well I mean, it's the Montreal Session website in one case. And I forget if Brother Steve's page mentions Montreal at all, but it's certainly a resource.

SJ: I think it does. I think it says somewhere that it started as an offshoot of the Siamsa classes. But it's funny...do you remember Shu Feng?

JTF: Shu Feng. No, I don't.

SJ: Shu Feng was a guy who was studying something pretty advanced mathematical at McGill, very brilliant guy from mainland China.

JTF: Ok.

SJ: He's turned into a really good flute player. I don't where he's living now. He was in New York. I don't know if he's back in Canada. But he was shaping up to being a really good flute player. And I met him at a session, he said: "I learned how to do rolls from your website!"

JTF: *exclamations of excitement* Amazing!

SJ: And I thought: "Great!"

JTF: Awesome!

SJ: Yeah.

JTF: I guess for every person who tells you that that's the case....

SJ: ...there must be a few more, yeah.

JTF: That time period when the Internet was starting to kick off...I mean that's when I began becoming interested in this kind of music as well, so it's...the Internet's become almost a go-to teacher. Or a teaching resource, certainly.

SJ: The Internet?

JTF: Or what we can find on it, I guess.

SJ: That's changed. I mean that's changed everything, hasn't it? Youtube has changed everything. In fact people don't really buy records anymore, they...when I was learning, I would go to sessions, I'd never take a tape recorder there. Go to Irish sessions in...and I'd have a few books. Go to Irish sessions in London, I'd never dream of walking in there with a tape recorder. I didn't have one anyway. So you'd buy LPs. There were like one or two shops in London that would sell Irish folk LPs, let alone outside London, forget it. So you'd make a pilgrimage down to these places and you'd buy two or three LPs, which was all you could afford. And you'd listen to them until you know every single note and scratch on them, inside out. You knew the tunes absolutely inside out. And then you'd buy another one. But people don't have that depth of study now. They...“Oh, I want to learn *Gravel Walk*, let's go on Youtube, see which versions I can find.” And they find 50 different versions. It's not as focused.

JTF: And are Montreal players trying to keep that older focus, I guess? Or has that kind of dissipated?

SJ: For people of your generation I don't think you probably do. Do you?

JTF: I mean I can think of a few people who try. I know personally I try to stay as focused in my playing as I can when I have the time to play. With the kids and everything...that's another question. But I find there are few people who...I mean as I've seen it, not that many who actually decide to approach this not as a hobby, but as a craft. Because I remember when I went through that kind of shift when I was playing, I was happy just to get a sound out of the chanter. And for me that was kind of “Achievement Unlocked.” And then...

SJ: This is after playing Scottish pipes?

JTF: I started playing Scottish pipes after the uilleann pipes.

SJ: Oh. I didn't know that.

JTF: A lot of pipers begin with the Highland pipes, then move to the uilleann pipes. I did the opposite. But once I was able to play the uilleann pipes with enough control to play in a session, for me that was "Achievement Unlocked," and then I started looking for other challenges, realized: "OK, what's next?" The Highland Pipes, which I began playing after. And after I was able to finish playing a parade with a pipe band, I was looking for a different challenge, and realized: "Ok, what's next?" And I realized, ok, I could either change instruments, or take the two sets of pipes that I play and focus.

SJ: Go deeper down.

JTF: Exactly. I really thought: "Ok, I should not treat this as a hobby, so I'm going to do it as a craft. I should try to perfect."

SJ: Yeah.

JTF: I mean eventually it becomes...there is eventually that law, I find, of diminishing returns where...how many more hours do you want to put in to achieve a smaller and smaller result? But that comes down to personal preference, I guess.

SJ: Right.

JTF: But yeah, I find not that many people of my generation playing trad music in Montreal approach it that way.

SJ: I think for me though, it's a very different world because there I was in England, where there were Irish communities in London and other big cities, you know. Because of all the Irish people who came over to work in England. And you sort of get hooked on Irish music. And ok, there was the Bothy Band, but there wasn't a huge Irish music scene among young people so you were a bit of an oddball, you know. And as I say, I played violin at school, so I could sort of read the notes, but it didn't sound Irish. And all I wanted to do was to stop sounding as though I wasn't Irish, I wanted to get the sound...to get this wonderful sound, and it became an obsession, and this is what you're aiming for, for me anyway. I think for people now, Irish music is so accepted that...Montreal is so cosmopolitan, you can go down to...you can take a few classes at Siamsa, and you can go down to Fiddler's Green, or whatever the successor is, and you know, hack your way through a few tunes and that's fine, it's a great social occasion. But...it was more of a mission for me, you know. And I went out to Australia for a few years, as I said. And actually my Irish music playing really consolidated there because I met a bunch of...I played in a band with some Irish guys. And there were some old established Irish families. Anyway, so it was like, you want to fit in, you want to fit in with these people, to be accepted by the real people...you want to be accepted as somebody who's not going to annoy them by playing badly.

JTF: Yeah.

SJ: Authenticity was the holy grail, you know. And I don't know whether young people taking up Irish music in Montreal have anything like that obsession, I don't know.

JTF: Yeah. Or if they do, it might be mixed in with Irish styles, perhaps. Or maybe not so much a focus on the Irish style as having the Irish as one string to their bow, out of many strings.

SJ: Well of course you've got some modern bands now. I mean the Bothy Band and Planxty I suppose were revolutionary because they were an alternative to the Chieftains and the *céili* bands. And they sounded a bit rocky. But they were still very, very strong traditional players. Well you have bands now with still very strong traditional players, but, you know, like Flook. You meet whistle players who are just sold on Brian Finnegan. And Brian Finnegan is a fantastic musician. Absolutely fantastic. But I don't really want to hear his tunes all night, you know. But, there are people, that's this whole thing.

JTF: I guess I'll have one more question for you. Then again it might be an unfair one, but we'll see where it goes. For you, what does it mean to play Irish traditional music?

SJ: *thoughtful silence*

JTF: Yep.

SJ: What does it mean?

JTF: Yeah.

SJ: Well, you know, it's an expression of something that's obsessed me for the last 30 years. In a small way, it is paying homage to the people who have kept Irish music alive, you know...I mean you read about how in the 1940s, the 1950s, and early 1960s, Irish music even in Ireland was looked down upon and was definitely underclass music, you know. And it's such fantastic music that has rightfully achieved its place in Ireland and then internationally. But I think when I play Irish music I want to be somebody who's passing on what I got from those guys. You know, Máirtín Byrnes, Bobby Casey, those old guys, or even...they're old guys now, Paddy Glackin and Kevin Burke are old guys now, but they were young guys when I was...

JTF: *chuckles*

SJ: But you know, you want to feel there's continuity. I do, anyway. And I'm not an Irish wannabe. I'm not one of those guys who I've met plenty of, who go to Ireland, come back with a fake Irish accent, you know, and sort of would like to pass themselves off as Irish.

JTF: *chuckles*

SJ: With my accent.

JTF: *chuckles*

SJ: You know, but it's fun, and it's social, and it serves a purpose playing for dancing, all those things. But at the back of my mind there is this sense that, you know, you can't...I'm not the heir to any particular school of traditional music or any particular tradition, but I do want to represent it properly.

JTF: Yeah. Absolutely. And I think we'll have the mission, you, me and others who think that way to keep representing it on into the future.

[END]

Interview with Paul Legrand

JTF: Alors nous sommes le vendredi 27 octobre, et je suis ici avec Paul Legrand. Paul, merci d'avoir accepté de me rencontrer.

PL: Bienvenue.

JTF: Alors pour commencer, j'aimerais savoir comment est-ce que tu as découvert le monde de la musique traditionnelle irlandaise. Alors ça s'est passé comment?

PL: Moi j'ai découvert ça dans les années 70. Je m'intéressais déjà, à la musique, aux musiques traditionnelles entre autres. Il y avait des personnes influentes comme Alan Stivell en France. Je dois préciser d'ailleurs que je vivais encore en France dans ce temps là. Et puis il y avait vraiment un engouement pour...pas juste pour la musique bretonne, mais toutes les musiques traditionnelles. Moi j'ai même joué du bluegrass.

JTF: Ah oui?

PL: Pendant un temps. Et puis ma découverte de la musique irlandaise ça a été relativement tardif, en fait. C'est venu en 78. Donc j'avais une vingtaine d'années. Puis là ça a été un coup de foudre. J'ai eu l'occasion d'aller en Irlande aussi. C'était en 80...En 78 justement, avec des amis, et j'y suis retourné aussi en 1980. Et puis là ça s'est vraiment...là j'ai décidé vraiment que je voulais apprendre le violon irlandais. La musique irlandaise au violon.

JTF: Et est-ce que tu jouais déjà du violon à cette époque là?

PL: Pas du tout, non.

JTF: Ok.

PL: J'ai commencé vraiment à ce moment là à vingt ans.

JTF: Et est-ce que tu jouais de la musique avant?

PL: J'ai joué...ma formation c'était, comme le dit la biographie de Siamsa...j'ai commencé la flûte à bec à l'école. Comme je pense tous les enfants. Ma mère était institutrice du village. Moi j'ai continué tout seul, parce que effectivement j'aimais bien la musique. Et puis bon j'avais des cahiers de musique, puis je lisais comme ça la flûte à bec. Après j'ai joué comme adolescent un peu de guitare, j'ai joué du banjo, dans le bluegrass c'était ça. Et puis ben voilà c'est ça...je zigonnais un peu sur les instruments. Mais c'était vraiment là le violon. Je m'y suis mis tardivement effectivement. À vingt ans.

PL: C'est ça, c'est le début. Ou peut-être j'avais déjà entendu un peu de musique irlandaise auparavant là, mais disons que c'est une date un peu charnière là, 78. Et puis je suis arrivé à Montréal en 82. J'ai beaucoup voyagé dans ce temps là. Beaucoup aux États-Unis. Et puis aussi...de Toronto au Cap Breton enfin. Je me suis installé après à Montréal. J'ai connu, je crois la première session...c'était en 83. Et je sais pas s'il y en a eu auparavant, mais c'était au Vieux Dublin. Et c'était la première...enfin la première, pour moi et la dernière à ce que je sache au Vieux Dublin.

JTF: Ah oui?

PL: Oui. Oui c'était pas tellement ouvert à ça, il y avait pas d'enthousiasme particulier.

JTF: Ok.

PL: Il y avait un house band, je pense, avec Jerry O'Neill.

JTF: Ok.

PL: Donc t'as dû en entendre parler. puis...Brendan Nolan.

JTF: Brendan Nolan, ok.

PL: Mais question musique irlandaise là, bien d'abord il y avait deux pubs, le Vieux Dublin...il y avait TC's aussi sur la rue Sainte-Catherine.

JTF: Ok.

PL: Mais là c'est pareil je pense qu'il y avait pas grand-chose qui se passait.

PL: Ça se passait plus dans le milieu francophone. Des musiciens qui s'intéressaient à la musique irlandaise. Et puis c'est ça c'était par les sessions en fait. Et donc du Vieux Dublin ça c'est organisé ensuite dans une place qui s'appelait la Ricane sur la rue Bernard. On avait des sessions aux deux semaines. Il y avait la Petite Ricane, c'est devenu la Petite Ricane par après, enfin c'est pas très important. Et puis bon, c'est ça, à peu près toujours les mêmes musiciens qui étaient là. Comme je dis c'était surtout des musiciens francophones, mais il y avait aussi une couple d'anglophones. Il y avait Patrick Hutchinson, je sais pas si tu connais, il jouait de la cornemuse.

JTF: Le joueur de cornemuse...je connais le guitariste.

PL: Ah oui d'accord.

JTF: Mais je sais qu'il y a un joueur de cornemuse aussi.

PL: Oui, qui est ethnomusicologiste.

JTF: Oui, oui, c'est vrai.

PL: Qui a étudié à McGill à ce moment là. Je crois que c'est à McGill qu'il faisait son...ou peut-être Concordia je sais pas trop. Peu importe. Et puis sinon, voilà les musiciens c'était Jean Duval, Golo, Mario Côté, Bob Cussen.

JTF: Eh bien il y a quand même des noms importants de cette musique là à Montréal. Quand même des piliers de cette communauté là. Et donc ça fait quand même depuis 1978, que tu t'intéresse à cette musique là.

PL: Oui.

JTF: Qu'est-ce qui a nourri cet intérêt là au fil des années?

PL: Ah moi je suis resté sur ce coup de foudre. Ça m'a toujours porté. Je crois que c'est important parce que pour moi enfin...dans mon cheminement personnel, il n'y avait rien devant moi là. Puis c'était comme une manière de m'identifier à quelque chose. C'est ça, c'était important pour moi la musique irlandaise. Vraiment. Et puis de devenir bon là. Autant que possible. De persévérer, et puis c'est ça. Ça m'a jamais lâché finalement. J'ai eu une période où j'ai mis ça un peu de côté, je me suis plus intéressé, parce que je travaillais dans un atelier de piano. Et puis

j'aime d'autres styles de musique, j'aime beaucoup Bach, j'ai découvert la musique de Glenn Gould. Et puis là j'ai décidé de me mettre au piano, puis d'apprendre la musique de Bach. Puis j'ai fait ça plusieurs années. Mais bon, ceci dit je jouais de temps en temps la musique irlandaise. Mais j'ai une période où j'étais plus dans les sessions. Ça c'est au début des années 90 par exemple. Puis il y avait certaines obligations professionnelles qui faisaient que je travaillais de nuit donc je pouvais pas être tellement dans le circuit si tu veux. Mais pour en venir aux années 80 pour moi c'était une période...effectivement il y avait eu des musiciens qui jouaient de la musique irlandaise, mais on parle de la période post-référendaire où la musique traditionnelle c'était pas du tout...il n'y avait pas l'engouement...il y avait pas tant de musiciens que ça finalement, tsé. il y avait un intérêt pour ça, mais je pense pas que c'était comme développé comme ça pouvait l'être aux États-Unis par exemple. Il y a eu vraiment une espèce de...je crois que c'était en force dans les années 70 au Québec, la musique traditionnelle. Surtout la musique québécoise. Mais enfin on parle généralement, je sais pas si c'est vrai ou faux là, peut-être qu'on a pas assez de recul pour ça, mais on parle du trauma post-référendaire, et que la musique traditionnelle a comme perdu de son intérêt. C'était difficile en vivre. J'ai monté un groupe avec Bob justement, Golo, pis Philippe, un joueur de percussion. Et puis on avait des contrats de temps en temps, mais on en voulait là, mais on avait pas tellement quoi. Et puis après c'est ça, pour moi il y a une période creuse qui correspond pas à grand-chose, mais je pense que à partir de 92 à Montréal, là c'est remonté. Et pour moi c'est la redécouverte, surtout c'est 94, 95. Tout d'un coup il y a une conjonction d'événements qui arrive. D'abord il y a l'ouverture de pubs irlandais comme Hurley's Pub, qui va être suivi de McKibbin's peu de temps après. Il y avait personne qui y croyait d'ailleurs à ces pubs. Moi j'avais un ami dans ce temps là qui disait: "Oh ça ne marchera pas. Il y a pas assez de monde." Et puis...voilà c'est ça deux, trois autres ont ouvert en même temps. Là ce qui s'est passé il y avait aussi 97 qui a été la commémoration de la An Gorta Mór. Tu sais, la Grande Famine. Il y avait aussi...ça s'est arrivé quand, je sais plus...la signature du vendredi...

JTF: Ah des accords en Irlande du Nord?

PL: Oui, l'accord de paix.

JTF: En anglais les Good Friday agreement. Oui oui le Vendredi Saint. C'est 98?

PL: 98.

JTF: Ouais.

PL: Donc en fait c'est que l'Irlande était vraiment sur la "map" là dans ces années là.

JTF: Avec raison je pense si justement les commémorations de la Famine, avec ce qui se passait en Irlande du Nord, je comprends pourquoi.

PL: On en parlait beaucoup de l'Irlande. Et donc, avec les pubs qui ouvraient aussi tout d'un coup il y avait beaucoup d'opportunités de jouer. Et puis là c'était le fun quoi, moi j'avais un groupe avec Andi et Peter Senn, et puis là on avait des contrats. Je sais plus quoi, on avait une session par semaine. C'était le fun.

JTF: Puis ça faisait des occasions de jouer justement pour des musiciens professionnels, et aussi pour des musiciens amateurs qui se joignaient aux sessions par exemple.

PL: Oui. C'est ça. Oui. Il y avait eu l'ouverture, bien enfin, Siamsa ça avait commencé en 92, je pense un truc comme ça. Enfin moi j'ai joint Siamsa en 94, je pense, à peu près, je sais pas exactement. Encore une fois le début des années 90 pour moi...j'étais un peu hors-circuit. Puis j'ai

commencé à enseigner à ce moment là, remplaçant un musicien qui était là depuis le début de 92, David Papazian. D'abord aux cours de danse.

PL: Pour moi c'était un quadrilatère. Il y avait Hurley's Pub. Au nord de Sainte-Catherine t'avais Claddagh. Sur la rue Bishop en face, t'avais McKibbins. Et puis en face de Hurley's t'avais...

JTF: O'Regan's?

PL: Ouaism qui était O'Regan's, qui est devenu Fiddler's Green.

JTF: Ouais c'est vraiment un petit quartier de pubs.

PL: Ouais.

JTF: Puis là dedans il y a aussi le Irish Embassy.

PL: Oui c'est ça. Ouais.

JTF: Alors donc t'en joues depuis longtemps. Ça fait partie de qui tu es en quelque sorte.

PL: Oui. C'était vraiment...je me suis vraiment identifié, là.

JTF: Puis est-ce ça a été difficile au fil des années d'être un musicien qui gagnait sa vie en partie par cette musique là?

PL: Oui, parce que regarde...en vivre, ça a commencé je dirais à peu près en 95, 96. Avec She-nanigans, le groupe dont je parlais avec Bob tout à l'heure dans les années 80. On avait beaucoup d'ambition mais pas de contrats. Mais pour moi c'était assez formateur de jouer avec Bob, entre autres. C'est un musicien qui a une connaissance assez large de la musique qui est capable de non seulement de jouer les mélodies, mais qui est capable de...il comprend l'accompagnement, etcetera, tu vois? Pour moi ça a été assez formateur. Enfin moi je vais revenir à mes débuts là, parce que quand j'étais en France, je me suis intéressé à la musique irlandaise, mais il n'y avait personne autour de moi. Donc j'ai vraiment appris seul avec des disques surtout. D'ailleurs aussi même si on m'avait payé pour prendre des cours j'en aurais pas pris parce que je venais de recevoir de l'enseignement classique.

JTF: *chuckles*

PL: Je me suis dépatouillé tout seul, quoi.

JTF: Et puis cet engouement là qui d'après toi a resurgi à partir de 92-94-95, est-ce que c'est aussi fort maintenant qu'au tout début de cette remontée là?

