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### **Reviving Scottish Fiddling: An Ethnographic Study of Scottish Fiddling Competitions in the United States**

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## Abstract

This paper examines the Scottish fiddling revival in America. Due to its rapid fusion into other fiddling styles, Scottish fiddling did not establish itself as a unique musical genre in the United States. One particular organization, titled “Scottish Fiddling Revival,” or “F.I.R.E.,” is largely responsible for the revival and has established all of the necessary elements within a revival framework to stimulate and maintain this style of fiddling. The organization sponsors official Scottish fiddling competitions, provides teachers to educate and maintain the style, and fosters a community to interact with the revival. This study examines the revival infrastructure and its implications according to an established framework for the continued development of Scottish fiddling in the United States.

## Introduction

This paper examines Scottish fiddling competitions in America and discusses the relationship between these competitions and the overall Scottish fiddling revival in the United States. This discussion includes an examination of whether or not such a revival is present according to Tamara E. Livingston’s revival framework. Also, the question arises: is this “revival” in fact a revival, or is it a first time introduction of Scottish fiddling to the United States? It is also possible that this “revival” is a part of a larger “Celtic revival.”

For this study, an extensive review of literature was conducted, which is described below. Nine Scottish fiddling competition judges were contacted. Five of these judges responded to questions through personal, email, and phone interviews. The researcher also attended a jam session and evaluated a competition through live observation and video recordings. Video recordings helped to evaluate multiple competitions across large distances. Competitions are necessary for an examination as they are the main focus of the organization central to the Scottish fiddling “revival.”

Several elements that contribute to the revival were identified and analyzed according to Livingston’s framework to determine if a revival is occurring. Such elements are found within the organization “Scottish Fiddling Revival” who are also known as “F.I.R.E.,” standing for **F**iddling **R**evival. These elements include the competition’s locations, environments, and the competitors. Other elements include the competition judges, the audience, and musical recordings. A discussion of the revival’s changing elements and their implications follows the examination of these elements.

## Review of Literature

Most studies concerning fiddling in North America are related to American styles of fiddling such as Appalachian fiddling, or Canadian styles, such as Cape Breton fiddling.<sup>1</sup> There

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<sup>1</sup> Cape Breton fiddling is a style of fiddling found on the relatively isolated Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia, Canada. This fiddling style is based on and descended from the Scottish fiddling style. Scottish Highland fiddlers that immigrated to Canada in the 18th and 19th centuries brought their musical traditions and instruments, including the fiddle, with them. The music has evolved over time and while still maintaining the Scottish heritage and influence, it is recognized as a distinct fiddling style.

is little research specifically regarding Scottish fiddling in the United States. For this reason, studies concerning other fiddling styles, fiddling contexts, and fiddling competitions in and out of the United States were consulted to frame this study, its background, and its direction. Whenever possible, the studies consulted were related or relevant to Scottish fiddling or fiddling in the United States.

Studies discussing Cape Breton fiddling include the genre's history as well as the social and economic backgrounds of the style and how those backgrounds influence the music. This includes a study by Burt Feintuch, *The Conditions for Cape Breton Fiddle Music: The Social and Economic Setting of a Regional Soundscape*, which forms a framework for fiddling and what context is ideal for its survival.<sup>2</sup> This framework examines elements within a specific location, such as terrain and economy, as well as certain musical characteristics, such as tonal centers and bowing techniques, that are more sustainable than others. He also describes how the Cape Breton tradition is surviving economically through recordings and live performances in various contexts such as weddings, funerals, parties, and other performance venues. Some of these performance venues are dance halls, festivals, and concerts.

In addition to contextual information regarding the survival of a fiddling tradition, Feintuch gives general information on identity as it applies to fiddlers. He describes the community built around and because of Scottish fiddling. The contexts mentioned above contribute to family ties and how the music is passed on through generations. Such insight was useful when examining the community of Scottish fiddling in the United States.

Last, Feintuch explores the idea of musical change and its impact on a tradition, especially when the authenticity of a tradition is important to a community. He states that in order to survive for a long period of time, some musical change must be embraced or the tradition will die out altogether.<sup>3</sup> Maintaining creativity while staying true to its local identity seems to be the main reason Cape Breton fiddling has not died out. A similar ideology was found in the Scottish fiddling revival in the United States. Feintuch ties such creative changes to economics. This provided possible insight on how the revival in the United States is changing and why. However, he does note that despite any changes musically, the Cape Breton fiddling tradition has remained, on the whole, quite resilient to change musically.

Another study by Earl V. Spielman, *The Fiddling Traditions of Cape Breton and Texas: A Study in Parallels and Contrasts*, compared and contrasted the traditions, approach, and attitude of Cape Breton fiddling and Texas style fiddling.<sup>4</sup> Through this study, he proposes a methodology from which to compare all fiddling traditions, including how they are preserved. Spielman specifically lists elements existing on a continuum for fiddle traditions. These elements include musical components, competitions, audiences, pedagogy and methods of transmission, community settings, and number of participants to a tradition. His methods and concepts are insightful as they provide clues for an ideal environment in which fiddling thrives, with and/or without competitions. Many of Spielman's elements were used as a starting point during fieldwork in this study.

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<sup>2</sup> Burt Feintuch, "The Conditions for Cape Breton Fiddle Music: The Social and Economic Setting of a Regional Soundscape," *Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (Winter, 2004), pp. 73-104, Accessed March 20, 2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30046241>.

<sup>3</sup> Feintuch, op. cit., p. 80.

<sup>4</sup> Earl V. Spielman, "The Fiddling Traditions of Cape Breton and Texas: A Study in Parallels and Contrasts," *Anuario Interamericano de Investigacion Musical*, Vol. 8 (1972), pp. 39-48. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/779818>.

Glenn Graham, a prominent Cape Breton fiddler, also organized his own study concerning Cape Breton fiddling, *The Cape Breton Fiddle: Making and Maintaining a Tradition*.<sup>5</sup> The study was eventually published as a book with an accompanying CD that chronicles the history of Cape Breton's fiddling. He also describes relatively recent changes and influences to the style, such as cultural, gender, and economic influences. Finally, Graham's research includes methods on pedagogical techniques for teaching the Cape Breton style. The CD accompanying the book provides descriptions, explanations, and examples of Cape Breton fiddling techniques. Examples of traditional Cape Breton tunes recorded in their original context such as a pub rather than in a recording studio are also on the CD.

At certain points in his book, Graham discusses both fiddling competitions and the concept of a fiddling revival during the 1970s in Cape Breton. However, his comments suggest that fiddle contests are frowned upon overall in Cape Breton as they limit the creativity of the performer. He comments that a "revival" in Cape Breton as applied to the fiddling style is an inaccurate word.<sup>6</sup> According to Graham, the music and tradition have remained intact since the Highland immigrants came from Scotland. The so-called Cape Breton fiddling "revival" of the 1970s was more of a renewed interest in the tradition rather than a reestablishment of the tradition.

Graham's views on revivals and competitions were helpful for this study since they provide balance compared with other views. His perspectives are more cautious whereas other opinions are very quick to assume that a musical tradition in a new context is automatically a revival and that competitions have no downsides to a tradition overall. Further, Graham's depth of work on Cape Breton fiddling styles and contexts is the closest analog to Scottish Fiddling in the United States since Cape Breton fiddling is Scottish in origin but placed in a context other than Scotland.

Some of the research conducted specifically on Scottish fiddling has been pedagogical in nature. For instance, Pamela Swing's dissertation, *Fiddle Teaching in Shetland Isles schools, 1973-1985*, concerns how fiddling was taught and revived in primary and secondary schools in Shetland, Scotland through one teacher and his students.<sup>7</sup> Another dissertation, *A Manual for the Learning of Traditional Scottish Fiddling: Design, Development and Effectiveness*, orchestrated by Melinda Crawford Perttu, tested whether the styles and techniques of Scottish fiddling could be pedagogically taught.<sup>8</sup> Both studies briefly discuss the concept of a revival; Swing's study explored the plausibility of a revival in Scotland, while Crawford Perttu's study explored elements of a Scottish fiddling revival in the United States. Crawford Perttu included an exploration of how competitions can be learning tools, but her perspective was primarily pedagogical in nature, rather than ethnographic.

Both dissertations are insightful on how Scottish fiddling is taught and passed on from teacher to student. This process provides clues regarding the tradition and the revival's migration. Both studies also provide background information regarding the different Scottish fiddling regional styles. Crawford Perttu's study in particular gives the most depth on the

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<sup>5</sup> Glenn Graham, *The Cape Breton Fiddle: Making and Maintaining Tradition*, Cape Breton University Press: Sydney, Canada, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Graham, op cit., p. 100-101.

<sup>7</sup> Pamela Sherman Swing, "Fiddle Teaching in Shetland Isles schools, 1973-1985," PhD diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 1991.

<sup>8</sup> Melinda H. Crawford Perttu, "A Manual for the Learning of Traditional Scottish Fiddling: Design, Development, and Effectiveness," PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 2011.

musical differences between Scottish regional styles and the different types of tunes used in Scottish fiddling. Her work also emphasizes the importance of each of the regional styles and how they are all important to the tradition.

Research on American fiddling has discussed general fiddling competitions. Specifically, Chris Goertzen has studied American fiddling contests and how they have changed over time in his work: *The Transformation of American Contest Fiddling*.<sup>9</sup> However, these American competitions often contain multiple genres of fiddling music. In all of the contests in Goertzen's study, competitors can choose from any number of styles including Scottish, Irish, Cape Breton, Texas, Bluegrass, and/or various local styles. The described elements of change give insight into how change in competitions can impact the music itself. These contests are not Scottish fiddling specific while F.I.R.E.'s competitions are Scottish fiddling specific. This is important as it is difficult to preserve a particular fiddling style when a venue mixes many styles. Although the competitions sanctioned by F.I.R.E. only play Scottish fiddling, Scottish fiddling has many distinct regional styles and the implications for the mixing of such styles make Goertzen's study relevant.

Other research concerns Scottish Highland Games and festivals in the United States. Erin Ruth Thompson's master's thesis, *Scotland in the Southland: The History of the Costa Mesa ScotsFest, 1932-2012*, describes the history, culture, environment, and common occurrences at Scottish Highland Games in the Southern part of the United States, specifically the Costa Mesa ScotsFest, which includes fiddling competitions.<sup>10</sup> Her thesis provides background information for context in which competitions are found, fiddling or otherwise. Thompson also gives a general sense for the type of person that goes to these Games and contests, which is helpful when describing an audience or group of followers. Last, her work describes a different set of Games in another part of the United States when a lot of the fiddling competitions for this study are from Northeastern parts of the United States.

Perhaps the most detailed account to date, regarding Scottish fiddling in the United States that also considers contests and competitions is Emily Ann Donaldson's book: *Scottish Highland Games in America*.<sup>11</sup> The book describes Scottish Games and festivals from all over the United States. A detailed history of the Games is chronicled with descriptions of the activities during the festivals including athletic, dance, and music contests. A list of the festivals and their locations up until the publication of her book is also provided. The list of locations within a previous, specific timeframe help to establish if the fiddling revival has grown or expanded across the United States. The locations also provide clues on how the revival is organized.

Also, a history of F.I.R.E. is described along with a brief biography of several prominent players involved in this organization. The prominent players mentioned are many of the founding members of F.I.R.E. and, through her book, the insights provided give insight into how and why this revival began. This includes the original intensions regarding the F.I.R.E. fiddling contests and how they connect to a larger revival structure.

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<sup>9</sup> Chris Goertzen, "The Transformation of American Contest Fiddling," *The Journal of Musicology*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Winter, 1988), pp. 107-129, Accessed March 20, 2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/763671>.

<sup>10</sup> Erin Ruth Thompson, 2013, *Scotland in the Southland: The History of the Costa Mesa ScotsFest, 1932-2012*, MA Thesis, University of California Riverside, Accessed December 11, 2013. <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/72x9t2fn>.

<sup>11</sup> Emily Ann Donaldson, *The Scottish Highland Games in America*, (Firebird Press: USA, 1999), Kindle.

The descriptions and history of the Scottish Games in the United States was much needed depth regarding background and context for these Games and their various competitions. The excellent background to F.I.R.E. in Donaldson's book helps trace the Scottish fiddling revival to a starting point. Additionally, Donaldson's work provides a point of entry in order to build on her work and go beyond her description of the organization, its history, and its purpose.

## Revival Definition

To examine if Scottish fiddling is reviving in the United States, the term "revival" first requires a definition. The Oxford Dictionary describes a revival as an "improvement in the condition, strength, or fortune of someone or something," and an "instance of something becoming popular, active, or important again."<sup>12</sup> The American Heritage Dictionary describes a revival as a "restoration to use, acceptance, activity, or vigor after a period of obscurity or quiescence."<sup>13</sup> The Merriam-Webster Dictionary explains a revival as "renewed attention to or interest in something."<sup>14</sup> Overall, these definitions require an activity, in this case Scottish fiddling, to have been present, to have disappeared, and then to have resurfaced again. However, these definitions also seem to imply that a renewed interest in something is also adequate criteria for a revival.