PL: Disons que ce qui entretient mon intérêt maintenant, ça ne vient pas nécessairement juste de moi, mais c'est les activités que j'ai qui fait que ça me...le fait d'enseigner, ça m'oblige à apprendre plus parce que justement j'ai de mes élèves qui me proposent des pièces à apprendre. J'enseigne au niveau plus élevé, donc en principe j'estime que je ne suis pas là pour leur imposer des pièces, mais qu'ils ont déjà des goûts. Donc ça, ça m'oblige à faire du travail. Et puis c'est vrai que d'aller dans les sessions, de temps en temps il y a quelqu'un qui joue une pièce, puis là t'as le goût de l'apprendre. C'est comme ça que ça s'entretient mon intérêt. Il y a un petit peu des deux, quand même, je dirais. Il me reste un intérêt, mais parfois disons que c'est pas aussi intense que ça l'a été dans les premières années, mettons, où je pouvais passer des journées entières à jouer là. Puis il n'y avait rien d'autre...c'était difficile les débuts parce que tu te dis:

“Bon, ce soir, je vais rentrer du travail.” Et tu pars le matin au boulot, puis je travaillais en usine des fois, des trucs comme ça. Et puis le soir tu rentres. Puis là, le drive que t’avais le matin là, t’es fatigué puis...le gros effort c’est d’ouvrir la caisse et tu prends le violon, l’instrument. Là ça partait. Donc j’arrivais à me stimuler comme ça. Et puis de se dire: “Je vais jouer tous les jours.” Mais ça ne marchait pas comme ça. C’était un peu difficile au début. J’arrivais à me ménager à un moment donné des plages de temps si tu veux, pendant un ou deux mois où j’avais travaillé intensément. Puis là j’arrivais à me retrouver seul puis à dire: “Ok, là je vais jouer. Puis je vais apprendre, je vais apprendre, je vais apprendre.” Puis c’est ce que j’ai pu faire. C’est comme ça que j’ai progressé vraiment. Au point à en devenir asocial d’ailleurs. Je ne voulais plus voir le monde. Je voulais juste jouer.

JTF: Est-ce que tu jouais souvent avec d’autres gens en dehors des contextes de sessions, mettons chez des gens?

PL: Là je te parle de ma période en France là.

JTF: Ok.

PL: Les quatre premières années où j’étais encore en France. J’ai joué avec un groupe en France un petit peu. Mais ça n’a pas duré, c’était un peu à côté, là. Mais cette période là qui a été importante pour moi, justement pour arriver à un niveau de confiance pour jouer. Non mais c’est ça, la démarche ça a été vraiment individuelle, puisque j’ai pas eu vraiment d’aide à côté. Je te l’ai dit que je montais à Paris des fois...même les disques de musique irlandaise, c’était dur à trouver. J’étais à 100 kilomètres de Paris. Des fois je partais en stop pour aller là, dans un magasin...je veux dire je ne connaissais pas trop, mais je trouvais des disques de Bothy Band, Planxty, ou bien les Chieftains. J’ai pigé un peu au hasard là. Et voilà.

JTF: Cette musique que t’as adoptée un peu comme étant la tienne en quelque sorte, et cette étiquette là, si je peux te demander de la décortiquer un peu pour moi. Les trois mots qui la composent en bout de ligne...”musique,” “traditionnelle,” et “irlandaise.” Si t’avais à mettre ces mots là en ordre d’importance pour toi...

PL: Irlandaise.

JTF: En premier, ouais?

PL: Oui.

JTF: Ok, et pourquoi?

PL: Parce que ça ne se limite pas à la musique. Mon intérêt aussi s’élargit un petit peu vers la culture, la langue un peu...c’est intéressant parce ce qu’il y a deux façons d’approcher ainsi la musique. Il y a le style que j’appelle *Fiddler Magazine*, où tu peux apprendre des musiques à travers un instrument, donc en l’occurrence le violon. Ou bien on peut faire la démarche inverse, apprendre un instrument à travers la musique. Pour moi c’est la musique qui vient en premier, et l’instrument second.

JTF: Ok.

PL: Tu vois ce que je veux dire?

JTF: Ouais.

PL: Même si évidemment bon on...moi quand j'étais gamin j'étais pas vraiment attiré par le violon, quoi. Et je joue du tin whistle aussi là. J'en joue moins mais je veux dire...pour moi c'est important aussi, donc, de découvrir la musique. Ouais c'est ça, c'est de découvrir la musique, on utilise des instruments et...je ne suis pas intéressé par d'autres styles de musique. Enfin je joue de la musique québécoise, j'en ai pas mal joué. Mais ça m'intéresse pas de faire du tex-mex ou du jazz, bien que même si je me suis essayé un petit peu quand même, mais je prétends pas en jouer, tu vois.

JTF: Donc vraiment cet intérêt là pour l'Irlande d'abord...

PL: C'est l'Irlande, ouais, la culture irlandaise de façon plus large, un peu la littérature à la limite.

JTF: Ok. Et entre "traditionnelle" et "musique," lequel des deux serait plus important pour toi?

PL: Musique je crois.

JTF: Ok. J'imagine comme tu disais que la musique passe avant l'instrument en quelque sorte.

PL: Oui. Et puis j'aime...enfin..."traditionnelle" c'est important aussi si tu veux...Mais je ne suis pas à regarder juste en arrière, parce qu'il y a un petit peu ça. Moi j'écoute des jeunes qui jouent là, puis ça me...qui peuvent inventer des choses...j'aime ça, quoi. Il y en a qui sont contre ce qu'ils appellent en anglais: "That's all innovation."

JTF: *chuckles*

PL: Puis tu dis ça sur un ton que je trouve que...en réalité ça me gêne pas de tout, d'autant plus que j'estime que tout s'est fait avant...on n'invente pas grand-chose en fait. Quand je ré-écoute des vieux enregistrements de certains musiciens, même si tout n'est pas nécessairement là, les prémisses sont là dans leur jeu, quoi. C'est une façon d'écouter qui fait que...enfin les styles de certains musiciens vont amener Kevin Burke à jouer du Michael Coleman d'une certaine manière, et puis tu l'écoutes joué par quelqu'un d'autre, tu retrouves la musique de Michael Coleman, mais pourtant ils ont chacun leur style, tsé. Mais c'est ça qui est la beauté, aussi. C'est la sensibilité, on entend différemment là.

JTF: Et justement à Montréal, est-ce qu'il y en a beaucoup de cette innovation là, par des musiciens d'une génération plus jeune?

PL: Je connais pas vrai. Je pourrais pas dire, en fait. Parce que je cherche un niveau qui serait un peu vraiment transcendant. Mais je connais pas de musiciens qui soient à ce niveau là.

JTF: Puis en même temps, ce n'est pas facile de se rendre à ce niveau là.

PL: Ouais c'est ça, un niveau de perfection, de maîtrise. Puis moi-même j'ai...moi je préfère de toute façon, tu sais j'irais chercher l'imitation. Mais franchement là je vois pas qui. Il y a un flûtiste français là qui donne des cours à Siamsa et qui est assez époustouflant.

JTF: Ouais.

PL: Je ne connais pas son nom.

JTF: Est-ce que c'est FX? François-Xavier?

PL: Oui c'est ça.

JTF: Ouais. Ouais il m'avait parlé...je pense qu'il s'intéressait aux uilleann pipes à un moment donné.

PL: Ok.

JTF: Je pense pas qu'il en joue en ce moment, mais il m'avait posé des questions là-dessus.

PL: Oui.

JTF: Ouais. Mais c'est vrai que c'est assez époustouflant ce qu'il fait.

PL: Ouais. Mais pour revenir tu vois à ce que je te disais, l'intérêt pour la musique avant le violon, c'est que pour moi, j'estime aussi que l'instrument justement central à la musique irlandaise, c'est la cornemuse. Enfin dans le sens où c'est elle qui fait que nous, par exemple, au violon, on fait des rolls, de choses comme ça. L'ornementation ça vient en partie de ça. Alors pour moi, ça ne m'intéresse pas d'apprendre juste de joueurs de violons là. Bien que même si c'est de eux que ça vient, je veux dire, j'ai appris des classiques, des standards de violon. Un peu de la musique de Matt Molloy. Pour moi c'est un de mes grands musiciens en musique irlandaise. Alors c'est assez drôle parce que probablement que Matt Molloy lui-même a appris la musique de Michael Coleman. Bon tu vois il y a des, je pense à *Tarbolton* par exemple. Mais je suis époustouflé par sa technique parce que justement il a la technique de cornemuse. Il a adapté la flûte beaucoup plus que d'autres flûtistes, enfin, à ma connaissance. Et il était vraiment outstanding là, je ne sais pas. Je trouvais qu'il y avait plein de joueurs de violon que je pouvais...j'aurais pas jugé l'un contre l'autre...autant à la flûte il y avait Matt Molloy là, tsé. Enfin en tout cas pour les années 70 80 là. Bon il y en a eu d'autres depuis.

JTF: Depuis que t'es à Montréal, les gens qui viennent aux sessions et qui participent à faire cette musique là, à la créer, à la jouer, c'est quelle sorte de personne?

PL: Bien comme je te disais au début, c'était pas mal des Francophones.

JTF : Ouais.

PL: Et c'est vrai que ça a peut-être un peu changé, mais j'ai toujours trouvé qu'il y avait un peu une césure entre la communauté irlandaise, on va dire de souche, et les musiciens qui jouent vraiment cette musique.

PL: Pour moi, la session, c'est le laboratoire. C'est vraiment le lieu important où ça se passe, quoi. C'est là que ça...ou la cuisine de la musique, je sais pas comment...C'est vraiment le lieu d'échange. Dans un groupe ça peut être plus fermé, vu qu'on va travailler de façon plus serrée, mais dans la session, là, tu peux être influencé par tel ou tel musicien, quelqu'un qui arrive...tu découvres des nouvelles choses, des nouvelles approches de la musique. Et je trouve ça important.

JTF: Évidemment il y a des gens comme toi, je pense à Andi aussi, qui sont venus mais qui sont restés. Mais ceux de passage, ils finissent par plus ou moins laisser de traces, j'imagine?

PL: Je te disais, par exemple la session c'est important comme phénomène, mais ça ne veut pas dire que je sais tout ce qui se passe au niveau des sessions. Non, je connais personne vraiment qui laisse sa marque de façon durable.

JTF: Ok. Sauf de rester.

PL: Oui, c'est ça.

JTF: Au niveau de la musique qui est jouée, au niveau des pièces...tu disais que tu joues aussi de la musique québécoise, j'imagine parce qu'il y a des similitudes entre la musique traditionnelle irlandaise et traditionnelle québécoise. Jusqu'à quel point, d'après toi, la musique québécoise a affecté la musique irlandaise à Montréal?

PL: Ou là là...Moi ce qui me concerne, les musiciens qui...on a été vraiment branchés sur la musique irlandaise d'Irlande, qui vient de musiciens irlandais. C'est intéressant ce que tu poses comme question parce que, oui, par exemple si je prends Martin Henri. Je ne sais pas si tu connais Martin Henri?

JTF: Le nom me dit rien, non.

PL: Ou bien Jean Duval justement. Ces musiciens là ce qu'ils connaissaient de la musique irlandaise, enfin je me prononce en leur nom, c'était Jean Carignan. Jean Carignan ça c'était une influence...beaucoup d'influence sur des musiciens...certains musiciens québécois justement. C'est certainement grâce à lui que des musiciens québécois ont découvert la musique irlandaise, tu vois. Mais moi, parce que moi j'ai commencé en France, je suis un petit peu à l'extérieur de ça. Mais c'est certain que Carignan, c'était une personne très, très influente.

JTF: Est-ce qu'on pourrait dire que Jean Carignan a été pour le Québec ce qu'Alan Stivell a été pour la France?

PL: Ouais c'est intéressant ça.

JTF: On dirait que les deux sont chacun des haut-parleurs de la tradition irlandaise.

PL: *chuckles* Oui, au niveau de leur influence, c'est certain, oui. Bizarrement c'est deux personnalités tout à fait différentes, là on s'entend. Mais effectivement. Au niveau de l'influence, on pourrait comparer, ouais.

JTF: Qu'est-ce que ça représente pour toi que de jouer cette musique? T'as déjà parlé un peu du fait que cette musique là fait partie de ton identité. Bien est-ce que ça te relie à une collectivité ou une communauté plus élargie? Comment tu vois ça?

PL: C'est sûr que pour moi c'était le fondement, c'était un peu une raison aussi pour laquelle même je suis resté ici. C'est drôle parce que j'aurais peut-être pu aller en Irlande, mais c'est les contacts que j'ai fait avec les musiciens ici qui m'ont un petit peu incité à rester. Le fait de voyager aux États-Unis aussi, j'ai quand même rencontré des musiciens. Alors finalement mon réseau social, on pourrait dire, est tout à fait marqué par la musique irlandaise. Parce qu'avant, quand je suis arrivé ici, je ne connaissais personne. Et c'est grâce à la musique irlandaise que j'ai fait mes contacts. C'est sûr qu'aussi bien question réseau...dans les années 90 il y avait aussi une chose importante. C'était de commencer à jouer pour la danse. J'avais un ami qui était très important pour moi. Enfin il est décédé en 96, on ne s'est pas connu si longtemps, il m'a incité à jouer pour

l'école de Bernadette Short. Et donc j'étais là presque pendant sept ans tous les lundi soirs, à faire l'accompagnement des danseurs. Et puis ça c'était une autre période, enfin qui vient de rajouter... il y a eu cette période 95-99, bon, je jouais mais j'avais pas tellement de contrats de ce côté-là. Mais il y a la première décennie là de 2000 à 2010-2012 où j'ai beaucoup joué. J'avais beaucoup de contrats liés à la danse. Donc c'était ce qu'on appelle les *feiseanna*, au pluriel. J'avais un niveau qui faisait que j'étais invité un peu partout. Au Mid-West surtout.

PL: Je parlais des conjonctions d'événements tout à l'heure là. La Grande Famine. Les ouvertures au niveau local, l'ouverture de pubs. Il y a aussi le phénomène Riverdance, ça c'est super important là. C'est ça qui m'a donné aussi des opportunités parce que tout le monde... moi je me souviens. à l'école de danse, il y avait des jeunes, ça commençait avec les petits là de 5-6 ans. Bien d'heure en heure, ça commençait, je ne sais pas, quatre heures et demi, cinq heures de l'après-midi... Le lundi soir jusqu'à neuf heures. Donc cette heure là c'était les plus avancés. Et ensuite c'était le cours des adultes. Mais il y avait la difficulté à monter juste un set avec... peut-être au mieux t'avais sept ou huit danseurs. Et puis tout d'un coup ça a explosé, je ne sais plus exactement quand là, mais avec le phénomène Riverdance, tout le monde voulait être Michael Flatley et Jean Butler, tsé. Et il y avait plein d'étudiants là, c'était phénoménal... une quarantaine, cinquante étudiants. Donc des adultes, des étudiants de Concordia probablement dans la vingtaine etcetera.

JTF: Parlant d'organismes reliés à la culture irlandaise, est-ce que t'as déjà fais partie de Comhaltas?

PL: Non. Je n'ai jamais été membre.

JTF: Parce que de mon souvenir, c'était en 74 je pense que le chapitre montréalais de Comhaltas a été fondé, je ne sais pas s'il est tant actif, ou ce qui se passe à ce niveau là.

PL: Ouais. Je ne sais pas trop franchement. Parce que tu vois il y a vraiment cet... je reviens un petit peu sur ce que je disais, dans les années 80 là... la communauté irlandaise, ses organismes comme ça, mais nous on ignorait complètement... ça se passait à l'extérieur des sessions, là. Il n'y avait pas de contact. Bien moi, je n'ai jamais adhéré, quoi.

PL: Je connais Pat Conroy. Je connais, mais c'est ça, c'est pas la même génération que les musiciens que moi j'ai connu. Puis il n'y avait pas d'atomes crochus.

PL : C'est ça, tu vois, on a tendance à... quand je vois certains ouvrages de musique, à focaliser sur une géographie, comme de dire: "Oh, East Clare, West Clare, ou Donegal. This house on this street of West Donegal."

JTF : *chuckles*

PL : À un moment donné, là...je pense à quelqu'un qui s'appelle le Northern Fiddler. Puis le type à un moment donné il interview un des musiciens qui vit au Donegal, mais il a passé vingt ou trente ans de sa vie dans le Bronx, tsé, à New York. Et puis pour moi...je veux dire...de toujours parler en terme de style, alors qu'on sait qu'il y a des personnes, et en plus, il n'y a pas plus mobile que les Irlandais, tsé je veux dire. Ils ont tellement émigré puis ils sont venus ou pas là, que ça prend pas tellement ça en compte. Ouais, c'est ça, c'est limiter les gens de géographie comme s'ils étaient inamovibles. Mais c'est pas le cas. Ou par exemple Tommy Peoples, on l'associe au Donegal style, mais il a passé je crois vingt ans dans Co. Clare. Puis maintenant je pense qu'il vit aux États-Unis. Il y a toute cette dynamique là qui est pas prise en compte.

JTF : Ouais, puis qui est quand même difficile à tracer sauf de connaître ces gens là intimement et pas juste de bouche à oreille. Ça me donne vraiment beaucoup de pistes de réflexion. Je dois avouer, il va falloir que je réfléchisse un peu à savoir par où je m'en vais par la suite, mais c'est vraiment super. Je pense que j'ai des réponses à mes questions. Merci beaucoup, vraiment beaucoup. encore une fois.

[END]

Interview with Aindriú MacGabhann

Jérémy Tétrault-Farber: Ok, today is Thursday January 11th, 2018. I'm sitting here with Belfast Andi, aka Aindriú MacGabhann. Andi thank you so much for agreeing to speak with me.

Aindriú MacGabhann: Hey no problem *a chairde* *laughs*.

JTF: *Chuckles* I guess I'll ask you to begin from the beginning. How were you first introduced to Irish traditional music?

AM: Well actually funny story there. I left high school in Belfast on the Falls Road. I was doing art and design. They incorporated photography as well. So when I was about 19 I went looking for apprenticeship jobs in studios. Just knocking on doors to see if they could take me in to teach me how to develop film and do stuff. So this guy Tom Russell, he had an advertising studio down at the bottom of the Falls Road in Belfast. My first job was making tea and mopping the floors, setting up his lights for pack shots. And he had a great selection of traditional folk music from all around the world. And I got the bug then, listening to the stuff.

JTF: Ok. Just out of high school then?

AM: Oh yeah. I'd been playing electric guitar since I'm about 12, you know, but it was mostly punk rock, stuff like that. Clash and Sex Pistols and stuff...and there was Damned. And then when I heard the folk music, I got the bug. Planxty were the first band I really took to, with Christy Moore. Big influence to me.

JTF: Absolutely. And what year was that when you first got the bug?

AM: That would have been about 1982. So I remember bringing... I said I'm gonna learn this stuff. I remember bringing the electric bass and the electric guitar to a local music shop and asked: "Could you swap them for an acoustic?" Because I wanted to learn the folk music. The guy went: "What are you doing, son? You're going backwards."

JTF: *laughs*

AM: I said: "What do you mean?" He said: "You're supposed to start acoustic then go electric, you're doing the opposite." I said: "It's because I want to play traditional Irish." And he said: "Oh yeah, you want to learn the diddly-dee." I said: "Yeah I do, yeah."

JTF: Ok. And was it as "the diddly-dee" that this music was known in your...

AM: Oh in my neck of the woods?

JTF: Yeah.

AM: Musicians would call it trad.

JTF: Yeah.

AM: But the local folk called it diddly-ider or dlddly-dee, you know. Even my nephews today say: "You're still playing that diddle-dee music?"

JTF: *chuckles* Are you ever, I guess, goodness.

AM: Well that's what I mean. Once you get the bug for it, you keep doing it, you know.

JTF: Absolutely. And what has kept you playing this music for as long as you have?

AM: Yeah, in 82. Well I don't know...I think it's a love for the history of the music as well, not just as a cultural thing coming from Ireland...the whole historical aspect of traditional music...to be sitting with people who grew up on the other side of the Atlantic in Montreal, playing the same tunes. It's fascinating to me. And playing tunes that are over a thousand years old, that's just...I tell people and they don't believe it. You know, one of the pubs we play there, the owner of McKibbins. He sold his shares and moved off. He's somewhere in the Bahamas now, lucky man.

JTF: *chuckles* The McKibbins downtown?

AM: Yeah, the one on Bishop. They opened the bar just a year after I got here.

JTF: And when was that?

AM: It's be 21 years ago now.

JTF: Ok 21 years ago ok.

AM: So I'd just arrived. I think it was 96...actually more than that. Yeah they opened about 21 years ago, I think because last year was their anniversary, and I got here in 96.

JTF: Ok.

AM: So a couple years after. And there was Irish music seven nights a week then. And I was playing with Toby Kinsella, one of the original members from Barde. And the bold Chris Crilly who was in Barde also. I'd play with these guys and I was honored to actually sit in with these guys. They were the seniors to me, they were the guys who came before me, you know. A few years older. They were like big brothers to me, you know. I was so happy they actually let me play with them.

JTF: Well yeah I can understand. So this was in 96 or thereabouts?

AM: This was in...actually when I first met Chris I think it was about 90...I was on a visit here, it was on a visa. It was 92.

JTF: Ok.

AM: It was 92. Because I came over here in 1991 for a visit and I went back home and I came back over to visit again, so I came back and forth three times, and I meet these guys in 92. There was a big summer of...I think it was a big anniversary, founding of Montreal. And they had a big Irish festival down at the Old Port, I remember. So I met these guys. Toby was doing a radio show on Radio Centre-Ville, and he interviewed me. He had me bring in my guitar and sing a few songs live on the radio. That's where I was first introduced to Toby. So I was just saying that the owner of McKibbins, they started introducing sort of more cover bands rather than the Irish music, you know. So he started introducing top 40 bands, which again, this changed the whole culture of Irish music in the pubs. When these guys played like rock n roll and Elton John and all of that contemporary 70s music, the Stones and all that. They all started creeping into the Irish pubs. The only Irish music you'd hear even today is like sessions, you know.

JTF: Yeah and back in the early to mid-90s when you met Toby and Chris and you were playing with them, was it sessions?

AM: No, we had a band together. Toby and I had a duo called the Blarney Pilgrims.

JTF: Ok.

AM: We played...

JTF: Good name.

AM: Yeah yeah...it was weird I had this dream, I had a French word in my head, it came there, "le pèlerin." And I said: "What does that word mean?" So I had this weird dream, this French word kept coming into my head, "le pèlerin." He said: "It means 'pilgrim.'" He says: "I got an idea, we'll call ourselves the Blarney Pilgrims." And he wrote this song the Blarney Pilgrims.

JTF: That was one of his?

AM: Yeah he wrote that, the Blarney Pilgrims. Well, not the tune, but the song. He put words to it. So we played under the Blarney Pilgrims. Sometimes I played with Chris Crilly, we did a couple little gigs here and there together.

JTF: Yeah.

AM: I remember playing with Chris Crilly on the 150th anniversary of the Famine. An Gorta Mór, up in Quebec City. TChris and I played up there. And I met this guy Dave Clark. Fiddler. But he was only a little kid then, this little kid came up with glasses and was playing fiddle "You're really good. How old are you?" He was 15 at the time, you know. So yeah, we did that. I think I've got a poster here somewhere, I got mounted of the An Gorta Mór. It was the 150th anniversary of the Famine in the 1840s, you know, and a lot of the Irish came over to Quebec and Grosse Île. But anyway yeah getting back to the owner of McKibbins. He said to me: "Andi do you play any top 40 music?" I said: "I do actually." He said: "You do?" I said: "Which century would you like?"

JTF: *chuckles*

AM: He said: "What? Which century?" I said: "Well, you know, some of the tunes that we play, O'Carolan goes back to the 18th century, 19th, 17th century. So I'm going beyond that and right up to the 70s, you know." It just flew over his head, he couldn't get the..."What? What do you mean what century?"

JTF: At what point did you decide you wanted to make music such a big part of your life? I mean, now you've been playing it for a very long time, you've made your life out of it essentially. At what point did you decide to do that?

AM: Well you know, years ago I moved to London in the 1980s. I moved away from Belfast and I brought my...I remember getting the ferry to Liverpool. Actually first of all, no, I flew to London first with my guitar, a couple cameras, and a case and my clothes. And then I went back to Belfast to get...I had a motorcycle, a chopper, and I went back to get the bike to bring it to London so I got the ferry to Liverpool and rode down to London. And there was a big Irish scene in Camden Town and Kentish Town in north London. So I'd go to the sessions there you know. And then I met other people of course, Irish guys and English guys, and we'd get the odd gig here and there you know. I said: "You want to play with us? There's a bit of money in this." "Money? Yeah? Sure, I'll do that!" So like I mean, going to London, as all the Irish did, we were all working on construction sites and any kind of work we could get, you know. I ended up delivering parcels on my motorcycle in London for about two years. Then getting the odd gig here

and there. I thought: “Yeah, I could do this, you know.” Getting paid for actually doing something you like, you know.

JTF: Yeah.

AM: And when I left London and came over here, I was in some of the Irish pubs and saying: “This guy’s getting paid to do this?”

JTF: *chuckles*

AM: I said: “And he’s putting on an Irish accent. I can do this.”

JTF: *chuckles* Without even trying.

AM: *chuckles* The guy’s putting on an Irish accent. I can do that. I don’t even need to put it on, you know. Why not? So that’s I guess that’s when I decided I’m gonna give this a shot and try to make some cash out of it, you know.

JTF: There you go.

AM: Do it for a living, you know, it’s hard enough though. It was easier years ago, when I was with Toby and Chris, because there was a bigger demand for traditional music, you know. There was kind of another revival of Celtic music, as you’d call it here.

JTF: Yeah I know. Was it early 90s with Riverdance?

AM: Oh that was a big influence, Riverdance, when it started touring the world and played different shows all around the world. It was good for us, because it was popular. Especially...you get, as you know yourself, somebody playing uilleann pipes, it’s very rare the people who, you know, that just, there’s only yourself and a couple of other people here.

JTF: A handful and we all know each other.

AM: Yeah exactly.

JTF: It’s a small community, yeah.

AM: And then there’s a guy I met up in Quebec City actually, Sweeney.

JTF: Yeah, Patrick.

AM: Patrick Sweeney, nice guy, he’s a good piper, you know.

AM: Out in Ste-Catherine-de-la-Jacques-Cartier. Right beside Shannon. When I gone up there, I’m meeting other people who were playing like, Irish music. I met these old guys playing the fiddle, and it’s so different the style of music there.

JTF: Yeah.

AM: Like the Shannon fiddlers were very different from people I’d met, and they were saying it goes back to the first Irish who came over in the eighteenth century. The style of fiddling. Carried it on, you know. And I took a walk in the graveyard there in Ste-Catherine, and seeing these graves of people born in Ireland who’d come over in the first wave before the Famine, in the eighteenth century. I was thinking: “God all these people came all that...it was like going to the Moon. Once you leave Ireland in a sailing ship you didn’t come back, you know. I just see these people’s graves that were a couple hundred years old. And then the community which sprang up

around that area...And I played there a couple times in the Shannon community centre with the young fellow I just mentioned, Dave Clark.

JTF: How was that style of fiddling different from what you heard elsewhere?

AM: It just sounded...it sounded really old, you know what I mean? It wasn't like Sean Keane and that and like the Chieftains and that...it just sounded really...like a really old style of fiddling ...you know it's like sometimes you meet people here from the Gaspé and that, they speak French. Like the old style when they first came here, the settlers. The accents, that's very different It's just like a time capsule.

AM: Another thing, for me which was very important. It was a nice little identity for me in Belfast to play traditional music. Because in those days it was mostly Catholics that played it, you know. A lot of the staunch Protestants thought it was foreign music. Their idea of music was either fifes and drums or country and Western.

JTF: *chuckles* Oh my goodness. Even a very musicky pub like Madden's in Belfast...I think you told me once, you'd gone there, and were told you couldn't sing a song there.

AM: Oh no they didn't...they don't let you. Actually...well sometimes...it depends what song you sing. Downstairs in Madden's...I was gonna sing one of my rebel songs. My rebel songs are very subtle. I don't use like: "Yay IRA!" and all this, I don't use that. I keep it very subtle, I don't want to offend anyone.

JTF: No, of course.

AM: *chuckles* Next thing, guitar stopped working. The bouncer had his hand on it... *chuckles* Protestants drink here too now.

JTF: And when was that?

AM: That was in the...that must have been about...2002 I think it was.

JTF: Ok, not all that long ago.

AM: Things have changed...a lot of the Protestant folk have learned Gaelic, and want to play Irish music, but I think it's brilliant you know. I had a friend once I worked with in a place called Lisburn. And the company was... three Catholics in a company of 30. And it was a microfilm company for documents for hospitals and things like that, and housing plans, you know. But it's all changed now, everything is computerized now, you know. There was a guy came up to me and said: "Look would you mind if..." It was coming up to the Twelfth of July marching season. He said: "You mind if I play band music." "No I don't care. Doesn't bother me." I said: "As long as you don't mind if I play some traditional Irish music." I used to bring cassettes with me, you know. He said: "Oh no problem, nothing political." Alright no problem. So I stick my cassette on...And the guy came up and he said: "What's that tune called?" I said: "Well I think that's *The Lark in the Clear Air*." Or whatever, I can't remember what tune it was. He said: "We play that in our band." I said: "You do?" He said: "Oh yeah, we play a couple of those tunes." "In your marching band?" "Yes." "See, we're all Irish, eh?"

AM: But like I said, when I grew up in Belfast, the Troubles started when I was six. It was truly serious, bombs and shootings and stuff like that.

JTF: And is that the reason you left for London?

AM: Well, one of the reasons. Well I couldn't take it anymore. It was too dangerous. I got nearly killed the year before...there were a couple of IRA volunteers murdered by the Secret Service. The SAS in Spain, in Gibraltar. And people were so pissed off that they could have arrested them, they didn't have to murder them in the street, you know. They shot a woman. Máiréad Farrell, Seán Savage and Danny McCann. People from our area, that came from our area. We were so insulted that they could have arrested them but of course they shot them dead in the street. And there were witnesses. A British lawyer who said: "No, they had shorts on, they had no guns, and they had their hands up, and they were murdered."

JTF: Ok.

AM: And of course he gets called "cokehead" in the papers, and there was a Spanish woman who was a witness. Of course, she was an ex-prostitute, so...you know what I mean, trying to bring down eyewitnesses. They could have arrested them. They followed them from Belfast to Spain. They were supposed to plant a bomb which I don't agree with. They could have stopped them at any stage. But they had them hit by a team in Spain, by the SAS. So we were so annoyed, we all lined up for hours. I remember people passing flasks of tea and coffee, because everybody lined up. And they brought the coffins back. So for me, rather than get involved in any paramilitary group and get, as my dad said: "You stay out of trouble. Because you join the IRA, you're either in prison for life, or you're in a box." So there's no escape. He said: "You stay away from these guys." They tried to recruit us in schools as well, you know. So my Quiet Revolution was to sing these songs.

JTF: *chuckles*

AM: Take a guitar and sing the Christy Moore stuff. This was like a political identity in Northern Ireland, you know.

JTF: And in hindsight maybe even of Quebec...I mean you just used the term "Quiet Revolution," I find that really interesting.

AM: Yeah. But then again, you know when I came over here...talking with some of the French, when they realized I wasn't a bloke and an Englishman, I was Irish, they went: "Ah, this guy's got the same sort of ideas as us."

JTF: And is that something you've found when you first came over here? That people treated you differently because you were from Ireland?

AM: Yeah. Especially musicians. "Oh you're Irish, oh yay, mon ami, ça va bien?" You weren't English, you were Irish.

JTF: And was that in sessions?

AM: Mostly sessions because I got to know the Quebecers from...they could play some Irish tunes, with Quebec music.

AM: These guys came over and started giving me trouble: “You speak French here.” “Excuse me? I’m having a conversation, would you mind?” “You live in a country called Quebec, you speak French in our country.” “Who are you?” And I’m singing, but I’m singing in English. I played some Saint-Jean-Baptiste shows, people showed up and booed me. “En français!”

JTF: Even before PKP said that.

AM: Yeah, yeah. I remember one night there were these guys, it was Jean-Baptiste and I was up singing. And these guys in the park were shouting...it was down in Chambly. They were in the park drinking beer. And they started shouting: “Hey bloke, en français!” The guy who’d invited us to play stopped and he starts, over the microphone, starts shouting: “My friend from Ireland, you insult him? He’s not English, he’s Irish. And that’s the language, the songs he learnt are in English.” He says to the guy: “If you don’t apologize and shut up, I’ll stick this guitar so far up your arse...” *chuckles*

JTF: *chuckles*

AM: The guys got up and took off because they were that embarrassed.

JTF: And when were those shows?

AM: Oh that must have been...where I was living, I was in Longueuil then...that would have been about 1998.

JTF: Ok, so after the referendum in 95.

AM: Yeah, oh yeah. Because I was in Scotland then, I was living in Edinburgh in 95. I came over here in 96. From Edinburgh.

JTF: I was speaking to a few other musicians, and they talked about this in reference to the first referendum in 1980, of this post-referendum trauma. And how that affected traditional culture. Quebec traditional music underwent a bit of a decline after that, but then a resurgence afterwards. So I’m wondering if what you went through as a traditional musician might be linked to that.

AM: When I came here I met people who were playing Irish music, and Quebec tunes, and some Breton stuff. But then when I started sessions in McKibbins and that, they started coming down to my sessions. That’s how I met them, because they’d hear: “Oh there’s a guy from Ireland, he’s doing a session at this new pub that opened.” So they’d come down and there’s probably about 15-20 people used to come down and play, you know, back in the 90s when I first came over here.

JTF: And who were some of these people? I mean, you mentioned Chris Crilly...

AM: There’s a guy Philippe Du Berger. You know Philippe?

JTF: I’ve played with him, with you before as well.

AM: Philippe...you see I’ve lost touch with these guys like Philippe. There’s a guy...He took over my session. I didn’t like that. He went to the boss and said like: “I can get more people here.” And I got my session taken off me, but I got it back again, you know. But...I didn’t like

what he was doing, he was using the language...excluding me because I didn't speak much French, you know. So he'd get in with all these guys...I was sort of pushed out: "Ah he's just a bloke." Which I didn't like, you know, using politics and language. Even though he wasn't a Québécois. His ma was French, but his da was English. He was more of an English speaker, who'd spent time in Ontario and Toronto and that, you know. And when he came in the Quebec scene, he sort of took over too.

JTF: Have you seen more of that kind of politics since then? Since you, I guess, re-took over your session?

AM: Well...I've argued with these people. As I've said, once the cover bands started moving into the pubs, we were getting less and less gigs, you know. I remember McKibbins we used to have three sessions there a week. Now it's down to Sunday afternoon, you know. And the one on Saint-Laurent, of course.

JTF: Down from seven nights a week from what you were telling me...

AM: Oh we were playing gigs like four nights a week with Toby and that, playing in different places. And, there was an Irish pub opened up in Morin Heights, the Commons, in the Commons. It was an Irish pub, we played there a few times, and Paulo played up there too with us. Peter Senn and...then, like I said when all these guys started getting in, bringing drum kits and electric guitars, they sort of squeezed us out. And all we could do is play like sessions and stuff, or Saint Paddy's, which they'll have you work like a dog, you know.

JTF: It's almost like you'd have to close yourself on those gigs, it seems.

AM: Then the need for you was no more.

JTF: Yeah after the 17th...

AM: That's it. Can you be here? Can you be at my bar? You can't exactly close yourself. You can't be in 20 places at once, you know. Why does it always have to be the same day? Can't you book us once a month, you know?

AM: But as I said before, I know I've put a lot of people's noses out of joint. I can understand playing Irish music, that's good, you like it. But you have day jobs, you're amateurs, right? We're not talking about us, we're talking about people who can barely play it. But they go into places that hire musicians, that pay musicians. Why can't you have a kitchen party like people used to do at home? You didn't have to go to an Irish pub that pays musicians. Because this is taking work away from other people. You know, just like these guys got in playing their rock n roll cover band music, and they're taking work away from us, it's like *expletive*, and what do you want to do, roll over and die? We still have to make a living.

JTF: And has that been a big problem for you?

AM: It has been, I find.

AM: Even just myself or two guys playing, getting paid, you know, bums on seats, they're buying beers, quiet night, why not? But as I said it doesn't make sense. Siamsa have ceilis in the Legion, right? So why don't you have your sessions in the Legion? You know what I mean? Because the Legion wouldn't mind if there's live music...you have all your ceilis there. Do your sessions there, don't be coming into my territory, walking into McKibbins or Hurley's, and asking to play for free. It's like, *expletive* I play in Hurley's for money. I got the manager years ago, and he told me he didn't want to pay us anymore. And I said why? He said those guys are doing what you're doing for free. And I said: "Have you actually heard them?" "What do you mean?" I said: "Go listen. Those are amateurs." I said: "There's some good players right enough...but this is why they're doing it for free."

JTF: In that kind of situation, did you ever think of trying a different path to make a living?

AM: See that's the sad thing is the Irish pubs pay money. I play at a couple friends' bars downtown and on the Plateau. And you're basically passing a hat. It's like, you do a gig and you're passing the hat, like, come on, I'm 54 this year, I don't need to pass hats like a beggar. May as well go busk in the metro, you know. And that's the hard thing. See all the pubs on Saint-Denis and that, they don't pay. It's all pass the hat and some of the bar takings.

AM: Because there's guys who start their sessions at the same time as mine. Come on, you're welcome to come to my sessions! You don't have to start a different session somewhere else just because...this is my session.

JTF: So is there a lot of territorial infighting?

AM: Oh yeah. Definitely. I've noticed this...People that I've noticed who used to come to my session, and then they got a bit of confidence and they started like: "Oh, we'll go start our own session, we don't need this guy anymore." I've seen a lot of that. But the whole of sessions is just to get together in a big community. Instead of having little...we'll have our session here in the Old Orchard, we'll have our session here at McLean's, and we'll have this one in Hurley's at night. In Belfast, here's a session in the afternoon, Kelly's. Then you go to Madden's that night. You know what I mean?

JTF: There's almost kind of a circuit.

AM: Yeah something like a circuit.

JTF: So, not that long ago, just a few years ago if memory serves, you won an award. The Liam Daly Heritage Award.

AM: Oh that's up on the wall there.

JTF: Yeah, so it is. My goodness.

AM: It's scary, it looks like something you'd put on a gravestone *chuckles*

JTF: I hadn't thought of it, but you're right, it kind of does. How did you first find out you were being granted that award?

AM: Somebody got a hold of me. Somebody called up, they must have been asking: "How do you get a hold of this fella?" I think they might have called one of the Irish pubs, get my number. And this guy, "Ok yeah, you've won the award." I said: "What for?"