Such definitions are also retrospective in their perspective. They imply that a revival can be examined and identified by looking into the past, after something is revived. While that is not disputed, another framework or definition is needed to evaluate a revival as it is occurring. Examining the process of a revival requires a different framework.

Ethnomusicological research on music revivals invokes similar definitions to the dictionary. Tamara E. Livingston in her article *Music Revivals: Towards a General Theory*, defines revivals as "a social movement which strives to 'restore' a musical system believed to be disappearing or completely relegated to the past for contemporary society."<sup>15</sup> She then argues that a musical revival will contain the following elements:

1. an individual or small group of "core revivalists"
2. revival informants and/or original sources (i.e. historical sound recordings)
3. a revivalist ideology and discourse
4. a group of followers which form the basis of a revivalist community
5. revivalist activities (i.e. organizations, festivals, competitions)
6. non-profit and or commercial enterprises catering to the revivalist market<sup>16</sup>

Livingston proposes this model as a framework that is "descriptive" rather than "prescriptive."<sup>17</sup> Her model is not explicit. A revival is not necessarily confined to these six

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<sup>12</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "Revival," accessed February 16, 2014, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/164908?redirectedFrom=revival#eid>.

<sup>13</sup> *American Heritage Dictionary*, s.v. "Revival," accessed February 16, 2014, <http://www.ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=revival&submit.x=0&submit.y=0>.

<sup>14</sup> *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. "Revival," accessed February 16, 2014, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/revival>.

<sup>15</sup> Tamara E. Livingston, "Music Revivals: Towards a General Theory," *Ethnomusicology* 43, no. 1 (Winter, 1999): pp. 66-85, accessed January 14, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/852694>.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

elements nor do these elements have to appear in any particular order or proportion. The organization, F.I.R.E., does adhere to Livingston's proposed model for a revival, even if it is not in itself the entire revival of Scottish fiddling in the entire United States.

According to one Scottish fiddling judge and expert, Jan Tappan, the word "revival" implies that fiddling was once prevalent in the United States when this was not necessarily the case.<sup>18</sup> If Livingston's model is observed, in order for Scottish fiddling to be "revived" in the United States, the tradition must have disappeared or significantly faded from the United States after it arrived from Scotland. Although it was absorbed by other fiddling styles, Scottish fiddling in its original form was present in the United States at one time in order to be absorbed in the first place. Despite whether it completely disappeared or whether it was simply renewed interest that occurred, Scottish fiddling is more prevalent now than in the past. This occurrence is reflected in the growing participation of the organization F.I.R.E. and its activities. The number of fiddling contests and their locations at the time of this study compared to the number in Donaldson's book and her time of writing illustrates this. Further, the organization, with the purpose to "preserve" Scottish fiddling and its regional styles, would not have been established unless a perceived lacking of the music was found in the United States.<sup>19</sup> This suggests that the criteria for a beginning revival is met: the music is more prevalent now than in the past and a renewed interest is established.

Scottish fiddling in the United States as a revival tradition is a relatively new phenomenon. However, Scottish people and their culture and traditions in the United States are not. According to the Montana Historical Society, Scottish people have been present in America since Colonial times. Between the years 1820 and 1950, nearly 5,000 Scots arrived in the US yearly.<sup>20</sup> Because most Scottish immigrants also spoke English, they could easily integrate into society without attracting as much prejudice as other immigrants.<sup>21</sup> These Scottish immigrants traveled throughout the United States and lost much of their Scottish accent in favor of something more "American" sounding. Like their accent, the music was also integrated with American culture.<sup>22</sup> A similar mix of culture can be seen in Appalachian fiddling music. In the early part of the 18th century, many Scottish immigrants settled in the Appalachian area.<sup>23</sup> For example, in the 1740s regarding Neil Gow, a famous Scottish fiddler, was given credit for "developing the powerful and rhythmic short bow saw stroke technique that eventually became the foundation of Appalachian mountain fiddling."<sup>24</sup> While there are other cultural influences, such as African rhythms, found in Appalachian fiddling, the Scottish influence can still be heard in the fiddling styles and is arguably the most recognizable cultural influence to a majority of

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 69-70.

<sup>18</sup> Jan Tappan, E-mail message to author, March 29, 2012.

<sup>19</sup> "Scottish F.I.R.E. Homepage," *Scottish Fiddling Revival Ltd.*, Accessed February 15, 2014.

<http://www.scottishfiddlingrevival.com>,

<sup>20</sup> Emily Satterwhite, "That's What They're All Singing About": Appalachian Heritage, Celtic Pride, and American Nationalism at the 2003 Smithsonian Folklife Festival, *Appalachian Journal* 32, no. 3 (Spring 2005), p. 52, Accessed February 11, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40934418>.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>23</sup> John R. Gold and George Revill, "Gathering the voices of the people? Cecil Sharp, cultural hybridity, and the folk music of Appalachia," *GeoJournal* 65, no. 1, Geography & Music (2006) p. 59, Accessed February 11, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41148022>.

<sup>24</sup> Debby McClatchy, 2000, "Appalachian Traditional Music: A Short History," Last modified June 27, 2000. Accessed February 15, 2014. <http://www.mustrad.org.uk/articles/appalach.htm>.

modern listeners.<sup>25</sup> Despite the fusion of Scottish and American music and culture, the early Scottish immigrants still retained enough of their traditions to establish Highland Games throughout the United States.

Emily Donaldson's book, *The Scottish Highland Games in America*, lists some of the first Highland Games in America as early as "20 or 30 years after the Civil War."<sup>26</sup> She also describes many Games as celebrating 120 year anniversaries at the time of her writing. These Games were often sponsored by Scottish interest groups and organizations all across the United States.<sup>27</sup> However, it is unclear if fiddling was a part of these activities. Donaldson seems to suggest that Scottish fiddling in the United States was not a part of these Games, and was not as prominent overall as it is today. She specifically cites the organization Scottish Fiddling Revival Ltd., or F.I.R.E., as the driving force for Scottish fiddling in America from the 1970s onward.<sup>28</sup>

Regardless of whether or not Scottish fiddling disappeared in the United States since the first immigrants or if the music simply faded from a more mainstream audience, such music was present in the US long enough to influence other styles. If this music influenced other musical styles, then it was once in the United States as a unique genre of fiddling. Since Scottish fiddling was present at one point, it can be revived. Perhaps the music was not as prominent as it is today, but the Merriam-Webster revival definition of "a renewed attention or interest in something" and Livingston's description of a musical system "relegated to the past" leaves room for this occurrence.<sup>29</sup> Starting around the late 1970s, Scottish fiddling has been revitalized through organizations such as F.I.R.E. and seen a new surge of interest around the United States. In this sense, Scottish fiddling is in the midst of a revival in the United States. However, this revival may be part of, or at the very least, connected to a broader Celtic revival.