JTF: So the pub called you?

AM: I think somebody called the Irish pubs where I play, and got the phone number from one of the managers. "Look for this guy, he's got this award." And then I got contacted by this guy. He said: "You won an award." I said: "What for?" He says: "You're..." What was it? You're...It even says it there...

JTF: I'll get up and read it. Uh. Liam Daly, a native son of Dublin, Ireland...

AM: I remember meeting him here.

JTF: You've met him?

AM: Yeah, because he had a TV show here.

JTF: That's right.

AM: He had a TV show on pay-per-view TV or whatever it was. A local channel. I met him here a couple times. He did some stuff on the radio. But he passed on. *reading* Liam Daly Heritage Award for my contribution to Irish culture *chuckles* My contribution to Irish culture in Montreal.

JTF: Yeah. How did you feel when you learned you were receiving this award?

AM: Well actually, is there any cash in it? *chuckles*

JTF: *chuckles*

AM: A backhand, get an envelope.

JTF: *chuckles*

AM: Oh no. We played, remember, one of the things.

JTF: Yeah for the UIS, I remember.

AM: We went down, they said "Could you bring your guitar?"

JTF: I think it was you, me, and Diane.

AM: That's right.

JTF: Yeah I remember that.

AM: That was part of this. Because we got invited to all these lunches and functions. Well the funny thing was, they wouldn't hire us for any of their gigs. I was kind of pissed off with that.

JTF: The UIS granted you this award those years ago. Have you gotten much work through the established Irish societies? The UIS, Saint Patrick's Society...

AM: Zero, nothing at all. And anything we did do is before I even got the award. We did it as like a little gift to them, you know. It's like, "Ok, we'll play one set for you." But the only thing was there was no money in it. They give you a bottle of beer and you had to get the bus all the way back home from Lasalle, you know. They don't have any money, they're a charity. But your plates for dinner are, like, two hundred dollars a plate. You could slide us a bit of cash, you know. We're working musicians.

AM: That guy who threatened to cut the money, saying there's other people doing it for free, I said: "You know, we have a band. It's actually with your establishment, we have our gear, you know, we can bring our gear and plug in. It's not just session music we do." And I said: "You know this because your pub endorsed my CD."

JTF: *All That Glitters?*

AM: Yeah. Because I went down to the pubs to ask for a bit of cash to help me pay for it. Because it costs three grand to produce, you know. Yeah, so I went around. I said: "Look, I'm trying to produce a CD. Could you please help, give it a little bit of money?" I went to the Irish pubs, I went to McLeans's, they gave me a bit of cash. Who else, Moosehead beer gave me some money. When I went to Hurley, they were saying: "What's this?" I said: "I'm doing a CD." They said: "What do you want?" I said: "A bit of cash." I said: "All the pubs are on board. McLean's and McKibbins." "Oh yeah? Ok. I'll give you a couple hundred bucks." So I went back to McKibbins and said: "Could I collect that money from you?" He says: "How much did I say I'd give you?" I said: "I think you said two hundred." He says: "No, I said a hundred." I said: "Oh well, that's bad. Bill Hurley gave me two fifty." He says: "Bill Hurley? His logo's on it?" I said: "Well, yeah. All your logos are gonna be on the CD." "I'll give you four hundred if you make my logo bigger than his."

JTF: *chuckles*

AM: *chuckles* I was like, alright. Fair enough. So I got a bit of cash, right. And his logo's bigger. I said: "Ok, you're..." Whoever gives you more money gets the bigger logo.

JTF: Fair enough.

AM: There you go, fair. So when he heard other people were on it, "I won't give you a hundred, I'll give you three hundred more, four hundred to make my logo bigger than theirs."

JTF: So there really is that kind of rat race.

JTF: Has anything changed about the traditional music that's played here since you began playing it in this city?

AM: Not really, no. I don't really see it. Again, there's different factions. The Quebec folk music scene is more recognizable, it's bigger. There's an industry there, that are actually making CDs.

JTF: Yeah. Which makes sense because we're in Quebec.

AM: And the funny thing is, I'm sitting one night, they had the *chanson complainte*, and I'm sitting right beside Mr. Bottine Souriante himself, the big guy, you know. Yves Lambert. I'm sitting, this guy is like huge around the world, and I'm sitting here, singing one of my sad *complainte* songs, and this guy's saying: "Oh, that's nice." But I'm sitting with these guys, I'm your contemporary, I'm your equal. Come on, give us a bit of work,.

JTF: I'm guessing you haven't got many gigs on the Québécois side?

AM: Oh no. I did when Peter Senn was playing with me because he was connected.

JTF: Ok.

AM: But, once we finished our friendship that was it, I was out in the dirt.

AM: "You know don't *Tura Lura*?" It's written by vaudeville people. Nothing to do with Ireland. "What do you mean? It's Irish." "No, no no, no, no." "Well the stuff you play is not Irish." "This is the stuff I learned in Ireland. And even stuff I've written." "That's not Irish, is it?" "Well I'm from Ireland, I wrote it, so it must be."

JTF: And what's the biggest difference for you between Irish and North American Irish?

AM: Again it's this, there's this romantic idea of Ireland. There's this romantic idea of Ireland, all the little red-haired girls, the pure red-haired girls with freckles and the thatch cottages. *expletive* It's a modern country. A lot of people get this romantic attitude when their ancestors came over a couple of hundred years ago. Ireland changed, you know. We got away from all that. We've got gay marriage now, and stuff like that. People here are these old codgers who are harking back to the times of their parents and their grandparents who came over. Ireland is a complete modern country now.

JTF: And have you found a lot of people in the music scene subscribe to that kind of romanticized Irishness? What have you noticed?

AM: I don't know. Again there's different levels of the music. So I met a lot of these people who are sort of like, this guy called Yank, do you know Yank?

JTF: The name doesn't ring a bell, no.

AM: He's an English guy from northern England. He's not Irish, plays nice fiddle and stuff, but I remember him: "Us Irish musicians," I'm going: "Us Irish musicians, you're an Englishman. You're from England, man. Oh you mean, 'us people who play Irish music?'" There's a difference between "Us Irish musicians" and people who play that. That's another thing which I noticed. A lot of these English musicians who play Irish tunes, there are a few who play rebel music. You can't have Irish music without the influence of music from the rebel side of Ireland. Because this is all part of our culture, about the invader. Coming and taking our land away from us and that. So it's a big part of Irish culture to have rebel songs, rebel music, which you can't just ignore, you know what I mean. You can't just say: "No, no, I'm English, I don't sing these songs. It's anti-patriotic, with the Queen and all that." I say: "I'm sorry, but you can't have both." You know? It's all part of one parcel.

JTF: And on the other hand, so many people who play Irish music in Montreal aren't of Irish descent. You're one of the few people in my experience...you are of Irish descent and you still play this music actively.

AM: Yeah. And I said that on the CBC. I said: "I'm actually probably one of the only people from Ireland that actually plays this music." They asked: "Are you sure?" "Go. Go look! Go to the pubs. Go to all the pubs, the Irish pubs, and find anybody from Ireland who plays trad Irish music. From Ireland."

AM: There are roots. You hear some tunes. That's from...where's that from? That's from Eastern Europe, or whatever. Or Algeria. But there's always a connection that sounds Irish. And there's a professor in Galway, was it? Brian McMahon said: "The Celts came from the east, so there's an influence of this kind of music. It's like...minor chords and all this." He says: "If you hand a tune, an Irish tune to a guy from India who's a musician, he'll finish the tune...because it's so connected.

JTF: Ok.

AM: *chants* You listen to *sean-nós* singers in Ireland, they're very similar. And like I said, the way the tunes are structured. A lot of that stuff sounds very Eastern. Even in my language book, it's all talking about Indo-European cultures and languages. It's a book on learning how to speak Irish. But I'm reading like this, going "Indo-European cultures, of course." There's a link in language, there's a link in music, and cultures too. I mean...*bodhráns*...every culture has a frame drum. These Algerian guys were in the pub going "*gasp* we have that." I said: "Yeah, but you don't play it the way I do." *chuckles*

JTF: *chuckles*

AM: They're going like that there, I said: "Yeah. This is how you play it, it's a *bodhrán*, you know." And then I'm playing the *bodhrán* for Natives here, who look at me and say: "Wow!" It's kind of the way music can break all barriers.

JTF: It really can, and I think it will continue to do that in the years, centuries, millenia to come.

AM: Well I hope...another thing about music. This electronic stuff's getting in, and it's bugging me. It's not real music. There's no...there's no melody. It's just *simulates an electronic music beat* There's all this kind of crazy thumping, there's no melody. So I can't wait until all this electronic stuff stops. And we'll be getting hired again, because...acoustic instruments. A couple times I got called into pubs that didn't have music because they had no power. "Oh, you can't play your CD player? Oh...You can't play your MP3s? Oh, you want me to play a song on the guitar now? Ok."

JTF: Oh goodness. Well, I wish you the best of luck with all that, and thank you again for sharing your stories with me.

AM: Ah, no problem, Jérémy.

[END]

Interview with Richard Morgan

Jérémy Tétrault-Farber: Today is Wednesday June 28th, and I'm sitting here with Richard Morgan. Thanks for being here, Richard.

Richard Morgan: Is this radio? *laughs*

JTF: *laughs* It almost sounds like it doesn't it? Thank you for agreeing to meet with me to talk about Irish music. I've got a few questions for you about our own experience playing Irish traditional music both in Montreal and anywhere else you've played it. I guess. To begin, how were you first introduced to this kind of music?

RM: This kind of music? So we'll stretch the definition of Irish music just a little bit. My parents had been involved in the English country dance music scene since the 1970s. Possibly before that. That's where they met. So I grew up surrounded by dance music, dancing...and my dad played in a ceili band for English dancing, but the English music repertoire and English dance repertoire, it borrows from all sorts of different traditions. I suppose. So there's a lot of Irish jigs and reels that are used, or American jigs...American dances and Irish dances...*Waves of Tory* is a classic English dance, which is actually an Irish dance. So there you go. And I was dancing probably *Waves of Tory* when I was about three or four years old. And I started playing when I was five years old at school. I was able to pick up stuff that my dad was playing. So I've been playing most of my life. A mix of English, Irish, Scots. It's funny if I actually look at my repertoire, there's actually a lot of Scottish music in there as well. So that was kind of it...the whole basis of it. The English style is slightly different. When I went to university in Cambridge...not Cambridge University, but the polytechnic in Cambridge, I got involved in the English scene first. And there was a strong Irish community there as well. So I got involved and started going to the Irish dancing and then the Irish music sessions. And that's where the whole pure Irish stuff kicked off.

JTF: Pure Irish. *chuckles*

RM: *chuckles* The purer Irish. I suppose I'm more of an Irish musician these days, but like I said I play Irish, Scottish, Manx, Welsh, English, some Breton tunes...tunes and traditions from the British Isles and surrounding areas...it was a huge melting pot. Particularly when you move across the sea to the colonies, as it were. The New World. You find that all these communities kind of mix together, and there's even less separation than there is elsewhere.

JTF: You came over the colonies, so to speak....it was around 15 years ago you said?

RM: It was 2001. End of 2001. I visited at the beginning of 2001, and I came back and moved here permanently at the end of 2001. So sixteen years. Maybe seventeen. I kind of poked around the music scene at the time, but it was about three or four years before I really started coming back to the music at that point. I think I went to one session at...you know it's a long time ago and I didn't know where I was going but I think it was McKibbin's. But it wasn't Belfast Andi and the time I think it was Peter Senn running it then. And there was a lot more Francophone

stuff there, and I think it wasn't as welcoming as it was second time around. Maybe that was just me at the time being completely.

JTF: There are so many different factors involved there too.

RM: Well it's the whole dual language, dual culture melting pot. A lot of the strong Irish musicians in Montreal are actually Francophone and they have a strong Quebecois repertoire as well.

JTF: So you've been playing this music for most of your life. Why have you kept playing that music for as long as you have?

RM: This is a good question. In the past I've always looked for a purpose for what I'm doing. And I started off with the dancing. And for dancing you need strong musicians. Either that or you need decent records. It kind of progressed into the music. I kind of ditched the dancing along the way. I was more interested in the music side than that. When you're playing for dancing, it gives the music a purpose. You're there, sitting, you're playing for people to dance to. It gives a particular style as well when you're doing that. And then I kind of went into the performance side. I worked as a sound engineer for a long time. I still do stuff for some of the Celtic groups around here, because of my experience with the acoustic instruments. And again, the performance side, it gives a bit of a purpose. When I moved here I kind of lost that purpose. I didn't have anything else, and it was a couple years before I came back to it. I've been playing since the age of five and I was, what, 25, 26 or something like that. And it was a nice break, but coming back and actually playing, it drew me back. There was something there that I was missing. I don't know why, what it was that kept me going, but there was something pulling me back to the music, there was something that was part of my life, I guess. It was something my family did, I had already done. And now I try and play for fun. I try and find ways to challenge myself, so I'd like to do more performance work again. But for the most part it's something that I'd good at. So that's one reason to go, but there's still so much to learn about it as well. I mean I don't write my own tunes. I'm not a composer like a lot of people. Most people try to write their own traditional stuff. I don't do that. There's just so many out there. I could just sit there and learn new tunes for the rest of my life and I'll only scratch the surface.

JTF: *chuckles* Yeah.

RM: Keeps it fresh and interesting. I think I'm not the kind of person that plays a lot on my own. So I've got to have people that I can play with, and reasonably decent people, near enough to my level for it to keep it interesting. As long as I have those kind of friends around me, I'm always going to be interested in playing.

JTF: Actually that almost segways too perfectly into my next question. Why do you play Irish traditional music? You've already kind of touched on that.

RM: I've always done it, but it's fun, it's challenging, there's always something new to learn, there's always a new tune to learn. And there's something about sitting down and playing with other people that you don't get just playing the tunes on your own. It's very rare that I will sit down at home, and play something and go "Wow, that was fun, that was interesting." There's

that kind of buzz, adrenaline rush, or something that you get when everything's working. And when you're playing with a decent group of musicians and that everything's nice and tight. And it's sounding good as well, it's feeling good and there's a buzz to it. You know, you go to the sessions for those one or two moments when that happens.

JTF: *chuckles* Yeah. One or two session or one or two moments in a session?

RM: It depends which session and who you're playing with. I remember when that finally clicked for me. It was here in Montreal, playing at Belfast Andi's sessions with, was it, Philip De Berger?

JTF: Yeah. Recorder player.

RM: Recorder player. I mean he's good, he's tight. There was a time when I was going to the sessions regularly and the two of us, him on the recorder and me on the tin whistle, we had the tuning right and we were really tight together. The whole feeling, the whole sound was just...a different type, it was something different. And it took me a while to figure out what it was, you know, playing with good people, you can hit something different. And it feels good when that happens. So....I can't remember what the question was. *chuckles*

JTF: It was "Why do you play Irish traditional music"? And you kind of said it, that joy that you get from those few moments of pure awesomeness.

RM: I love the music, I listen to it all the time. I think when you've grown up listening to that sort of stuff...it's my music. And to be able to play something that sounds right, feels right and sounds like the stuff you've heard on CDs, or records, or tapes, or whatever...that's fun. There's that buzz...you get a buzz out of it.

JTF: This might not be a fair question, or even one that's easily answerable, but where have you played music in Montreal?

RM: Where do I play? I don't get to as many sessions as I'd like. I started off at McKibbin's with Belfast Andi, first up on Bishop then the one on Main Street as well. Sometimes Hurley's on Saturdays with Andi or Paul. The main one for me has been...since I started working downtown, it's the Wednesday nights, it's kind of convenient. I was going to Fiddler's Green when it was O'Regan's...not quite the initial group, but not far off it. Sometimes the slow session at Old Orchard. Apart from that I tried to go to Vice Versa a couple of times a few years ago. But I didn't know any of the repertoire. It was too noisy to be able to actually pick up the repertoire. So that's always been the thing. We had a similar sort of story at the Irish Embassy. We tried doing it there. The Saturday afternoons kind of worked, but the evenings there's just so many people talking loudly. You can't hear the person playing opposite you. So that kind of environment doesn't work unless you've got loud instruments, and a lot of loud instruments and a lot of people who know the repertoire already. I can't think where else I've played. I think there was a session at l'Escalier for a while. There was an Irish session. I think it's more a Quebecois session. That's on the Monday nights now. I've not tried that, not tried the new one. But I get the impression that it's students who like to play fast. That's what I've heard about that one. And outside of

Montreal there's Joliette. I've been up there a couple of times at the Albion. Those are the sessions I play in. In terms of bands I've played in a couple of places on St Paddy's Day...at Honey Martin's, and whatever, I've played at the Aquarium sometimes with Cats in the Kitchen.

JTF: You mentioned before your role as a sound engineer for ceilis and for different bands. Has that been mainly for ceilis or mainly for...I know you're been a sound engineer for other bands like Corsaire...

RM: The sound engineering started when I was a teenager playing for English dancing and English music. And I went to a couple of festivals...the sound was terrible. The sound engineers didn't know what to do with a dozen acoustic instruments. And we were kids, we didn't know what we were doing either. So it didn't help. My dad had a PA kit and I learned how that worked. And then I actually went to university and studied audio technology. I didn't finish the degree...Physics and audio technology. It was fun and interesting. While I was there I started working full-time, four or five nights a week at a blues bar. They had a stage and a big PA. That was mainly kind of blues rock stuff. It was owned by my Irish dance teacher, actually. So there was Irish music on Monday night, dance classes on Saturday afternoon. So there was the occasional Celtic group that would come through. And sometimes I'd get to do those. And I worked for local TV stations while...it was related to this place. We got more acoustic instruments coming through there. But I kind of learned the sound engineering trade there and then, when I moved here, I kind of stopped. I tried to get a job at Radio Canada, mais mon français n'était pas assez bon.

JTF: There you go.

RM: *chuckles*

JTF: There you go.

RM: I'll make a point of saying...*chuckles* Oh well. And that kind of worked out for me. But I kept my hand in with the sounds, working with Corsaire. I did the sound for a couple other Celtic groups over the years. And at the moment it's mainly the Siamsa *céilí* band. I love that the stories are the same. These Celtic groups have half a dozen or a dozen acoustic instruments. Sound engineers don't always know how to deal with these things. Since it's my music, I understand what the music is, I understand how the acoustic instruments work, and how they're supposed to sound naturally, if you're playing in sessions and playing with other people. It just means that I'm one step closer to actually getting a decent sound out of these things. There have been some groups that have appreciated the extra helping hand. If someone's looking for a bit of help with a PA, I'll lend a hand.

JTF: You've named a whole bunch of different sessions, most of them in pubs or bars. Are you playing in sessions in people's homes at all? Is that part of your experience?

RM: Robin Beech is the big one for organizing sessions at his place. Two sessions, two parties annually. A summer session and then there's Laurence's birthday, back on the 27th or 28th of December, or something like that. They're always quite good. There's a lot of musicians and a lot of diverse musical experience there for beginners. A lot of experienced players, Quebecois music, Irish music, even Breton. Laurence likes Irish and Scottish music, so we'll play Scottish music sometimes. I've been to a couple other places. This Porchfest a couple of years ago. For a couple years Janet hosted Porchfest at her place. So I played at that. I've been to a couple of others as well. I don't know their names though. People that have come through over the years, and they wanted to organize something, or they were doing something, and you go and play a few tunes. Sometimes it's a bit hit and miss, it depends on who's organizing it. You don't get so much of that downtown. You don't have the kitchen parties here.

JTF: Yeah. Or I guess if they do have it, they're probably friends inviting a bunch of other friends. And probably not that well advertised online or anything like that.

RM: No. It's usually more friends of friends. And I guess it works better if you're, particularly for the ones happening in Montreal, it certainly works better if you're actually in Montreal. You can just pick up your bags, hop on the metro and you're there in 10 minutes. I live on the South Shore. I've always lived on the South Shore. It's been a bit of a barrier to getting into these things sometimes. Cats in the Kitchen did a gig a few years ago for Patti McCurdy. At her place. Irish party. So we played, and then we had a session afterwards. People would come to the birthday party and play. So, there was a big sessions afterwards.

RM: I hear of the traditional kitchen parties of the East Coast music scene. I believe that sort of thing still happens. I don't say I come across anything like that, but I hear the stories and it rings a bell with some of the older stuff that I've heard. This kind of kitchen party was the traditional way it was done in Ireland. The traditional way it was done in England as well. Since the Folk Revival, it's become a bit more commercialized. And you end up being entertainment. So, a bit more professionalized, a bit more commercialized than the traditional "let's get a very few friends together and do something on a Saturday evening." So I'd be interested to talk to some people from the East Coast who apparently still do this sort of thing. How it works over there. Maybe they don't have Facebook there I don't know *laughs*

JTF: *laughs* Slowly. It's made its way to New Brunswick by now, I think. You mentioned that Folk Revival. Have you noticed a change since you began playing Irish traditional music. What impact do you think that revival has had?

RM: Well, what I understand of it is, I'm second-generation. My parents were part of the Folk Revival in Britain, so I'm kind of, first-generation folky. Or second-generation folky, or whatever you want to call it. For me it's traditional, because it's always happened. For them, there was kind of a period when it didn't happen. They were part of bringing it back and making it popular. Around Montreal, I haven't noticed that much, but having looking back at what's happening in Europe. I know I missed out on something huge just after I left. There's something I was kind of feeling when I was in Cambridge, because I'd always found it was played...and the

university societies that were related to traditional dancing, traditional music, Scottish, I mean, there were tons of students coming in or learning about it who'd never done it before, getting involved and getting really enthusiastic and carrying it on and spreading the word, and bringing more people in. That went for the English societies, the Scottish dance, music societies, the Irish groups. And the time I left, 2001, it felt like there was something brewing. And apparently the middle of 2005 onwards was a huge expansion of traditional music, much of it driven by these students who had discovered it....grown up, had kids, their kids got old enough to start getting involved, sort of the way I had been. And I know it's bigger now there than it was when I was there. And so that's changed in the last 15 years since I've been here. And I feel like I missed out on something. I've watched it from a distance, but I'm wondering whether something similar will happen here, and we just haven't hit it yet. You know, we see a lot of youngsters come through here and play in sessions. They're at university, they're learning stuff. Learning music, some of them are studying music. And they're getting involved in this sort of thing. That's the next generation. These are the ones who will generate the next generation, if you can keep them involved in this sort of thing. I'm too far out of it, maybe I'm just getting old...I don't see the same thing here. I may be wrong, maybe I'm just not looking. But at least I've not seen any.

JTF: The impression I've gotten is that there's more younger people going through the Quebecois scene. And then maybe some of them transfer over into a little bit of the Irish scene. But I've been removed from it a little bit too.

RM: My gut feeling is that it will happen in the Quebec music scene. Because we're in Quebec. And quite honestly it's stronger, it has more people involved in it, here in Montreal than the Irish music. So maybe that explosion will happen within a few years, ten years, or whatever on the Quebec side. But it would be good for the Irish music scene as well. Because we have so much in common. The tunes, the same format. For the same purposes, for dancing. Our modern stuff is for listening, too. And it's not that different. If you can learn to play Quebec tunes, you can learn to play Irish tunes, there's not a huge difference. I would be interested to see what happens in the next ten years. I reckon it's probably around the ten-year mark, you've already got the supergroups. We have the Bottine Souriante. Then you've got the Vent du Nord...what's the other one I'm forgetting, De Temps Antan. You've got these supergroups that are featured on TV. That that play regularly, you hear them. You can find them on Youtube and whatever else. So, it's there, there's a kind of core there. We'll have to see where it goes after that. We've got to keep people interested.

JTF: Yeah, that's always been a concern. Different collectors, especially in the past, who collected the music and transcribed it, fearing it would die out.

RM: Yeah.

JTF: And those collections ended up bringing it back to life. Or not, as the case might be.

RM: Yes, I've got a lot to say about that.

JTF: Oh yeah?

RM: The collectors have done a superb job finding and publishing. There is a danger that I see often. It's is that people will come into the traditional scene, that we will have the collector's reference works and say: "Ok, this is how it's done. This is what the collector said was done, this is the traditional way of doing it, this is the Clare style of playing." When in reality, you've got to remember that what the collector saw was a snapshot. It was one day with a tape recorder, recording that tune, one guy playing that tune. Maybe the fiddler was having an off day. A lot of those accidentals weren't supposed to be there.

JTF: *laughs*

RM: But you know it was one take, one recording, and that's what was written down. So being someone who grew up in...I just play this stuff instinctively, I know how it should feel. Having played English and Irish, I know what the differences are, and I can see how it's changing as time progresses and different people play. When someone comes in and says: "That's how the Clare flute style is, you should be playing it like this, you should be playing this," I'll nod politely and ignore them completely.

JTF: *chuckles*

RM: There are scholars and there are musicians. For me there are scholars and musicians, and musicians will know that it's not the reason you play it that way. That's not the ultimate exact way to play, it's not set in stone. So the collectors for me, they did a good job in a time when you didn't have ABC programs to typeset your music straight off, they introduced all sorts of errors that way. There weren't tape recorders, there weren't videotapes, there wasn't Youtube. There was just one guy with a pen and paper, maybe a bit later they had recording devices. They'd go around collecting these things. For something that was dying out. On my part I think probably two World Wars, particularly in Europe, accelerated that dying out. Because a lot of the people willing to continue these traditions didn't come home. So that kind of accelerated that, and people went around and recorded this and said: "This is what's happening." It's a useful source. One of the sources that I like, that I find interesting, is a group going around stately homes in the British Isles, and looking at private collections. Private manuscripts that, some of them date back two or three hundred years. The lord would have his musician who would play for him, and maybe the musician would wander about the estate and various other towns and would pick up tunes and they would keep a manuscript of what tunes they knew, what they played. And so there's a group online that's transcribing these into ABC, so they're making them available online. And you can go find, look at the manuscripts for the ABC of these things, and you're finding tunes that are still played today. But older versions of them. From two hundred years ago. There's a manuscript I looked at that's two hundred years old and it's got *The Jig of Slurs* in that. It's got a couple other tunes we play at the sessions. It's not quite the same, I think there's an extra part...Interesting. But when you come across those sort of things, it's kind of fun. At the same time, you've got to take that music and interpret it for yourself, play it in a modern way otherwise it's...Anyway, traditions evolve. But it's interesting to have that nice snapshot.

JTF: Yeah that snapshot can be useful. But yeah, I know what you mean. I'll ask you now to rank these three words in order of importance to you.

RM: Ok.

JTF: The order is as follows: “Irish,” “Traditional,” and “Music.”

RM: For me, reverse order. “Music,” “Traditiona,” “Irish.”

JTF: “Music” first, the other two second?

RM: “Music,” then “Traditional,” then “Irish.” Because I’m not great at playing other music, but I love music in general. I’m quite happy to listen to blues, rock, jazz, whatever. I listen to a wide range of stuff. And if I could play some of the other stuff I probably would but I’ve never got into...I’ve never got my head around the 12-bar blues.

JTF: *laughs*

RM: Four bars extra screw me over. Traditional. That’s what I know best. But the reason I put traditional before Irish is because I play English, Scottish, everything. I started off with English. Irish is probably more important to me now than English. But I kind of lump traditional...the Celtic traditional music that all has the same form anyway, I kind of lump it all together. I try not to make a distinction. And if you were gonna be picky, a lot of the tunes that we play in the Irish session on Wednesday evening are not Irish. A lot of them are Scottish. And a lot of the new ones that we play, the modern things like *Superfly*, they’re written by Scots. They’re played by Scottish groups. They’re written by Scotsmen. But are they traditional Scottish? At this point there’s very little difference between traditional...between modern Scottish traditional tunes and modern Irish traditional tunes. There’s so much crossover between musicians there...maybe someone who was very...knew the music intimately, would be able to say: “Ok, that particular kind of raising tweak twiddle there is typically Scottish.” *chuckles*

JTF: *chuckles*

RM: Most of us can’t tell, most of us don’t care either.

RM: I was watching a Youtube video today of Le Vent du Nord. And they were playing at Celtic Connections, in Scotland isn’t it?

JTF: Yeah I think so.

RM: They got a bunch...they’ve got Julie Fowlis singing. Which was interesting. A female voice with Le Vent du Nord was interesting, but there was also her playing her penny whistle in it. And it just...It’s probably Irish, Scottish. She’s Scottish. The penny whistle is supposedly Irish. Playing Quebecois tunes.

JTF: There you go.

RM: Mix and match.

JTF: Mix and match.

RM: That's what's happening now.

JTF: And in all of this great big mix, what does it mean to play this music? Be it Irish traditional or traditional more broadly speaking.

RM: What does it mean?

JTF: Is it for your pleasure, for instance? Or is it part of something bigger? How do you view that?

RM: It's a social thing. And that goes back to its roots really. It was always a social thing. You know, you and your neighbours in the barn, kitchen, having a bit of a knee-ups. It was a social thing back then. And for me, it's still a social thing. It's my night out. *laughs*

JTF: *laughs*

RM: It's my night out during the week. That's a lot of what it is. And it's having a bit of fun with friends. That's what it means.

JTF: If it's fun with friends, the fact that music binds these friends together, does that make these friends closer than if they were non-musical friends?

RM: I think friendship is defined by what you do together. So, I mean, I've got friends I play badminton with. It's badminton that binds us together. We don't have much else in common. I've had friends that I've programmed with, or that I've worked with as a sound engineer, or whatever. And I've got friends that I play music with. What makes them friends is what we've got in common. So I don't think the musical friends are any closer...well...most of my friends are musical friends, because that's what I do most of the time. So probably my closer friends are musical friends, but that's only because I don't do much else these days. But I don't think the music automatically means there's a closer bond there. It's doing something together that we all enjoy. Friendship is all about communication. Communication channels. Whether it's something you're doing, something you can talk about, whatever. And the music is just a form of communication.

JTF: Now, you were saying before that in the next ten years or so, Quebec might hit its big revival. I guess in the lead-up to that revival...Since you've been here since 2001 or so, how much do you think the music in Montreal and the performance settings and all that, have they changed a lot since you started seeing it in Montreal?

RM: Has it changed a lot? I mean I started off in the sessions, then I started playing, and working with Corsaire and Cats in the Kitchen, and doing things and taking it up a level. And that's kind of been put on the back burner...we've grown up, moved on. And I've come back to the music

scene. The session scene. And I suppose the sessions have changed. There are more Irish sessions that I'm aware of. I got the impression when I started at O'Regan's, it was a lot of the Siamsa students that wanted to go and play. Siamsa didn't have its own session at that time. So there was a lot of beginners there. And there's just been a growing number of Siamsa students over the past 10 - 15 years. So there was only like half a dozen or so of them at O'Regan's when I started. Probably me and Robin squeezed them out a little bit by being too good, playing too quickly. But now they've got their slow session now, they have on the Saturday, and although I'm not a huge fan of playing tunes too slowly...I come from a dancing background you've got to play fast enough for the dancing, that's the whole point. That was the original point. Nowadays you also need to be fast enough to sound interesting. And sometimes I find, if you play slowly you lose a lot of the character of the tunes. But the slow session is really popular and it's really popular for people that are actually just getting into this thing. And so it's a really great place to learn, get a repertoire together. Particularly...I guess it was over the winter, time is flying by. There was a lot of music students that were going. And they were all very good musicians, but didn't have a repertoire. So they were sitting and learning the tunes at the slow session.

JTF: So were they all different universities?

RM: I was only there a few times, but I got the impression they were music students at McGill. A whole bunch of them came along. I'm not entirely sure how or why they got involved in this...they were all good musicians in their own right. And when I talked to some of them they were learning stuff, but the list of tunes they had were not easy tunes. *Hounds on the Heath* is the one that sticks in my mind. Because that is just diabolical. A piper tune. It's designed to fit on the Scottish bagpipes, so you should find it easy. *chuckles*

JTF: *chuckles* we'll have to find out. *chuckles*

RM: There's no place to breathe. It's a typical piper tune.

JTF: Yeah it is...*chuckles*

RM: All quarter notes and no place to breathe. *laughs*

JTF: *laughs* Yeah that sounds about right.

RM: It's diabolical, I can't play the thing. I keep looking at it and going: "No, this makes no sense."

JTF: *laughs*

RM: Yeah, these tunes were on their list to learn, it's like: "Ok who've you been listening to?" But yeah...to go back to what I was saying about training that group of people, a growing number of people that are playing it. There definitely seems to be a growing number of beginner or amateur musicians who are not particularly great at music, but are enthusiastic and enjoying themselves and doing it for social reasons. Again, the Saturday afternoon session is a big...it's a social event. It's the same as, in the old days, it says: "I'm talking about my past, going back to the

ceili or the English dance every week.” I used to go dancing every week. At your local dance club. Going to the Saturday session is the same thing. It’s not necessarily the best musicians, but it’s people that are going out and playing for fun and enjoying themselves. It’s a social event.

JTF: I have to say you’ve given me a whole lot to think about. So, unless there’s anything else you’d like to add...

RM: You’ve got enough material there, good.

JTF: I think so. So thank you very much.

RM: You’re welcome. It’s been interesting talking about it.

[END]

Interview with Philippe Murphy

Jérémy Tétrault-Farber: Alors nous sommes le mercredi 20 décembre, je suis ici avec Philippe Murphy, merci d'avoir répondu à mon invitation qu'on se parle un peu de la musique traditionnelle irlandaise à Montréal.

Philippe Murphy: I'm here against my will.

JTF: Look at the small print *chuckles*

PM: *chuckles*

JTF: Comment as-tu découvert cet univers là, de la musique traditionnelle irlandaise?

PM: Eh boy. Comment j'ai découvert ça... je pense que ça part, à la base de mon intention de faire la généalogie de la famille Murphy. J'ai commencé à poser des questions à mes parents, puis de me rendre compte que mes ancêtres étaient débarqués de l'Irlande pendant la Grande Famine, que les Murphy étaient à Montréal depuis 150 ans pis tout ça... Je ne sais pas, la musique ça faisait partie de la même...tsé, Murphy c'est pas un nom québécois. Puis je ne suis pas de culture québécoise tellement, c'est comme un espèce de void culturel. Je me suis rendu compte que j'avais pas de quoi me rattacher après mes racines. Faque ça a commencé en même temps que je commençais à jouer de la guitare. Faque j'ai appris des pub songs, les Dubliners, des affaires comme ça. Puis de fil en aiguille c'est comme...ah bien, il y a plus que juste ça. J'ai découvert, c'était dans un magasin de musique, un petit paquet Clarke avec un tin whistle cheap et un petit songbook dedans. C'est comme: "Ok, bien je suis capable de jouer de ça, c'est pas compliqué, il y a juste six trous, non je suis pas bon, je pense je vais avoir besoin de quelqu'un pour me montrer quoi faire."

JTF: C'est souvent les instruments les plus simples qui sont le plus compliqué. J'avais commencé à la trompette vu qu'il y avait juste trois pistons, je me disais ça serait pas trop pire.

PM: *laughs*

JTF: Ça, ça fait longtemps.

PM: Nope!

JTF: Mais tu parlais d'un void culturel. Parce que culturellement, j'imagine t'es québécois?

PM: Bien oui, à la base...je veux dire j'ai grandi en français. Oui, j'ai les références culturelles d'un Québécois francophone. Mais sinon...ma blonde dans ce temps là, quand j'avais 16, 18 ans, son père était nationaliste, drapeau du Québec, poster du référendum, puis tout ça. Chez nous ce n'était pas très très politique. On était pas vraiment...il n'y avait pas de culture traditionnelle, tout ça. Faque, dans ce sens là j'étais vraiment dans le generic.

JTF: Ok. Et c'est par après que t'as découvert les aspects plus traditionnels de cette culture musicale là?

PM: Ben déjà de savoir c'était quoi mes racines, savoir que j'étais...à la base, on est nés au Québec mais on est tous des fils et des filles d'immigrants, dans le fond, là, à moins d'être Amérindien. On a tous un bagage culturel ou un bagage, ne serait-ce que génétique, qui est différent. Quelqu'un qui arrive en première génération immigrant, c'est assez simple pour les deux ou trois premières générations après ça de garder ces identités là, pendant qu'il se métissent avec la culture québécoise. Mais eux autres, ça fait 150 ans que les Murphy sont à Montréal. En plus je n'étais pas connecté sur la communauté irlandaisien parce que mes grand-parents parlaient français à la maison, mes parents parlaient français à la maison. Faque j'avais aucun référent culturel à l'Irlande, ni du côté de ma mère, que c'est des Belges...À part de savoir que...j'ai trouvé un drapeau belge chez mon grand-père à un moment donné...Ok, ça doit vouloir dire quelque chose. Il n'y avait pas cette connection là immédiate après la culture de la famille, si tu veux.

JTF: Ok. Cette connection là, t'as fini par la construire en partie, j'imagine, par la musique?

PM: Ah beaucoup par la musique. Oui oui. Parce que la généalogie, c'était le fun, mais c'était un petit peu sec. Je veux dire, oui, t'apprends à connaître les noms des personnes qui sont venus avant toi. À moins vraiment de tripper généalogie là, ça ne te donne pas des histoires, c'est un petit peu impersonnel. Si t'as pas connu ces gens là, à moins d'avoir des objets qui leur appartenaient, ou d'avoir entendu des histoires qui sont passées de bouche à oreille, c'est un peu triste, là. Triste dans le sens qu'il n'y a pas pas grand chose à faire avec ça. Il y a la musique... malheureusement je pense que c'est, tsé, comme la parade de la Saint-Patrick, la réputation des Irlandais d'être des bagarreurs, des buveurs, m'a amené aux pub songs, au fighting, pas fighting mais...des chansons patriotiques...

JTF: Rebel songs?

PM: Rebel songs, merci. Puis de là, j'ai comme connu la musique traditionnelle.

JTF: Et depuis ce temps là t'as joué...tu disais que t'avais commencé avec un whistle Clarke avec un songbook dans le paquet. Tu joues de la flûte maintenant. Comment t'es passé du whistle à la flûte?

PM: J'ai essayé de commencer tout seul au whistle, puis je me suis rendu compte que je ne progressais pas, que je n'étais pas bon. Puis là j'ai découvert Siamsa. Après une ou deux sessions de cours, je me suis ramassé dans le groupe de Brad Hurley.

JTF: C'est vers quelle année à peu près?