## Celtic Revival

According to the *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, the term "Celtic" is often reserved for "Bronze Age civilizations that expanded their territorial hold throughout Europe until the early years of Christianity." *Garland* also states that

"*Celtic* also denotes cultural traits that persist from earlier ages, specifically the Celtic family of Indo-European languages with its branches: Goidelic (Irish and Scottish Gaelic, Manx) and Brythonic (Welsh, Breton, Cornish). These languages survive in Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and Brittany."<sup>30</sup>

Applying "Celtic" to music is difficult. *Garland* notes: no "set of sonic traits" distinguishes Celtic music, nevertheless, it is a widely understood label because of the cultural heritage associated with the term Celtic." While "Celtic" is a broad term for a wide range of musical styles from a variety of locations, the music within that broad term contains many distinct styles that can be distinguished by a trained ear, musician, and/or scholar. The term is

<sup>25</sup> Satterwhite, op. cit., p. 305.

<sup>26</sup> Donaldson, op. cit., p. 270, Kindle.

<sup>27</sup> Donaldson, op. cit., p. 286, Kindle.

<sup>28</sup> Donaldson, op. cit., p. 2122, Kindle.

<sup>29</sup> *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, op. cit.

<sup>30</sup> *Garland World Music Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Celtic," (London: Routledge, 2000), accessed February 16, 2014, <http://glnd.alexanderstreet.com/view/331913>.



being used here because of the possibility of a Scottish fiddling revival fitting into or being a part of a larger, broader Celtic revival that includes music from many “Celtic” areas of the world, including Scotland.

Post World War II, much of the world saw a renewed interest in folk music, especially in the United States. This revival peaked in the 1960s and the 1970s and also saw a particular increased interest in Celtic music, especially Irish music. In addition to an elevated interest, folk tunes were also fused with more contemporary musical styles, such as rock and roll. While Celtic music of all types is not immune to such changes, and its practitioners have even embraced some contemporary influences, Celtic music has also strived to preserve its music in as pure a form as possible. This has resulted in a fairly conservative ideology in order to maintain and preserve the musical style(s). Gillian A. M. Mitchell, in his article, *Visions of Diversity: Cultural Pluralism and the Nation in the Folk Music Revival Movement of the United States and Canada, 1958-65*, says:

“‘Ethnic revivals,’ which thrived in North America in the 1970s and 1980s, owed much to the pluralism of the 1960s revivals, but movements such as the revivals of Klezmer and Celtic music often adopted a retrogressive and nostalgic approach to ethnicity and music, perhaps in reaction to the political crises of the 1970s.”<sup>31</sup>

This “retrogressive” direction can be seen through organizations that wish to keep their traditional music as close to the original source and tradition as possible. These organizations are not necessarily closed minded to other ways of interpreting a musical style, but they often wish to preserve the original material so that older styles of playing are not lost. The organization F.I.R.E. began in 1975, which technically puts it in the timeframe for the broader Celtic revival. While the organization and its work towards preservation of traditional Scottish fiddling could be considered a part of this broader Celtic revival, according to Livingston's revival model, the organization itself fits within the revival framework. The details of how it fits into that framework are described below. While the broader Celtic revival is a factor and influencer to the Scottish fiddling revival, just as the Scottish fiddling revival could be seen as an element contributing to the broader Celtic revival, the Scottish fiddling revival is being examined on its own terms and its own merits for this study.

## **F.I.R.E.**

Scottish Fiddling Revival Ltd. (F.I.R.E.) is an organization that seeks to revive and preserve Scottish fiddling in North America through education, resources, and fiddling competitions.<sup>32</sup> The organization started as a non-profit in 1975 and sanctions fiddling competitions in the United States and Canada.<sup>33</sup> They also certify judges for local and national competitions, as well as monitor the annual U.S. National Competition held at a sponsoring

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<sup>31</sup> Gillian A. M. Mitchell, “Visions of Diversity: Cultural Pluralism and the Nation in the Folk Music Revival Movement of the United States and Canada, 1958-65,” *Journal of American Studies* 40, no. 3 (Dec. 2006): p. 614, Accessed February 11, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27557862>.

<sup>32</sup> “Scottish F.I.R.E. Homepage,” *Scottish Fiddling Revival Ltd.*, Accessed February 15, 2014, <http://www.scottishfiddlingrevival.com>.

<sup>33</sup> Idem.

Highland Games during the Games season.<sup>34</sup> Scottish F.I.R.E. is the only sanctioning agency for Scottish fiddling judges and competitions in North America.<sup>35</sup> This organization, through its members and activities, embodies the Scottish fiddling revival in the United States and aligns in one form or another with each point of Livingston's revival framework. Some of its elements conform to multiple points in Livingston's framework.

F.I.R.E. embodies the relationship between Scottish fiddling competitions and the Scottish fiddling revival in the United States by using the former to work towards the goal of the latter. This organization also provides resources for Scottish fiddlers, including free fiddle music through the F.I.R.E. website and social media accounts, an list of active fiddling clubs in the United States, and an active list of Scottish Fiddling Societies with their locations throughout North America.<sup>36</sup> These fiddling clubs and societies establish a musical community and are an opportunity for players to meet with each other.<sup>37</sup> These opportunities usually take the form of a "jam session."

According to *Grove Music Online*, a jam session is "any meeting of musicians, in private or public, where the emphasis is on unrehearsed material and improvisation."<sup>38</sup> Scottish fiddling jam sessions tend to be very interactive. They can consist of any number of musicians, generally fiddlers and guitarists or pianists. There may also be flutes, recorders, cellos, or bodhráns. The players will take turns soloing, starting tunes, and giving signals with their head and facial expressions to indicate a repeat or an ending. They also signal for tempo changes and stylistic interpretations through visual signals and aural cues in their playing. During the jam session, fiddlers may also join in after the jam session has started. There may also be different degrees of listening ability in terms of intonation, style, and dynamics. The number of tunes played could also vary.<sup>39</sup>

Jam sessions fall under Livingston's category of "revivalist activities." Jam sessions help form a sense of community within a revival. They physically bring people together and provide an informal means for players to make music for their own enjoyment. The sessions can bring older and more experienced players together with younger, perhaps less experienced players for the purpose of fiddling together. The less experienced players can learn technique and tunes from the more experienced players. In this way, tunes and methods are passed on which ensures a continued style of fiddling. Livingston describes such activities as a "supplement" for "what can be learned from recordings and books with lived experiences and shared contact."<sup>40</sup> This is especially important in an aural tradition such as Scottish fiddling when the melody may be notated in terms of notes and rhythms but no stylistic indicators are given. Additionally, many tunes are taught and learned by ear and not learned visually at all. Since the jam sessions are also intended to be enjoyable, fiddlers usually play at more than one. More than one session at more than one location means that the music has a way of moving around. Also, jam sessions tend to

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<sup>34</sup> Scottish F.I.R.E. Homepage," op. cit.