PM: 2001, 2002. Dans ces années là, parce qu'en 2003 je suis allé en Irlande pour prendre des cours au Willie Clancy Summer School.

JTF: Wow.

PM: Ein hein.

JTF: Nice! Je suis jaloux.

PM: *laughs* Oui.

JTF: Wow!

PM: On en reparlera, mais c'est vraiment le party total, c'te place là. Mais ça veut dire que je devais jouer depuis au moins un an ou deux pour être un petit peu à l'aise pour prendre des cours ou avoir la motivation de pousser ça plus loin. Puis là, en tout cas, pour revenir à ta question, Brad a amené sa flûte dans un cours. Parce que j'imagine qu'il voulait nous montrer que, tsé, il n'y a pas juste le tin whistle, il y a des instruments qu'on soupçonne pas. Comme la première fois que j'ai vu une concertina, j'étais comme: "Wow! Mind blown!" Puis les pipes, c'est la même chose. Tsé, les premières fois que tu vois un piper irlandais, là, c'est comme...

JTF: Comment fait-il pour lutter avec cette pieuvre et ce cochon en même temps?

PM: Oui, c'est ça, exactement!

JTF: C'est quasiment ça.

PM: Faque c'est ça, Brad avait amené sa flûte pendant un cours, puis il en a joué un peu, puis là j'ai fait comme: "Wow, ok." Puis je pense, il a dit un commentaire à l'effet que...à venir jusque dans les années 70 avec Paddy Moloney et les Chieftains, le tin whistle est pas considéré comme un instrument sérieux, que les musiciens sérieux jouaient de la flûte. Je fais comme: "Moi je suis un musicien sérieux!" *laughs*

JTF: *laughs* Ah ben oui!

PM: Faque c'est un petit peu de ça, plus le fait que c'était comme une révélation. C'est tellement...quand t'entends un instrument pour la première fois là, puis ça te rentre dans la peau. C'est fantastique.

JTF: Puis ces cours là, c'était avec Siamsa?

PM: Ouais. Dans le temps qu'on était à Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, à Wesley Church. Way back when.

JTF: Ouais, parce que les cours ont quand même changé de lieu beaucoup.

PM: Une fois.

JTF: Une seule fois?

PM: On est parti de Wesley Church, puis on s'en allait à Marianopolis.

JTF: Ah ouais, ok. Je pensais que ça avait sauté plus que ça.

PM: Bien au début ça se faisait dans les cuisines, puis dans les maisons des gens, parce que Siamsa ça a commencé plus informel, comme un regroupement de gens qui cherchaient à attirer des professeurs pour donner des cours. C'est des gens qui cherchaient des ressources pour apprendre la musique irlandaise, à la base. Puis tranquillement pas vite, ça a commencé vraiment dans la cuisine chez quelqu'un. Puis, à un moment donné, tsé...naturellement ça a évolué. Les premières années c'était ça. Mais je n'ai pas connu cette période là. Mais je veux dire, je connais assez de monde qui m'en ont parlé.

JTF: C'est ça, ça a l'air d'être vraiment *le* groupe, ou l'organisme de musique traditionnelle irlandaise à Montréal.

PM: Ah pour la musique, ouais. Même...le plus important, ou le seul?

JTF: Ouais c'est ça, c'est une très bonne question. Je sais qu'il y avait eu un groupe de Comhaltas à Montréal. J'avais connu des gens qui en ont fait partie, mais on dirait qu'ils faisaient très peu comparé à ce que Siamsa faisait. Mais c'est l'impression que j'avais à l'époque.

PM: Siamsa est né, c'est un mouvement réactionnaire contre Comhaltas.

JTF: Ok.

PM: Parce que Comhaltas dans les années 90 refusait d'organiser des cours de musique. Peut-être parce qu'il y avait déjà assez de choses, tsé, leur assiette était assez pleine, ou ils voyaient pas l'utilité ou quoi que ce soit. Aussi peut-être en réaction parce que Comhaltas c'est quand même très...j'allais dire protocolaire, mais c'est assez rigide comme organisation. Puis il faut envoyer de l'argent... toutes les organisations régionales doivent envoyer de l'argent à l'organisation nationale, qui elle envoie de l'argent en Irlande. Faque en terme de ressources, quand tu veux faire quelque chose de local...quand tu veux quelque chose à petite échelle, local et communautaire, Comhaltas c'est peut-être un peu rébarbatif, tsé. Une très grosse organisation.

JTF: C'est vrai que c'est énorme. Mais à la base Comhaltas, c'est un organisme de musique irlandaise qui n'organisait pas de cours de musique...

PM: Bien pas à Montréal en tout cas.

JTF: Ok ouais. Peut-être pas à Montréal.

PM: À Ottawa tu peux prendre des cours avec Comhaltas.

JTF: Ah ok, ouais.

PM: Tu peux en prendre ailleurs. Aux États-Unis...mais pour une raison qui m'échappe les fondateurs de Siamsa ont décidé de se dissocier de ça.

JTF: Ok. Ça c'est une partie de l'histoire de la musique à Montréal que je connais très peu, vu que j'ai commencé à jouer un peu après toi, si t'as commencé en 2001, 2002...je pense peut-être 2003, 2004 dans ce coin là.

PM: Un peu après. À ce niveau c'est sûr que Steve Jones en connaît un méchant bout sur ces années là, parce que lui est là depuis les années 80, au Québec.

JTF: Ouais.

PM: Puis il est resté ami avec Brendan Walsh. Puis comment qu'elle s'appelle sa conjointe? En tout cas, les Walsh, qui eux-autres ont parti Siamsa au départ, qui étaient comme le moteur...

JTF: Je vais en parler avec lui, il faut que je lui parle à un moment donné.

PM: Ouais.

JTF: Alors donc là t'as commencé en 2001, 2002, à jouer de la musique. Qu'est-ce qui a fait en sorte que t'aies continué à en jouer jusqu'à maintenant?

PM: As-tu vu le McGill mini-music de Sean Ferguson?

JTF: Je pense que j'ai vu passer quelque chose là-dessus.

PM: L'année passée, pour la fin de semaine mini-music, il a fait un talk qui s'appelait "Irish Group Therapy." Pis je pense que c'est ça qui est la beauté de la musique irlandaise. C'est que c'est de la musique de communauté...à la base t'as le plaisir de jouer d'un instrument. Si t'as pas le plaisir de jouer d'un instrument, t'auras pas de plaisir de jouer avec d'autres personnes. Mais à partir du moment où est-ce que tu t'embarques dans les sessions, puis tout ça, c'est le partage de la musique, cette espèce de rush d'adrénaline quand tu joues un set avec d'autres personnes là, puis là tu sens le...c'est comme intangible, mais il y a quelque chose qui se passe...ça se met à fonctionner. Le beat est bon, puis t'as du plaisir, et tout ça...c'est très "addictive" comme feeling. Puis c'est très bon pour la santé mentale, c'est ça la blague de Sean. À peu près la même chose que les gens qui vont dans une chorale. Chanter en plus, parce que c'est très physique. Chanter et jouer d'un instrument de musique, c'est très physique, ça libère des endorphines. Mais aussi l'effet d'entraînement du groupe qui est très, très important. Partager un moment musical comme ça. Ça, ouais je pense que c'est ça a fait que, à la longue c'est motivant de poursuivre et de s'améliorer. Je dis souvent aux gens, tous ceux qui ont fait de la musique classique...je pense que Sophie aussi elle va pouvoir dire la même chose...jouer, pratiquer pour éventuellement jouer dans un orchestre où est-ce que tout est codifié et rigide, puis jouer dans une communauté, une affiliation "loose" avec des gens comme ça, où est-ce que t'apprends du répertoire...Le plaisir est directement proportionnel à l'effort que tu vas mettre à apprendre ton instrument et à apprendre du répertoire. Évidemment plus que t'en apprends, plus que tu rencontres des gens. Plus tu rencontres des gens, plus que t'as d'opportunités qui s'ouvrent à toi. Tu rencontres du monde fantastique, tu crées des nouvelles amitiés. C'est une belle communauté tout ça. En tout cas, c'est mon évaluation de pourquoi que ça fonctionne aussi bien, la musique

irlandaise. Même ceux qui jouent pas très bien, tu vas dans les slow sessions. Tsé il va y avoir 15 personnes qui vont se pointer, ils vont jouer lentement, ils vont jaser, c'est gens qui se seraient peut-être jamais rencontré. C'est des gens qui ont peut-être pas grand chose en commun, mais la musique les rapproche. Ça crée des liens instantanés.

JTF: Tu disais que la musique irlandaise fonctionne assez bien à Montréal en tant que "music scene." Est-ce que c'est très actif? Ou est-ce que c'est une niche un peu...

PM: La musique traditionnelle selon moi c'est une grosse niche, même pour les musiciens, même pour le répertoire traditionnel québécois. Tu penserais que les Québécois seraient fiers de leur culture, seraient fiers de leur répertoire traditionnel. Mais mon expérience c'est que tu fais jouer de la musique trad en plein milieu de l'été, puis des gens qui...mettons si je fais jouer de la musique dans mon bureau là, de la musique traditionnelle, peu importe que ce soit québécois, irlandais. Les gens vont rentrer dans mon bureau, ils vont faire comme: "Ah, de la musique du Jour de l'An."

JTF: *chuckles* Ouais.

PM: Sauf que c'est bon à l'année de la musique comme ça, c'est pas juste au Jour de l'An. Même si la Bottine Souriante chante à propos de la tourtière, puis du Réveillon, ça reste que c'est pas juste bon au Jour de l'An. Tsé, le même genre de personne qui aurait pas de problème à aller au Festival Nuits d'Afrique pour écouter, je sais pas moi, des Maliens jouer de la musique, puis chanter le répertoire traditionnel du Mali. Mais pour une raison quelconque leur demander d'écouter du trad québécois en dehors du temps des Fêtes, ou de trad irlandais en dehors de la Saint-Patrick, c'est comme, "does not compute."

JTF: Ok.

PM: Je trouve ça un petit peu...pourquoi est-ce qu'il y a pas de fierté à ça? Et en découle le fait que, bien, non c'est très difficile d'attirer des gros noms de la musique irlandaise c'est très difficile. On a eu nous autres, des gens...Seán Keane qui est passé...peut-être 150 personnes qui venues, tsé...les géants de la musique irlandaise, puis tu ramasses 100, 150 personnes.

JTF: Ou quasiment des poussières, on pourrait dire.

PM: Quasiment.

JTF: Ouais.

PM: Tsé je veux dire, Mémoire et Racines ça fonctionne bien, parce que c'est dans Lanaudière. Mais la Grande Rencontre ici à Montréal, ils sont pas obligés de fermer la Sainte-Catherine pour les installer avec des scènes extérieures, puis avec la Bottine Souriante qui joue devant 150 000 personnes.

JTF: Ouais ça marcherait à la Saint-Jean pour la Bottine Souriante, mais pas pour...

PM: Mais pas pour un festival. Si tu déconnectes la musique d'avec certaines périodes de l'année spécifiques, ça ne lève pas, on dirait.

JTF: Et justement, pourquoi tu joues de cette musique là à l'année longue? Parce qu'il faut pouvoir la jouer quand on veut.

PM: Ben parce que c'est de la musique, c'est du répertoire fantastique. C'est merveilleux comme musique, c'est tellement bon! C'est juste comme: "Aaahhhh!" C'est bon.

JTF: Bien oui. Puis autant qu'il y a, comme tu disais, des Québécois qui n'adoptent pas, entre guillemets, leur propre musique traditionnelle, autant qu'il y a aussi des Québécois qui adoptent autant le trad québécois que le trad irlandais, et qui en deviennent, je sais pas si on peut dire des ambassadeurs, mais...qui font de ces musiques là une grosse partie de leur vie.

PM: Ouais. Bien oui effectivement. C'est...ce que je réalise, puis surtout cette année...le Festival des Traditions du Monde de Drummondville. C'est fini là.

JTF: Ah ouais?

PM: C'était la dernière année, là.

JTF: Ah ouais? Je ne savais pas.

PM: Traditions du Monde de Drummondville...si c'est pas fini, c'est peut-être la dernière année, sur le bord de fermer boutique. Comment ça se fait qu'à peu près tous les pays dans le monde, puis toutes les régions dans le monde, ont leur troupe folklorique régionale, financée par le gouvernement...pas au Québec. On a-tu une troupe de folklore québécoise officielle?

JTF: Officielle? Je ne pense pas.

PM: Bien voilà.

JTF: Non-officielle on pourrait...j'ai entendu des histoires de Reel et Macadam d'il y a une couple d'années.

PM: Mais ça c'était pas officiel. Ça c'est des gens qui étaient dans Les Sortilèges, du temps que Les Sortilèges était la troupe officielle du Québec. Ça a été très très gros, Les Sortilèges. Mais c'est comme dire...pourquoi est-ce qu'on a les Grands Ballets Canadiens, mais on a pas une troupe de folklore canadienne? Ou une troupe de folklore québécoise? Parce qu'on s'entend la tradition canadienne, québécoise, c'est différent mais pas tant que ça. Ça devient la responsabilité de chaque personne qui aime la musique trad de devenir un ambassadeur, parce qu'on n'a pas aucun ambassadeur officiel, on n'a pas de troupe officielle, on n'a pas de programme officiel...chaque organisme musical est obligé de se débrouiller chacun de son bord pour essayer de survivre avec le peu d'argent qui est investi dans cette culture là.

JTF: Bien oui. Et justement ces sources de financement...je sais que Siamsa c'est un organisme qui est bénévole à la base, et qui paie les professeurs de musique.

PM: Ouais. Bien officiellement dans la constitution, les professeurs sont bénévoles aussi.

JTF: Ok.

PM: Mais on peut les payer.

JTF: Ok ouais.

PM: Mais ouais, ça reste que c'est tout géré par des bénévoles.

JTF: Dont toi, d'ailleurs. T'es le directeur de Siamsa depuis combien de temps?

PM: Mai 2017.

JTF: Yahoo!

PM: Ça fait six mois.

JTF: Six mois. All right!

PM: Puis l'organisme a pas explosé encore. Ou implosé.

JTF: On a le temps encore.

PM: On a le temps encore.

JTF: *chuckles* Bien non, bien non.

PM: Pas de mutinerie.

JTF: De ce que j'entends dire, les gens sont super contents avec toi comme capitaine, entre guillemets.

PM: Bien, c'est un petit peu le lot de tous les organismes à but non-lucratif. Quand il y a quelqu'un qui veut s'en charger, là, comme: "Tu veux t'en occuper, toi? Aaahhhh. Bravo vas-y!"

JTF: Je comprends absolument. C'est comment que tu t'es retrouvé dans cette position là, justement?

PM: J'avais pris des cours pendant plusieurs années. Je n'avais pas enseigné, mais je jouais du tin whistle pour le cours de *bodhrán* pour fournir la mélodie pour qu'ils puissent jouer sur quelque chose. Puis j'avais juste le goût de m'impliquer avec Siamsa, faque je suis devenu Member-at-Large, puis après ça, un couple d'années plus tard...t'as-tu connu Kelly Simons?

JTF: Je l'ai rencontrée brièvement je pense.

PM: Ok. Bien en tout cas elle, qui était trésorière, elle a débarqué. Faque j'ai pris son poste à elle...un concours de circonstances. Je ne pensais pas faire ça pendant sept ans de temps. Mais tsé, j'ai fait du scoutisme, j'ai fait plein d'affaires bénévolement, faque ça fait partie de ma vie de donner un petit peu de mon temps. C'est ça. On sait jamais dans quoi qu'on s'embarque, mais c'est comme le proverbial doigt dans le tordeur.

JTF: Ah!

PM: *chuckles*

JTF: Ouais. Il est "tough" à retirer ce doigt là, une fois qu'il est rentré.

PM: Il faut que t'aïlles jusqu'au bout du bras là, puis une fois que le bras est arraché, là tu peux dire: "Ok, c'est beau."

JTF: Laissez-moi mon moignon.

PM: Ouais c'est ça, j'ai fait ma part.

JTF: Donc tu joues du trad irlandais depuis longtemps. Plus j'y pense, plus je me dis t'as déjà un peu répondu à ma prochaine question. Pourquoi est-ce que tu joues de cette musique là?

PM: Parce que c'est beau. C'est beau, puis ça pogne aux trippes, puis ça vient chatouiller quelque chose de très profond dans l'être avec un E accent circonflexe majuscule.

JTF: *chuckles*

PM: Ça vient bousculer des sentiments très profonds. C'est comme...sans savoir que ça faisait partie de moi, j'ai comme l'impression que ça vient parler à qui je suis, profondément.

JTF: Mais au niveau des endroits à Montréal où on peut jouer...bon c'est certain qu'il y a certains pubs qui sont connus comme étant des lieux de musique. Et ce que je trouve cool de ces

lieux là, c'est que c'est des lieux qui ne sont pas typiquement rattachés à la culture irlandaise, qui finissent par le devenir. Je sais qu'il y a eu un show de Cats in the Kitchen il n'y a pas longtemps. Puis je sais que c'est pas du tout un groupe exclusivement irlandais, mais je trouve ça comique de devoir me rendre à un bar comme l'Aquarium pour entendre du trad irlandais. Dans ma tête il y a un petit "disconnect" qui se fait.

PM: Ouais. Un genre de bar de quartier sur l'avenue Masson. Il y avait eu une Saint-Patrick au Barouf avec Cats in the Kitchen sur Saint-Denis. Mais c'est ça. Encore là, quand vient le temps de célébrer la Saint-Patrick on dirait qu'il n'y a pas assez de musiciens irlandais pour faire toutes les gigs disponibles.

JTF: Il faudrait les cloner ou presque.

PM: Ouais, c'est ça exactement.

JTF: Il y a des musiciens d'ailleurs qui aimeraient ça pouvoir se cloner pour travailler une fin de semaine de l'année, puis être correct jusqu'à la prochaine Saint Pat.

PM: Ouais. Pendant une semaine, tu fais ton argent du mois au complet.

JTF: Quasiment, ouais.

PM: Ben ouais effectivement. Tsé, quand on parle de places où écouter de la musique irlandaise, le pub irlandais, c'est une dérive des clubs privés, des piping clubs, des music clubs. Tsé, à la base, les meilleures sessions, ou en tout cas les sessions où t'apprends le plus, où tu partages le plus, c'est dans le salon avec deux trois personnes, des gens intimes. Puis là tu joues des tounes. C'est ça qui est vraiment difficile. Garder ça, quand tu commences une session, un house session, de la garder en vie. De garder un momentum. Ou juste des fois la partir, tsé.

JTF: Effectivement. Mais t'en as déjà fait des house sessions chez toi?

PM: Ouais. C'était plus des partys du Jour de l'An slash session. Ce n'était pas des house sessions en tant que tel.

JTF: Ok. Mais effectivement c'est pas évident de démarrer un événement comme ça, puis de rendre ça régulier aussi. C'est vrai que c'est pas facile. Mais c'est sûr que c'est une sorte de session différente que des sessions, disons, commerciales.

PM: Complètement différent.

JTF: Je vais te nommer trois mots. Je vais te demander de les placer en ordre d'importance pour toi.

PM: Oh good!

JTF: Et évidemment il n'y a pas de bonne ou de mauvaise réponse, aucunement.

PM: *chuckles* il y a pas de bonne ou de mauvaise réponse, là tu donnes les trois réponses pis la...

JTF: Ah! Wrong.

PM: Jérémy fait non.

JTF: Wrong.

PM: *chuckles*

JTF: Go home, this is over.

PM: En premier je mettrais ça...

JTF: Oooh, ok.

PM: T'es-tu correct, as-tu des crampes? Non non, c'est juste...t'es-tu sûr que tu veux pas mettre ton nom, que ton nom soit retiré...?

JTF: *laughs*

PM: Ah peut-être.

JTF: Ah ouais, c'est ça.

PM: Non vas-y.

JTF: Les mots sont: "musique," "traditionnelle," "irlandaise." En ordre d'importance pour toi.

PM: Wow.

JTF: Je sais que c'est pas facile comme exercice. Que dirais-tu?

PM: Je pense que j'irais avec "tradition," "musicale," "irlandaise." C'est-à-dire qu'à la base, ce n'était pas comme ça au début. Au début c'était vraiment "Irlande," "musique," "tradition."

JTF: Quand t'as commencé à en jouer, c'est ça?

PM: Ouais. Parce que je cherchais mes racines irlandaises à travers la musique, puis j'ai découvert que c'était la musique traditionnelle. Tsé, des trucs qui étaient joués depuis...Mais là je pense que c'est le contraire. Là c'est en train de devenir la tradition, la musique, puis l'Irlande. Parce que j'ai réalisé, à force de jaser avec les gens, j'ai réalisé qu'on devient à un moment donné des passeurs de tradition. On apprend des sets de quelqu'un, on les intègre, puis on les repasse à quelqu'un d'autre. On est des passeurs de tradition. Il y a quelqu'un qui m'a appris à jouer de la flûte, moi j'apprends à quelqu'un à jouer de la flûte. S'il y a pas de passeurs de tradition, la tradition meurt parce que c'est une tradition orale. Oui, c'est écrit dans les livres, et c'est de plus en plus facile avec Internet...il y a de plus en plus de médias pour garder ça vivant, tsé. Mais à la base, si t'as pas un passeur de tradition, si t'as pas quelqu'un qui connaît les histoires, ...tsé, mettons telle toune, on la jouait tout le temps avec telle autre toune. Pourquoi? Ça c'est parce que dans le temps, Normand Pipon, il y a commencé ça, et on a joué ça pendant des années. Puis moi maintenant quand je joue ces deux tounes là ensemble, je pense à Normand. C'est devenu la tradition. Mais c'est ça. Faque tradition en premier. Musique en deuxième parce que j'aurais pu apprendre à danser. J'aurais pu apprendre à chanter. J'aurais pu apprendre à élever des moutons. J'aurais pu apprendre à...je sais pas...il y a sûrement plein d'autres traditions irlandaises. Moi c'est la musique qui m'a interpellé. Puis irlandaise parce que...c'est ça.

JTF: Tes origines.

PM: Pour la même raison qu'au départ elle était en premier. Mais irlandaise a pris moins d'importance. Parce que il y a la musique québécoise aussi, tsé, avec des gens comme Marjorie, qui...eux-autres venaient d'un bagage de musique plus québécois, ou qui était plus à cheval. Elle avait vraiment comme une culture québécoise bien enracinée. Elle était vraiment à cheval sur les deux traditions. Puis elle nous a amené à apprendre la musique traditionnelle québécoise. Faque c'est pour ça que irlandaise maintenant...oui j'aimerai toujours mieux la musique irlandaise. Mais apprendre la musique fait en sorte que tu peux sortir de ton carcan. Une bonne toune, c'est une bonne toune, peu importe qui c'est qui l'a composée.

JTF: Si on pense à Montréal, c'est sûr que c'est la métropole du Québec, c'est un gros centre qui rassemble. Je pense qu'il y a une majorité de Québécois qui finissent par passer par Montréal ou sinon y vivre à un moment donné de leur vie.

PM: Plus souvent qu'autrement mon expérience ça a été surtout au CEGEP et à l'université que les gens me demandaient d'où je venais. Je disais: "Je viens de Montréal." J'étais comme le seul dans ma gang. Tsé, il y avait du monde de Rimouski, Abitibi, Joliette, la Rive-Sud. Mais quelqu'un qui venait de Montréal, qui habitait à Montréal et qui étudiait à Montréal, c'était comme: "Ah bien t'es la minorité."

JTF: Puis je pense aussi que Montréal a peut-être ce rôle là au niveau de la musique irlandaise en Amérique du Nord. Comme centre à la fois d'attraction et de diffusion. Parce que je pense, entre autres, à Lúnasa. Mais je sais que c'est peut-être pas un bon exemple parce qu'ils font des concerts dans plein de petites villes aussi. Pas juste des grands centres urbains. Mais c'est sûr que Montréal attire des grands noms et des moins grands noms aussi de la musique.

PM: Oui, mais je ne pense pas qu'ils viennent pour la musique irlandaise.

JTF: Ok?

PM: Je pense à Cillian Vallely qui avait une blonde montréalaise. Faque lui il a passé bien du temps à Montréal. Faqu'il connaît très bien la ville. Mais je pense que s'il y a des musiciens étrangers qui viennent à Montréal, pour des musiciens traditionnels, oui ils vont jouer dans les sessions, ils vont continuer...mais ils veulent apprendre la musique locale. Puis c'est un petit peu la difficulté d'avoir une ville comme ça qui est tellement à cheval sur...il y a une grosse communauté anglophone. Puis une majorité francophone...mais ça reste que c'est la majorité l'emporte. Faque je ne suis pas sûr que ce soit une si grande plateforme de diffusion de la musique irlandaise.

JTF: Québécoise probablement plus.

PM: Ouais.

JTF: Plus j'y pense, il y a aussi la distance qui empêche pas les gens de se déplacer pour venir puiser dans cette musique là. Je pense entre autres à François Pellerin qui venait de Sherbrooke parfois pour des sessions à Montréal.

PM: Ouais ouais. Bien c'est sûr que t'as plus de monde au pied carré, faque t'as plus d'opportunités de faire des gigs, t'as plus d'opportunités de donner des cours de musique, t'as plus d'opportunités de croiser des étudiants étrangers qui sont ici, qui sont eux-mêmes des musiciens. T'as plusieurs grandes écoles de musique, faque c'est sûr que...puis Montréal est quand même devenue une ville universitaire. Par la force des choses oui, t'as plus de chances de croiser des bons musiciens. Si tu veux faire une session irlandaise à Québec, ça risque de virer moitié québécois, moitié irlandais. Puis les gens, il va falloir qu'ils viennent d'un petit peu partout pour

peupler cette session là, tandis qu'ici, à peu près tout le monde embarque dans le métro et ils se rencontrent au centre-ville, et voilà, t'as quinze personnes facilement là.

JTF: Ouais. Quinze ou vingt ou trente ou quarante parfois.

PM: *chuckles* Bien c'est ça. Je pense c'est juste une réalité d'une grande ville. Une grande ville, t'as une plus grande concentration...il y en juste plus de monde. Même si une personne sur mille joue de la musique irlandaise, bien dans un village de mille...

JTF: Et au niveau des gens qui jouent de cette musique là, est-ce que c'est souvent des gens qui ont des racines irlandaises eux-mêmes?

PM: Je vais juste faire le tour vite vite de mon groupe d'amis. Je veux dire Julien pas du tout. Sophie très peu *chuckles* Louis non plus. Gord il vient de la Saskatchewan, je ne sais pas s'il a des racines irlandaises. Possible, mais il a commencé plus dans le Canadian fiddling. Plus que la musique irlandaise à en proprement parler. Si tu regardes les gens de la session, Paul Legrand est français. Robin Beech est anglais, même chose pour Richard. Des anglais anglo-anglais. Rae Shepp, elle est scandinave. Moi quand j'ai commencé à aller aux sessions, il y avait Yolanta Kruk. Elle est hongroise ou polonaise, si je ne me trompe pas. Moi qui est un francophone, Murphy, je le porte parce que j'ai le nom de famille. Mais à venir jusqu'à vingt ans, je n'avais rien qui me prédisposait à jouer de la musique. Faque non, au contraire, je trouve que c'est une musique qui fédère beaucoup de gens de partout. Il y a quelque chose d'universel là dedans qui fait que les gens adhèrent à ça. Je pense que c'est en partie le phénomène de la communauté qui est très très forte, qui aide.

PM: On entend souvent que dans les années quarante, cinquante, il fallait quasiment, dans les grandes villes irlandaises, il fallait quasiment que tu te caches si tu avais un violon ou si t'avais un accordéon. Il fallait pas que le monde sache que tu jouais de la musique traditionnelle parce que c'est de la musique de paysan. C'était tourné en ridicule quasiment. Puis j'ai l'impression que cette mentalité là est restée dans les expats de la communauté irlandaise de Montréal. Je sais que j'ai beaucoup dit de mal du peu de fierté que les Québécois ont de leur musique traditionnelle mais j'ai l'impression que la communauté irlandaise a le même malaise avec leur propre tradition musicale.

JTF: Ouais. Malaise, ou manque d'égard, ou on appellera ça comme on veut, mais ouais. Le lien entre, mettons, Siamsa et certains des autres organismes, mettons UIS, ou la Saint Patrick's Society...Si je me souviens bien là...est-ce que Siamsa reçoit du financement de ces organismes là?

PM: Ouais. De la Saint Patrick's Society.

JTF: Et est-ce que ça représente une grosse partie du budget de Siamsa?

PM: C'est sûr que ça fluctue beaucoup, mais en général, ... si je devais donner un pourcentage, c'est peut-être cinq pour-cent du budget. Une grosse année c'est peut-être la moitié de ça. Une petite année c'est peut-être cinq ou sept pour-cent mais c'est... dans le fond c'est ce qui fait la différence entre perdre de l'argent, ou break-even à la fin de la session.

JTF: Ok quand même.

PM: Ouais.

JTF: Ça varie vraiment entre cinq et cinquante pour-cent? C'est...

PM: Non non, jamais cinquante pourcent. Non non non.

JTF: Faque c'est entre cinq et...

PM: Bien mettons une grosse année où on a vraiment beaucoup d'activités, puis beaucoup d'étudiants, c'est peut-être deux et demi pour-cent de notre budget.

JTF: Ok. Ah, la moitié de cinq.

PM: La moitié de cinq.

JTF: Ah, excuse-moi.

PM: Oui. La moitié de cinq.

JTF: Ok.

PM: Cinq pour-cent...ouais cinq pour-cent c'est un bon chiffre, je pense que c'est une bonne moyenne.

JTF: Quand même.

PM: C'est pas comme tu t'attendrais de certains organismes qui sont financés quasiment au trois-quarts par, soit le gouvernement ou soit... faque tsé, nous autres c'est vraiment une petite subvention annuelle pour dire qu'on est capable de... Grosso-modo c'est qu'on est capable de faire des activités sans se soucier que ce soit profitable pour l'école. Des ateliers où il y a juste trois personnes qui se pointent, puis qu'on perd de l'argent, bien tsé, tu peux t'en permettre deux ou trois dans l'année. Tu peux te permettre, mettons, le cours de harpe. Tu sais que t'auras jamais six personnes qui vont prendre des leçons de harpe à Siamsa. Mais ça peut te permettre d'assumer le salaire de ton professeur pendant une session. Tsé, ce genre de chose là.

JTF: Ah je comprends. Surtout dans un contexte où, comme tu l'as dit, ça prend des gens pour poursuivre cette tradition là, même si ce n'est pas rentable.

PM: Puis c'est pour ça qu'on est une OBNL aussi. Parce que ce ne sera jamais possible de rentabiliser ça. Je ne sais pas si c'est parce que c'est de la musique traditionnelle. Parce que les gens sont prêts à payer en cours privé soixante-quinze piastres de l'heure pour apprendre le piano d'un professeur qui a une réputation, ou quelqu'un qui sort de l'université va être facilement capable de charger cinquante piastres de l'heure pour apprendre le piano en cours privé. On dirait que les gens ne sont pas capables à se résoudre de dépenser cet argent là pour engager un professeur pour leur montrer à jouer de l'accordéon, mettons. C'est "juste" de la musique traditionnelle.

JTF: Ça ça me brise le coeur d'entendre ça, même si je comprends. C'est un peu comme ça du côté des cornemuses aussi.

PM: Bien c'est la même réalité. Puis d'un autre côté c'est correct, parce que c'est de la tradition orale. C'est de la musique traditionnelle, c'est fait pour... si t'es chanceux, tes parents jouent la musique, les voisins jouent la musique, puis tu grandis là-dedans. Puis quand t'es assez vieux pour tenir un instrument, tu commences à apprendre en écoutant... tsé, tu grandis avec ça. T'as pas besoin de personne pour te le montrer, ou t'es assez chanceux pour être capable de t'asseoir avec des musiciens de passage... mais c'est ça.

JTF: Ouais c'est vraiment ça. Mais depuis que tu joues de la musique irlandaise à Montréal, depuis le début des années 2000, est-ce que la musique ou les contextes où la musique se joue ou les gens qui jouent de la musique, est-ce que ça a changé beaucoup depuis les débuts?

PM: La vie ça change, faque les gens sont amenés à vivre ailleurs, ils sont amenés à dépenser leur temps libre à différentes choses. Moi je vais beaucoup moins dans les sessions parce que l'intérêt a passé à autre chose. Faque oui, les gens ça change, c'est la vie. Il y a comme un noyau dur de monde. Mais l'atmosphère des sessions... Montréal est reconnue pour avoir des sessions qui sont quand même assez relaxes, pas très strictes. Tsé... on va jouer à peu près n'importe quoi si ça swing. Je veux dire, on va jouer du Breton. Si quelqu'un décide pendant une accalmie de jouer un morceau de musique Cajun, tsé, on est tout le temps bien open pour ça. Puis c'est pas partout que tu peux tu permettre de faire ça. Il y a des places qui tu te ferais crucifier si tu commençais à jouer du Cajun.

JTF: Si t'es chanceux.

PM: Crucifier si t'es chanceux, ouais c'est ça.

JTF: *laughs*

PM: Si les gens sont cléments avec toi. Faque pour ça, ça n'a pas tellement changé. Les gens changent, les lieux changent, mais l'atmosphère reste sensiblement la même. Oui, c'est très ouvert, c'est très mixte, c'est très informel. Tu sais, il y a des places où il faut absolument qu'il y ait un leader, ou comme une hiérarchie... ça c'est des affaires qu'on enseigne aux étudiants, à Montréal sachez que nous autres on est pas mal free-form. C'est ça, c'est la caractéristique des sessions à Montréal. Ça, ça ne change pas.

JTF: Deux questions peut-être un peu difficiles. C'est peut-être pas évident d'y répondre mais je vais te les poser pareil.

PM: *chuckles*

JTF: Essaie de t'imaginer que Siamsa n'existe pas comme organisme.

PM: Ok.

JTF: Est-ce que la musique irlandaise à Montréal survivrait d'après toi? À Montréal.

PM: Wow. J'ose espérer que oui. Mais c'est sûr qu'avoir un organisme comme Siamsa, ça joue vraiment un rôle de catalyseur. Oui, ça va survivre parce qu'il va toujours avoir des gens qui vont vouloir sortir, jouer de la musique, puis tout ça...parce qu'à la longue, est-ce qu'il y aurait un renouvellement de ces gens là? Je suis moins sûr.

JTF: C'est ce que je me disais aussi, parce que l'impression que j'ai, c'est que si Siamsa assure ce roulement là, et justement offre des forums où des gens peuvent se rendre pis jouer de la musique autre que mettons dans les salons...le salon d'un ami ou des trucs comme ça. Donc c'est sûr ça serait difficile je pense de quantifier c'est quoi l'impact direct de Siamsa en terme d'étudiants qui ont pris des cours ou qui ont joué de la musique pendant cinq ans ou plus après. C'est quasiment impossible de le quantifier, mais on dirait que Siamsa a vraiment eu un gros impact à Montréal. Pour ce qui est de la musique irlandaise en tout cas.

PM: Oui effectivement. Ouais, parce que veut, veut pas, pour être capable de prendre assez d'expérience et d'assurance pour sortir de son petit cocon et aller se greffer à d'autres musiciens et jouer avec eux autres, ça prend une rampe de lancement, ça prend...comment dire...tu peux pas, à moins d'avoir vraiment beaucoup de guts. Ça prend une certaine forme d'encouragement, ça prend de l'expérience, ça prend des techniques, ça prend toutes sortes d'affaires comme ça. Puis c'est sûr que tout bon professeur veut que leurs étudiants deviennent autonomes, et se rendent éventuellement...c'est ce que j'aimerais que tous les étudiants soient capables de faire. Aller dans les sessions et jouer avec d'autres personnes. Parce qu'ultimement, c'est tellement important pour moi cette synergie là, cette communauté là, que je veux que les gens puissent vivre ça pour eux autres mêmes. Faque sans Siamsa, il va toujours y avoir des gens qui vont être intéressés. Mais vu que je fais de moins en moins, et qu'il y a des familles de musiciens de père en fils pis tout ça irlandais à Montréal...ça je ne le vois pas. Puis il y a tellement de monde de différents horizons, de différents backgrounds, qui se ramassent dans les sessions de Siamsa. C'est sûr que ça stagnerait, ça finirait par stagner.

JTF: Bien c'est clair à mes yeux, en tout cas, que Siamsa a joué un gros rôle à garder cette musique là bien en vie.

PM: Ouais.

JTF: It's thanks to you, man.

PM: Ah oui, c'est ça, moi j'étais pour dire...j'ai six mois derrière moi pour m'enorgueillir, mais sinon... *chuckles* ça fait au dessus de vingt-cinq ans que ça existe, faque je ne suis qu'une infime partie dans tout ça. Puis c'est vraiment un écosystème très très très chaotique et complexe. Il y a pas de règles...tu fais ce que tu veux.

JTF: Ah. Comme dans une session.

PM: Comme dans une session. Yahoo!

JTF: Bein merci beaucoup pour cet entretien.

PM: Eille, ça fait plaisir.

JTF: On se revoit bientôt dans une session.

PM: Session. Yahoo!

[END]

Interview with Rae Shepp

Jérémy Tétrault-Farber: Today is May 29th, 2017, I'm sitting here with Rae Shepp for a directed discussion on Irish music history in Quebec. So Rae thank you for agreeing to this interview.

Rae Shepp: You're welcome.

JTF: I really appreciate it. I guess we'll begin with a few questions and we'll see where the discussion goes from here. How were you first introduced to Irish traditional music?

RS: A friend that I'd known for quite a while, his roommate said one day "Do you want to go to a *céili*?" and I said "what's that?"

JTF: *laughs*

RS: And I went to the *céili*. And that's the first time I heard Irish traditional music. I'm pretty sure it was sometime around 1990, I'm guessing.

JTF: Ok. Around 1990, Where was the *céili*? Do you remember?

RS: It was at the Legion in NDG, with Siamsa. This person he played *bodhrán* and he had taken a class there. So that's how he was connected.

JTF: Ok. So I guess Siamsa was already around at that point.

RS: Yeah. Quite a long time ago. You can check on the website. I don't remember the exact dates.

JTF: So I guess you've been playing Irish traditional music from that time onwards.

RS: Pretty much.