<sup>35</sup> Crawford Perttu, op. cit., p. 77

<sup>36</sup> "Scottish F.I.R.E. Fiddling-Clubs," *Scottish Fiddling Revival Ltd.*, Accessed February 15, 2014. <http://www.scottishfiddlingrevival.com/fiddle-clubs-and-societies.html>.

<sup>37</sup> Melinda Crawford Perttu, e-mail message to author, March 14, 2012.

<sup>38</sup> Gunther Schuller, "Jam session," *Grove Music Online*, Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press, accessed February 16, 2014, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/14117>.

<sup>39</sup> Field notes by the author. September 8th, 2012. Edinboro University's Highland Games and Scottish Festival.

<sup>40</sup> Livingston, op. cit., p. 73.

be more relaxed compared to more critical environments, such as a competition. Competitions also fall under Livingston’s category of “revivalist activities.”

### Competitions and Competitors

While F.I.R.E. does provide opportunities for these jam sessions, F.I.R.E.’s main function is established through the competitions that it sanctions. These Scottish fiddling competitions in the United States take place at various Highland Games festivals. These festivals typically run between February and October and take place at various locations across the country.<sup>41</sup>

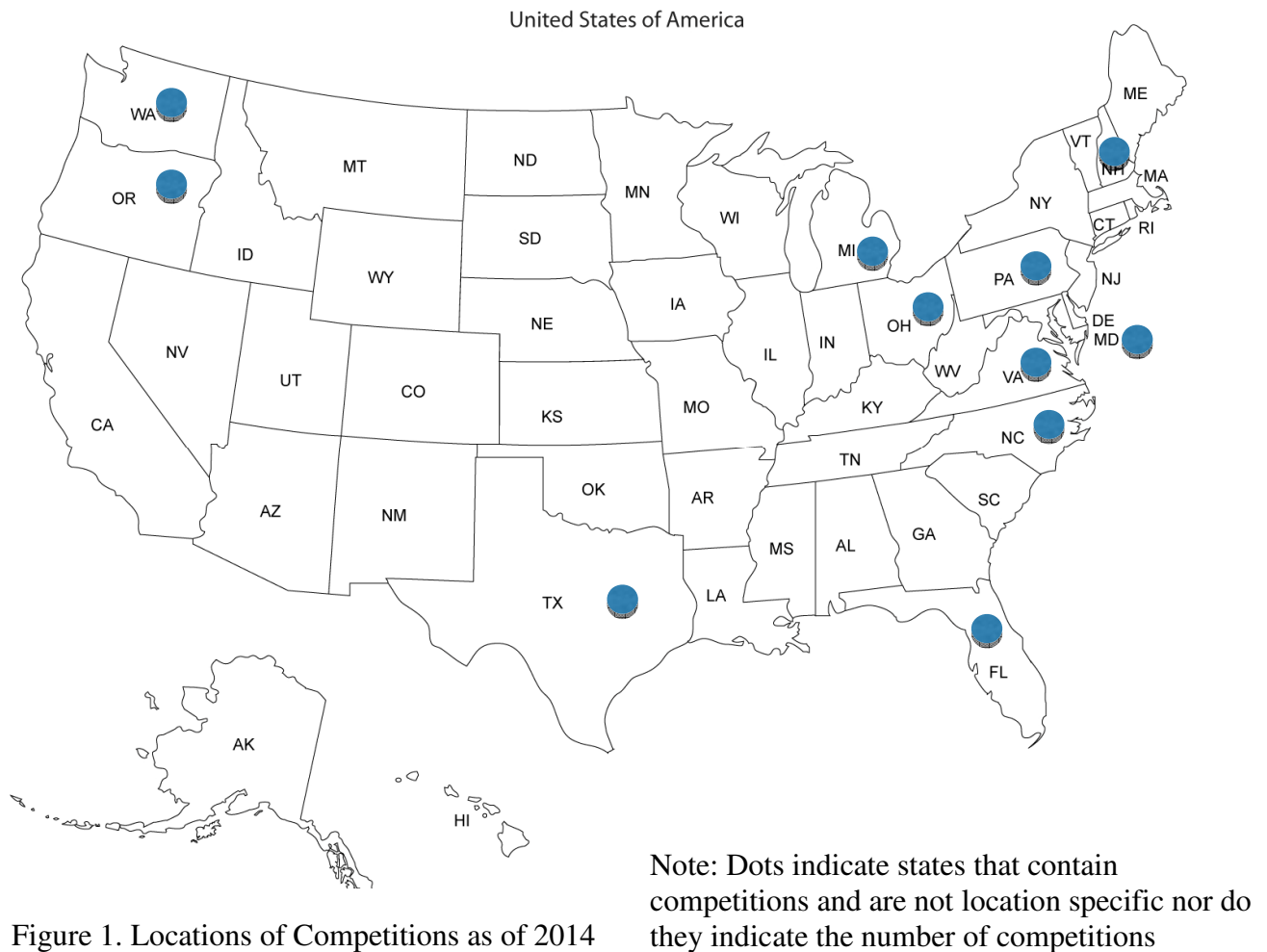


Figure 1. Locations of Competitions as of 2014

The locations seem to depend on the organization hosting the Games and competitions though there is some overlap between the locations of the judges and the competitions. There are several factors that contribute to the locations of the competitions. One of these factors is the locations of the judges themselves. Many of the judges live in or near the states containing

<sup>41</sup> “Scottish F.I.R.E. Sanctioned Fiddling Competitions,” *Scottish Fiddling Revival Ltd.*, Accessed February 15, 2014, <http://www.scottishfiddlingrevival.com/fire-sanctioned-competitions-and-judges.html>.

competitions.<sup>42</sup> Another factor is the Games that host fiddling competitions. There are several Highland Games associations that sponsor and host the fiddling contests in addition to other activities. The location of the Games impacts the location of the Scottish fiddle contests (see figure 1). The Games<sup>43</sup> may include athletic competitions, Scotch tasting, as well as Celtic harpers, piping, drumming, Highland dancing, and fiddle playing, specifically fiddling competitions.<sup>44</sup>

Competitors apply to the competitions through the F.I.R.E. website, the F.I.R.E. Facebook page, or the hosting location's website, which may be at a university or general Game location such as a fairground or park. The application may be submitted online or downloaded for mail submission. The type of submission depends on who is hosting the contest. There is often a prepayment or registration fee for the competitors. A parent or guardian must sign the application form if the applicant is under 18 years of age.