JTF: And why have you kept playing it for as long as you have?

RS: Because it's fun! *laughs* I enjoy it. And also I think the social aspect is really really important. It was nice for me to get back to playing music, because I was in the band in high school. And I didn't really do anything with music for many years. So I guess that's one of the first things I enjoyed was that I was able to be involved in music in a different way. To get back to playing music.

JTF: What was different about Irish music that was different from high school? From the music you played in high school?

RS: It was less structured in a way. In high school we were playing from written music of course. Especially me, I wasn't playing the melody or anything. So I don't know. I guess it was a different experience, but I think the part that's the same was playing with other people. In high school we...certainly the first few years, we didn't have time for band so we're eating sandwiches and playing on our lunch breaks. *laughs* We did that the first two years. So we did our thing during lunchtime. But the social aspect was the biggest. Maybe that's it.

JTF: That kind of drew you back into it.

RS: Probably.

JTF: Why do you play Irish traditional music specifically? Why that?

RS: I think because I started with the dancing. And that first class I took was dancing. Then it just appealed to me, I guess, because it's dance music. Something about it appeals to me. Not sure what. I always liked folk music. When I was a teenager it was a big deal. It was a big deal of course, all the folk music at the time. So I think I've always liked folk music. And it's of course related to that. I think that's part of it too.

JTF: If you had to rank the following three terms I've written down here in the order that they're most important to you, tell me what that order would be and why. The terms are "Irish", "traditional", and "music".

RS: *laughs* I would say music one. Because music has always been important to me. All different kinds of music. Growing up, even, you know when we were kids, we heard music in our house. My parents were singers and musicians. I grew up hearing music all the time. So music. I think maybe "traditional" is more important than "Irish," in a way. Like I said, it's because I like a lot of different traditional music. Certainly now. Most of which I probably got exposed to from being exposed to Irish traditional music. The Breton music and the Scottish and the Quebec...It really came from that. Irish was first...and I think the Irish probably last...maybe because I'm not Irish, so I don't have that cultural aspect.

JTF: So you're not Irish. Music for you is the most important of that whole triumvirate, you could say. So for you, what does it mean to play this kind of music?

RS: I think it is a fun way to share something with other people. But also it's just enjoyable to listen to like even just playing at home. The tunes I really like, I enjoy playing them. I'm thinking of something...I think it was Gearóid who said one time...He told us one time: "You know, it's more important to just enjoy playing at home, you know, rather than the idea of having to go play with other people or be in a band." So it's more important to enjoy just doing it because you like it.

JTF: Of course.

RS: So I think that's part of it too. And like I said, there's a social aspect in there, making music with other people, the effect of it. And how it sounds. But I think also I enjoy just the sound of it.

JTF: You said it was a way of sharing something with other people when you're not at home alone playing it. What exactly do you share in those situations?

RS: I think creating something together. Creating a moment. The actual music. Or just the experience, but you're doing something together and being creative. Even though it was a set, maybe a set piece, when you're doing it, you're being creative because you're expressing the music and making it together. I think that's it.

JTF: You began playing the music around the 1990s...or right around the start of that decade. What has changed about that music since you began playing it?

RS: I think it was very popular around then because of the whole Riverdance thing, which, you know, really made people interested in that kind of music. And I think that's changed a lot. We see that with the pubs. Why they're not as popular as they used to be. Because all these pubs opened up and the music just, you know, isn't as popular for people to come listen to as it used to be. As in the heyday. I think that was the reason because we heard it on TV and we'd been, you know, it was a big phenomenon. Whereas I think now people don't come to listen. But I do believe there's more people that want to play. So I think that's the issue. That a lot of people want to be playing it, but people don't come and listen. Or very few. I'm sure you know that. A lot of people come to yell and scream, and they don't really want to hear the music. So they're not coming because they want to hear the music.

JTF: Yeah, that's an interesting paradox.

RS: Though some people do. I find there's more now...that people do want to come...than maybe five years ago. They come on purpose to listen to it. But I think that's the big change. It's not as popular in the wider culture, in popular culture.

JTF: Or if it is, it's in very specific circumstances, you mentioned Riverdance just earlier.

RS: Yeah.

JTF: You know, that's really interesting. I mean if more people seem to want to learn to play this music, I guess then they probably look elsewhere than their local pub for ways of being exposed to that music. My guess would be probably kind of Youtube, or other online videos

RS: Definitely nowadays. Always looking up stuff. You know, because it's a different culture than here. It's not like in Ireland, where people go in the pub, take their kids, first of all they're allowed to take their kids. There's that whole issue. And you know, it's a social thing, and it's normal for people to hear, certainly in parts of Ireland anyway, to hear this kind of music growing up. Just like I said, in our house you know, we had the Metropolitan opera on every Saturday. Again I never liked it until I was older and then I realized I probably absorbed it all as a kid and all of a sudden, I liked opera. I think here, because we don't have that tradition. That people even in the old Irish pubs in the earlier years... You know, if you were able to talk to some people

about that. Like the Hunter's Horn I know there were all these ones downtown. Maybe in the 60s, even. Or the 70s, I'm guessing. But these were the original ones and I'm sure in Griffintown you've probably lots of stuff like that, that maybe it was different. But nowadays, you know, people don't go to hang out in the pubs and I think that's why, as you know from your experience, and they play whatever kind of music they like. There's not really a space for it. So that's part of the change.

JTF: And I remember...just my own experience...seeing people come in and be surprised that there's live Irish music in an Irish pub. It was a bit of an odd situation. What kind of people, when you began playing Irish music, what kind of people were playing it?

RS: It's hard to say. I'd say mostly the people I knew because they were learning, or they were teachers or people that were around. Most of the people I saw at the beginning when I would go to the pubs were singers, I would say, than more instrumental. I think actually even before I was playing...only the first year...when I came back to Montreal, which was 1989, so that's why I know it's from that time. It was more that, yeah. The Old Dublin. And when Hurley's opened. So it was Charlie MacLeod and Brendan Nolan. These people. Jerry O'Neill on fiddle. These are the people I really heard at first, performing. But for sessions, I wasn't at sessions I don't think for quite a long time. I'm trying to remember the first one. It would have been at McKibbins, when it was in the back and when they were on Saturday night, I think. I think that's the first one I went to. It was suggested to me since I was just a beginner, by Deborah Johnson. That it would be safe for me to go there with my drum and...that was a good one to go to...to sort of be forgiven... *chuckles* For making mistakes or to be a beginner, so that's the first time I went to a session. So I don't know when that was. Early 90s sometime.

JTF: So you named some people...were they from Ireland?

RS: Charlie's from Cape Breton. And Brendan's from Ireland. I just saw him on Thursday. He's from Dublin. He lives in Florida now, but he was in Montreal for many years. Charlie was telling me that he was at the session a week ago Monday. He played with us, sang a song. When Hurley's opened he was there, and he played there for 14 years. Brendan for, I don't know how long, quite a long time too before they left Quebec. And he's been in Florida for many years. And Jerry finally retired, and he lives in Ontario. But he was a fiddler, he played with both of them for many years. He was quite well known. he was from...I forget where in Ireland. I think Derry I might be wrong. So these were the people I remember hearing a lot at the beginning. And there were other people of course like, Orealis with Kirk, and Chris, they're the ones I would have heard at the beginning. And then later when I was playing it would have been different. But I loved to go and hear them. It was mainly singers, and fiddle. With Jerry.

JTF: And when you were actually playing, there was maybe a few years between starting listening to the music and when you began playing it, I guess?

RS: Maybe a year. It wasn't that long.

JTF: Ok. And when you were playing a little bit more actively, was it similar types of people to the original singers and musicians?

RS: It's hard to remember. *laughs* it's long ago. Yeah, I think so. Certainly with Andi and Bob, and Patrick. So it was professional musicians. So I would be at some sessions with them, for a while. And then I can't remember what was going on...Probably school. But I know I was with them at the beginning and I was back with them later. I would say also yes for professional musicians from different places.

JTF: Ok, so there were professional musicians from when you first began getting interested. There were professional musicians already involved.

RS: Yeah. It was sessions and I would also go to hear them perform.

JTF: Ok. And they would do I guess a bit of both sessions and live performances I guess...

RS: Yes. Paul Legrand, yes. In the olden days. So that would have been at the very beginning when I started going to sessions and also then to go hear them. To see shows. And I kept going to the ceilis.

JTF: Yeah, those have been ongoing, I guess. I mean they're almost like the Saint Patrick's Day parade, no matter the weather, they will happen.

RS: *laughs* So far.

JTF: How are things now, as opposed to when you had either just begun or been involved in this music scene for a few years...how are things now compared to then, would you say?

RS: I think it's similar. I mean there's slow sessions going on. There's still people performing, but I find in the city there isn't much Irish music. There are some people that perform regularly, that are traditional musicians that have a regular gig in some of the pubs. But not that much. I find that the pubs are really just...all...rock n roll and noisy music *laughs* You know, good music but they don't hire bands. And I don't know if it's because the bands aren't there, or if they want to bring in crowds...Again, people don't come in to listen if they don't want to come in and listen to that kind of music. They're not going to. I don't know. That would be my guess. I think too a lot of people who are in bands have other jobs too. So there aren't as many full-time musicians working in this kind of music. There are some, as we know, we know some people who are...But maybe that's part of it too. People aren't wanting to spend, you know, not 10 o'clock at night until 3 in the morning two nights a week on the weekends, playing their regular thing when they have other jobs as well. I find a lot of people involved in Irish traditional music here in Montreal, in Quebec music, also have other jobs. So maybe that's part of the reason.

JTF: Very well could be. So do most people who play Irish music in Montreal play other styles as well? Or Quebec music? Or anything like that?

RS: I would think more and more. Certainly people that come to sessions. Yes. And I think that Quebec music is really taking off. They have a lot more sessions now that they used to, they have

several during the week. So a lot of people that come and play Irish music also go to those sessions. And there's a lot of Quebecois, young Quebecois people that are starting to play Irish music, I find, in the sessions. I'm meeting more all the time.

JTF: Yeah. And do they learn those Irish tunes in Quebecois sessions, or do they come to quote-unquote Irish sessions?

RS: My guess would be mainly from going to Irish sessions. It would depend who's there. Because I know in some of the Quebecois sessions they play Irish sets. So I guess they just all...as you know, it's the same tradition with the jigs and a lot of overlap. Certainly for jigs, especially. The reels are played differently. The emphasis and accents are different, but the jigs are very common. So that's a good point. It would be a good question to ask somebody who goes to the both a lot.

JTF: Do you go to Quebecois sessions?

RS: No, not really. I wouldn't mind to go and listen. I know some Quebec tunes, but I don't think I'd play fast enough to be able to do it. But I enjoy listening a lot to bands, but I don't go.

JTF: I've heard people say that sometimes an Irish session can stop being Irish because there's so many other tunes in the midst so to speak. Have you found that to be the case?

RS: I think I think it depends. I know that bothers some people. They say: "I want to play Irish music." But I think generally it's pretty accepted and people play a little bit of everything. I think as long as it's traditional music, most people in Montreal don't really have a problem with it. They just want to, you know, enjoy it and share the different stuff. Any sessions I've been to here, it's pretty much a little bit of a mix of everything. But I think it's important to have some Irish when you're playing in an Irish pub. It's good to have some Irish anything.

JTF: And where do people play Irish music? You mentioned sessions, you mentioned different venues for live performances, and also people just playing on their own in their homes...

RS: Or busking.

JTF: Or busking, that's true. So, where has this music been played all over the place?

RS: I would say all of those. Or sometimes people just go out and they're practicing outside. We have a few friends I know, they do it all the time. They go sit in the park and they work on tunes. That's Olivier and Marc-Antoine. They often do that. They provide a free show for the people in park, I guess *laughs*

JTF: And there was Porchfest, I think, just recently.

RS: Yes. Well, we were in that. We were playing in that.

JTF: How did that go?

RS: Ok. Yeah, it was pretty good. It was different this year, because we didn't have somebody's house. Because we played at Sharon and Sean's last year. Of course they don't have their house anymore. But Maria set it up where she works at the seniors' residence. So we played on the outside and it was nice, because some of the people were able to come outside and sit for a while before they had to be taken back inside, in the sunshine and listen to the music. The one lady sang. So it was kind of nice, it was pretty good. It was a pretty good turnout. Again, something different that nobody else was playing as part of the Porchfest. Nobody else was playing that kind of music at all.

JTF: So there was no other traditional music?

RS: No, I don't think so. In the programme, no...other than blues and some folk music. But nobody else was...this year...other than...no, that's not true, other than Jocelyne, who was doing her hurdy-gurdy. And that's really more medieval, the stuff she plays. She had her performance. Then she came and joined us after.

RS: I was hoping Monica might be there yesterday, because she usually goes to the Walk to the Stone, but she wasn't there. But I think she'll be around. I wanted to talk to her. But I don't know if she's going back to Ireland, or if she's had enough...it's hard. So even on Crescent. They just keep closing and...

JTF: Yeah. And reopening.

RS: If I can I'll talk to her, see what's happening.

JTF: Absolutely. And how was the Walk to the Stone?

RS: I didn't do the Walk. But a lot of the musicians did. There were definitely a couple hundred people this year. They had something in the news about it. And it's always interesting, because there's always lots of people to talk to. I mentioned Michael, but also there's a few other people I hadn't seen very often.

JTF: Yeah.

RS: I go around and chit-chat with them after.

JTF: I can understand why too...given the whole issue of the land...the whole control of the land...Hydro-Quebec.

RS: Which they're happy with, it's working out now.

JTF: Yeah.

RS: It looks like they seem happy about it. And Cormac I saw; he seemed happy about it, so it looks like things are working out. But it was definitely well attended. There were a lot of people. Coming back after, I'm sure there were a couple hundred people there.

JTF: You're not of Irish ancestry...

RS: No.

JTF: What is your ancestry?

RS: On my father's side, it's Austria. And on my mother's side, it's Sweden and Norway. So I always say I'm a Viking.

JTF: *laughs*

RS: That's my connection maybe. At some point, you know, there's probably some relation who came back...went back to Norway or something...So for some reason, Irish, maybe in there somewhere. *laughs*

JTF: Maybe somewhere.

RS: Maybe some generations ago. That's entirely possible, which is interesting because I'm interested now in hearing some of the Swedish music. And our friend Svante...When he was here, I know I asked about some of the tunes he had, because I was interested. And I did learn the polska. Because I'm kind of interested in that, in learning a little bit about that as well.

JTF: And do you feel that this kind of new interest for Swedish music is because of your own origins, or not at all?

RS: Yeah. Yeah, I think because of that.

JTF: It may be a little bit of a spark there.

RS: *laughs*

JTF: And I meant Svante...I've heard his name before, what does he play?

RS: Oh you haven't met him?

JTF: No. I know he was here...

RS: He's a fiddler.

JTF: Fiddler, ok. I'd heard the name, I've heard great things about his playing, but I never got the chance...

RS: I'll send you a link for him playing on Youtube.

JTF: Ok. If you could that'd be amazing.

RS: And I think...you see...Robin is going to Sweden, and I think Gabrielle...I think they're all going. It looks like this summer, so I think they're gonna go over and play. He recorded something at Robin's house. Anyway, he's a really, really, really good musician and a really nice person. Which I always like. *laughs* I like it when they're super good and not conceited about it, those are my favorite people. Musicians I like to listen to.

JTF: How do you think Irish music will look like in 10 years in Montreal?

RS: Oh boy. I would hope we'd still have the traditional sessions going on. And that that will still happen. I really don't know if it's gonna keep going. But then again, it has been going all these years. So there's been some sessions. I would hope that the ones that have been going on forever will still be happening. I don't know if there'll be more. But then again, like I said, there seem to be more and more Quebec sessions starting up all the time. So maybe the younger people are still interested. Maybe there will be newer Irish sessions starting, I don't know. But like I say, I would hope the ones that have been going forever...I can't believe how long Wednesday's been going. I can't believe it's been that long now. But also of course the ones at McKibbin's and Hurley's, you know' they've been going on even longer. I would expect there's enough interest, like I said, with people wanting to play, that those sessions would be able to keep going. In terms of more...I don't know, it's hard to say. You know people are so fickle. You know, like I said, everything was popular for a while, then nobody's interested. So I guess it depends in society, what people are interested in. If there's a resurgence at some point, and people wanted to play more folk music, then maybe that'll happen. But who knows, I don't know. I don't know if anything else will change.

JTF: In terms of the people playing music, we know they're of all different backgrounds, all different walks of life, professional musicians or not...you kind of hinted at earlier about conceited musicians. How much of a problem has that been in your experience in sessions?

RS: Not really that much. Honestly, no. It's been one or two people. Somebody from out of town I'm sure you can remember. You know who I'm talking about?

JTF: I think I have an idea. There's a few people that are annoying. But I find most people are pretty easy-going, and I find the sessions I've been to, I find that the session leaders are, you know, are friendly and are welcoming. I've never really had a bad experience in Montreal with, you know, people not welcoming people to play or saying: "You can't be here," or something.

RS: I find in all cases, I've never really noticed that people aren't nice. And they welcome new people to come in and join them. So I think that's a pretty good thing about Montreal with the sessions. I don't think people generally have a problem with that. And for the conceited thing, I can only think of that one person *laughs*

JTF: Yeah. I guess maybe if the rest of the people you know in this environment are so mellow and easy-going, the exceptions stand out that much more.

RS: Yeah. But I think too for sessions, people that come to a session if they know what it is. They come and they realize it's not all about them. So that's why I think you don't see that too

much, you know, because it's kind of the whole purpose. It's just about doing something together. It's not all about me and "look at me." So I think if it happens, like I said, you would notice it. So I don't think it's that prevalent. And like I said too, with professional musicians running it, same thing. You know, they don't make it all about them. They include everybody, they know it's a session. So I don't think that's a big issue.

JTF: I've maybe one more question for you. Do you see yourself continuing to play Irish music for many years to come?

RS: Yes. I have way too much to learn, as you know. I stopped having a list, because my list is too long. I remember I was talking to somebody about this, I remember when we first went to sessions we'd record everything. It was Emily I was talking to. You never have time to listen to it all. So I gave up doing that. Instead of trying to pick and maybe record a particular tune you really want to learn or find out the name. Because it just gets ridiculous. Like everyone else I have a giant list of tunes I want to learn, which I'll never do. I think part of it I will because I enjoy doing it on my own, and also I enjoy playing with other people. But also with, definitely with the concertina. There's so much more I want to learn; I started learning doing chords. There's so much more just for that instrument that I need to work on. So there's a lot of challenges I have beside learning the tunes. Playing them at the right speed. There's so much I have to work on with that, that I can't see stopping anytime. And then my other instruments of course, I also could be working on...

JTF: *chuckles*

RS: Though I still enjoy it. So I don't think...I hope in ten years I'm still playing. Even if it's just at home.

JTF: Of course. Excellent. Well, thank you so much for speaking about this.

RS: You're welcome. And you can come back to me if there's something else.

JTF: Much appreciated.

RS: If you need to ask more questions after talking to other people, there might be something you think of.

JTF: Maybe, yeah, I'll definitely be in touch if that's the case.

RS: Good. It's gonna be very interesting, eh?

JTF: Absolutely.

RS: Aren't you lucky you got to pick a topic like this? Something you're interested in.

JTF: I know.

[END]