Competitions and competitors are divided into three different classes: novice, junior, and open. Novice class is open to any fiddler new to Scottish fiddling with no age restrictions. Junior class is open to anyone under 18. Any fiddler may compete in an open class division. Once a competitor has won three novice class competitions, the competitor must enroll in either open or junior class.<sup>45</sup> Once the application is received and processed, applicants compete in reverse order of when their entry is received. For example, a late entry will perform earlier in the competition.

If an applicant is applying for the U.S. National Scottish Fiddle Competition, the participant must be a member in good standing with Scottish F.I.R.E. and meet at least one of the following criteria:

1. Winning a regional competition since October, 2012.
2. Placing 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> in a regional competition and being declared eligible for Nationals by the judge of that competition.
3. Having won, been runner up, or tied for 1<sup>st</sup> before a playoff in a U.S. National competition within the last 5 years.<sup>46</sup>

An applicant indicates the competition(s), year, and or judge as necessary on the application form. If the applicant is not a member, they must fill out the Scottish F.I.R.E. membership form and pay the appropriate dues. Also, typically on the application for the competition is a list of prizes which may include a trophy and a prize of monetary value. Other prizes include medals for the best jig, strathspey, march, reel, and air respectively.<sup>47</sup> A 4th place

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<sup>42</sup>“Scottish F.I.R.E. Sanctioned Fiddling Competitions,” op. cit.

<sup>43</sup> “The Scottish Games Association of Delaware, Inc.,” Accessed March 10, 2012, <http://www.fairhillscottishgames.org/index.html>.

<sup>44</sup> “The New Hampshire Highland Games,” Accessed March 10, 2012, <http://www.nhscot.org/>.

<sup>45</sup> “Scottish F.I.R.E. Rules for Scottish Fire Sanctioned Competitions,” *Scottish Fiddling Revival Ltd.*, Accessed February 15, 2014, [http://www.scottishfiddlingrevival.com/uploads/3/1/0/1/3101742/rules\\_for\\_scottish\\_fire\\_sanctioned\\_competitions.pdf](http://www.scottishfiddlingrevival.com/uploads/3/1/0/1/3101742/rules_for_scottish_fire_sanctioned_competitions.pdf).

<sup>46</sup> “Scottish F.I.R.E. Rules for Scottish Fire Sanctioned Competitions,” op. cit.

<sup>47</sup> A jig is a tune in 6/8 time and the rhythms are typically swung. A strathspey is unique to Scotland and its fiddling style. Strathspeys are known for their 16th note runs and the use of the Scottish snap, which is written as a sixteen/dotted eighth set, but performed as thirty-second/doubly dotted eighth rhythm. A march is in 4/4, 2/4, or 6/8

medal may or may not be awarded depending on the competition, and a “Quaich,” or a two-handled Scottish drinking bowl, might be given along with a monetary prize.

Because competitions may include a prepayment or application fee, the competitions are also a source of income for the revival. This income goes under “commercial and non-profit activities” described by Livingston’s last element in her framework. Additionally, some competitions require a fee from the audience to attend the contests. Such a fee is another source of revenue to maintain the cost of the competitions and the revival.

During the competitions, competitors’ names and what they are playing are announced either by the performer, by a judge, or by the steward.<sup>48</sup> The competitors then play their “sets” of tunes, consisting of different types of Scottish tunes.<sup>49</sup> The Scottish regional styles are varied and the “sets” may include some or all of the regional Scottish fiddling styles.<sup>50</sup> However, the tunes themselves do not mix the regional styles. If more than one regional style is played in the “sets,” then the styles vary between tunes, rather than within tunes. Each tune must conform to a distinct regional style, even if the “sets” overall contain more than one style.

The sets themselves vary in both length and style and competitors may or may not choose to tune their instrument before they begin. The music is memorized and played toward an audience while the judges sit where they can still see and hear clearly but remain unobtrusive to the audience and to the competitor. Competitors typically wear traditional Scottish attire such as kilts.<sup>51</sup> In the Junior and Open National Competitions, traditional Scottish attire, or “Highland dress,” is required.

Memorization is part of the Scottish fiddling tradition. The music is often learned aurally and the tunes, when written down, contain no stylistics. This allows a competitor to put his or her own personal interpretation on the music which is consistent with the revival ideology discussed in detail later. The traditional Highland dress links to Scottish culture and reinforces the tradition. It could also be considered part of Livingston’s ideology component. Since Highland attire is required, rather than suggested, at certain competitions, specifically the national competitions, it is also part of the discourse central to the revival.

Competitors are judged based on three categories. These categories are “time (tempo and rhythm),” “execution (technical proficiency and intonation),” and “expression and interpretation” which includes how well each tune transitions and fits together as a whole. Overall, the scores are determined by technical accuracy and interpretation of Scottish style(s).<sup>52</sup> The score forms will be discussed in more detail further on in this paper. To be judged as accurately and as fairly as possible, competitors need to be judged not only by musically proficient players, but by judges that know about Scottish fiddling styles, techniques, and history.

time and features a lot of ornamentation in Scottish fiddling. A reel is common to the Shetland regional style and contains significant syncopation.

<sup>48</sup> A steward is the person in charge of the competitions’ logistics and making sure that everything runs smoothly. This includes but is not limited to keeping track of applications, accommodating various travel needs as needed, making sure there are enough forms for everything, and publishing the official list of winners.

<sup>49</sup> A “set” is a series of tunes played together with smooth transitions between each tune.

<sup>50</sup> Scottish fiddling varies depending on what area, or region, of Scotland the fiddling style originated from. Each regional style contains distinctive characteristics distinguishable to someone familiar with each Scottish regional fiddling style.

<sup>51</sup> Video recording, provided to author via dropbox through competition judges, recorded September 8th, 2012, accessed November 10, 2012, Edinboro University, PA.

<sup>52</sup> Idem.

## Judges

Competitors are evaluated by F.I.R.E. sanctioned judges. All F.I.R.E. judges are selected based on their expertise in Scottish fiddling. This expertise is defined by their playing ability and knowledge of the various Scottish regional styles. Potential judges are required to be performing on a professional level and are selected by three other F.I.R.E. judges.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to judging, F.I.R.E. judges further the revival in other ways. Many are music educators, and some have written research on Scottish music and Scottish fiddling. Many also teach the fiddling tradition formally to students willing to learn the Scottish fiddling style. All of them are experienced and professional performers in both fiddling and non-fiddling venues. They have all been competitors before they were judges and many have produced recordings of their music, specifically their Scottish fiddling. These judges are critical as they are directly and indirectly responsible for the Scottish fiddling revival.

Since the judges know the most about this type of music, they are responsible for the music's circulation, the faithfulness to traditional styles, the continuation of its growth, and the context within which the music is placed. They are considered to be what Livingston calls "core revivalists," the first element in her framework, in that they feel a "strong connection with the revival tradition that they take upon themselves to 'rescue' it from extinction and to pass it on to others."<sup>54</sup> One way to pass the music on to others is to discuss the music with the audience, which serve in part as a group of followers to the revival.

## Audience

At the beginning of a competition, the judges usually welcome the audience. However, what is said after the welcome may vary. Sometimes a description on how they judge and what is looked for in the competition is given.<sup>55</sup> Time does not always permit any sort of detailed explanation, but the sample of judges interviewed all agree that speaking to the audience is important for contextual purposes.

Since the Games may or may not be Scottish specific (sometimes the Games are of a general pan-Celtic theme), the audience may have a wide range of interest and knowledge, or possibly lack thereof, about fiddling.<sup>56</sup> A varied audience may allow more wide-spread places for the revival to circulate. The audience becomes more informed not only by listening to the music, but through knowledge imparted by the competition's judges.

Judges who speak to the audience allow for a more informed audience. An informed audience might better appreciate what they are hearing and be more likely to support the art.<sup>57</sup> Through supporting the art, these audience members may help the revival to expand. While the audience is usually friends and family, "the rest are typically uninformed on what a competition is all about," says fiddling judge Calum Mackinnon.<sup>58</sup> Livingston states that "revivals almost always have a strong pedagogical component in order to pass on the tradition in a controlled

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<sup>53</sup> Melinda Crawford Perttu, e-mail message to author, April 2, 2012.

<sup>54</sup> Livingston, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>55</sup> Melinda Crawford Perttu, e-mail message to author, March 14, 2012.

<sup>56</sup> "Celtic Arts Foundation," Accessed March 10, 2012, <http://celticarts.org/>.

<sup>57</sup> Melinda Crawford Perttu, e-mail message to author, March 14, 2012.

<sup>58</sup> Calum Mackinnon, e-mail message to author, March 18, 2012.

manner. How well the revivalist community is educated about the tradition, however, varies according to the individual dispositions of the participants.”<sup>59</sup> In addition to teaching their own students, who often become competitors, the judges are also responsible for educating the audience about the tradition. The audience may be unaware of why the competitions are important to the revival or why the revival is occurring in the first place. Eliminating such ignorance can draw people to the competitions, and by extension the revival, as well as keeping a group of followers to support and maintain the revival. This could also be a potential recruiting method to bring new players and possibly future judges to continue the revival.

If an audience can better understand how the competition works, they may potentially feel more involved with the experience, especially since many of these competitions take place in very interactive environments such as Games and festivals. Audience members, in the form of followers to the revival per Livingston’s model, also contributes to the non-profit or commercial enterprises of a revival since there are often CDs available to purchase at the competitions. If the music is not available for purchase at the competition, it is available for download or as a separate CD online. Recordings have a significant contribution to the revival and fit into more than one element in Livingston’s framework.

## Recordings

Recordings fall under several points in Livingston’s criteria. They provide “non-profit and/or commercial enterprises catering to the revivalist market” which is Livingston’s last element in her framework.<sup>60</sup> Glen Graham asserts in his Cape Breton work that commercial recordings provide “quality material” and “exposure” for people to hear this type of music, a “goal” for young musicians to aspire to, and “added income for professional artists.” He states that a recording could be a “tool for learning old and new tunes.”<sup>61</sup> Graham also describes home recordings, or non-commercial quality recordings as an “excellent way of showing a true traditional atmosphere in which the music is played” and “a way of capturing the music in a ‘free,’ relaxed atmosphere.”<sup>62</sup> In a world where music can transform so quickly and easily, any recording is helpful to maintain a musical style and culture. Aural traditions, such as Scottish fiddling, are especially susceptible to change.

A recording is also portable and easily distributed, allowing a way for the music, and therefore the revival, to circulate quickly. Livingston describes recordings as “objects that can be collected and categorized, which in turn influences the definition of the genre for other collectors, consumers, and players, not to mention the recording industry.”<sup>63</sup> The recording industry, the Internet, and applications such as iTunes or Spotify create another way for these recordings to be readily accessible. Further, in such a rapidly changing world, it is conceivable that the revival may not be successful in the long term without recordings. Should a revival collapse, the music could possibly be revived yet again with the permanent record of information that recordings provide. In this circumstance, the recordings would become a type of “original source,” the second requirement in Livingston’s criteria, for a new revival should the current one

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<sup>59</sup> Livingston, op. cit., p. 73.

<sup>60</sup> Livingston, op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>61</sup> Graham, op. cit., p. 94.

<sup>62</sup> Idem.

<sup>63</sup> Livingston, op. cit., p. 71.

collapse. Recordings could also be a form of original sources in the current revival as they are often used as teaching tools by students and teachers.

While music is ever-changing and evolving, recordings can preserve music in its present form. There is perceived value in “hearing [music] performed exactly as it was originally intended to be heard.”<sup>64</sup> This can be valuable to a student hearing the music in an authentic light, thereby learning a style as faithfully as possible. However, the paradox is that a recording is only one interpretation. It is possible that the interpretation might not be assessed by others as being entirely authentic or traditional. That is why experts are needed to keep a traditional musical style intact. An incorrect stylistic interpretation could be problematic for a student that is attempting to learn Scottish fiddling by copying a specific fiddler’s style verbatim off a CD.<sup>65</sup> A single fiddler may not interpret a recording the same way as another, and there might be different, personal ideas on how to play the same melody.

## Interpretation

There is considerable room in Scottish fiddling for personal interpretation. Most Scottish fiddling tunes are written with very little stylistic notation. It is up to the player to perform the music stylistically in the absence of notation. Knowledge of the different Scottish fiddling regional styles, such as West Highland or Northeast, is critical especially considering that each of the six Scottish regional styles has its own unique characteristics and complexities. A player must be well-versed in each regional style if he or she is to play each Scottish fiddling regional style correctly and separately from one another.

In order to play each distinct style correctly and as authentically as possible, aspiring fiddlers must have a fairly accurate foundation to build upon. According to one judge, Pat Talbert, “It is important that there be a certain core of knowledge from which all players pull, in terms of stylistics.”<sup>66</sup> A mastery of this core knowledge will allow players more stylistic freedom:

“One must master the basics of an art in order to earn the privilege of varying away from that art. If you do not first establish yourself as competent in the fundamentals of Scottish fiddling, then you will not be taken seriously when you attempt variations.”<sup>67</sup>

Accurate knowledge of a style is important to competitors and judges alike as it is reflected in the competition rubric and comments. A faithful portrayal of the style maintains the style’s integrity, ensuring a continuing revival.

If there is a key concept to the Scottish fiddling revival through the organization F.I.R.E. in the United States, it is this one. While new interpretations are not forbidden, a player must adhere to and understand the “core knowledge,” or fundamentals of a style. If they remain within the framework of a style’s musical parameters, they are permitted to express the music according to their personal interpretations. If there is an ideology, or set of principles, in this revival, it is probably that concept. Ideology, as established by F.I.R.E., the competition judges, and as agreed

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<sup>64</sup> John Turner, e-mail message to author, March 22, 2012.

<sup>65</sup> Jan Tappan, e-mail message to author, March 29, 2012.

<sup>66</sup> Patricia Talbert, e-mail message to the author, March 31, 2012

<sup>67</sup> Idem.



upon by the players that participate supports this principle of acceptable, personal interpretation within the core knowledge of traditional Scottish regional fiddling styles. A revival ideology or discourse is Livingston's third element in her framework.

While core knowledge is important, personal interpretation is encouraged. This is typical of how the tunes are written and, according to one judge, is ultimately decided upon by the player. "Ultimately, the music has to say what the player wants it to say."<sup>68</sup> This margin for interpretation can be entertaining to an audience but provides a unique complication for the competition judges.

While there are specific criteria for each category that are being evaluated, there is still a certain human element on the part of the judges to be considered, and even with a specific scoring sheet, there is still considerable room for interpretation on how to score a competitor. This is significant because different judges may place different values on different aspects of a competitor's performance and could, over time, impact which aspects of the fiddling revival receive emphasis over other aspects. Each judge might have a different opinion on the interpretation of a particular style. Long term, this varying opinion could have consequences for the revival and its music.

These differing opinions manifest in what several judges have described as a "generational effect." Older judges grew up listening to more "traditional fiddling" while younger judges could be influenced by newer trends that have taken Scottish fiddling to "new places."<sup>69</sup> Individual judges have also expressed that what they listen for has changed over the years as they have perceived an overall improvement in playing ability. All of this makes judging "progressively harder."<sup>70</sup> Newer trends are can still be authentically "Scottish" and are not automatically invalid, but judges may have differing opinions on what is acceptable in a competition setting where they are attempting to maintain the most culturally authentic styles and interpretations possible. The increasing difficulty of evaluating competitors can be seen through the changes in the competitions, and specifically the criteria used to judge the competitions. On top of these considerations, improved playing over the past few decades of the revival's existence has been reported by all of the judges. This also causes changes in the competition's format, specifically the competition's score forms.

## Score Forms

According to the judges interviewed, the overall improving quality of the players has caused changes in the score forms used in the competitions. The number of required tunes increased and "more emphasis has been put on musicality and the technical aspects of playing" compared to scoring and judging non-musical elements such as clothing.<sup>71</sup> There is even an "ongoing discussion of what kind of scoring system and what sort of judging sheets should be used at competitions."<sup>72</sup> Some of these debates include the criteria themselves or the question of how detailed the information is that the competitor receives.<sup>73</sup> The fact that the judging forms

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<sup>68</sup> Idem.

<sup>69</sup> Calum Mackinnon, e-mail message to author, April 6, 2012.

<sup>70</sup> Melinda Crawford Perttu, e-mail message to author, March 14, 2012.

<sup>71</sup> Patricia Talbert, e-mail message to author, March 31, 2012.

<sup>72</sup> Patricia Talbert, e-mail message to author, March 21, 2012.

<sup>73</sup> Patricia Talbert, e-mail message to author, April 6, 2012.

required an update is significant as it shows the need to adapt to a developing revival. The shift in emphasis from non-musical elements to a more musical concentration suggests a focus on the quality of the music in the competition rather than the spectacle of the competition itself within the revival.

In most cases, the judges are concerned with what is “authentically Scottish.” There have been some instances where the judges selected a winner between two competitors: one who had some technical flaws, such as a misplaced fingering or an incorrect bowing, but they were more consistent with the Scottish styles. The other competitor was technically flawless but did not adhere as closely to the Scottish styles. One competitor’s interpretation was more “Scottish” while the other was more flawless. In each case, judges selected the competitor that was closer to the Scottish style despite the technical errors.<sup>74</sup> This remains consistent with the revival ideology of faithfulness to the foundation of the Scottish styles. It also shows the commitment of the judges to their philosophy.

All of these debates, discussions, and changes are a suggested result of a changing revival. The most recent audiences appreciate “different shadings and different innuendos” that were not as appreciated a generation ago.<sup>75</sup> Such changes bring into question the notion of fusion. Fusion contains many implications for a musical tradition and maintaining the authenticity.

## **Fusion**

There is more evidence of change within the revival than adjusting competition score forms. Circulating a genre of music, and the revival by extension, has its own set of complications. While Scottish fiddling has influenced many other genres of music, it is possible that Scottish fiddling itself can also be transformed in ways other than progression of technical proficiency. It is even possible for the different, distinct elements and styles, such as the Scottish regional fiddling styles, within one overall genre of music to begin fusing together. Fusion is often a very natural side effect of cultures interacting with one another.

Fusion has unique consequences for a competition. In the minds of many judges, such as Pat Talbert, there are strong opinions on judging and there is a “clear definition and specific stylistics that define Scottish fiddling music.”<sup>76</sup> If a fiddling style outside of Scottish is heard, there is an immediate deduction in points. For example, Irish fiddling techniques and ornamentations are different from Scottish fiddling ornamentations and techniques. A mixture of these styles would undermine what a Scottish fiddling revival is attempting to achieve. The ideology of the revival maintains an adherence to the foundation of the Scottish fiddling styles. Mixing different fiddling styles would not be consistent with such discourse as it would create something entirely new, and not necessarily Scottish-authentic.

If a mix of Scottish regional styles is heard, there will usually be a drop in points and the comments from the judges to the competitor will note the jumble of styles.<sup>77</sup> The style should be “consistent throughout the performance” in a competition.<sup>78</sup> For example, if a strathspey is

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<sup>74</sup> Melinda Crawford Perttu, personal comm., April 26, 2012.

<sup>75</sup> Patricia Talbert, e-mail message to author, April 6, 2012.

<sup>76</sup> Patricia Talbert, e-mail message to author, March 31, 2012.

<sup>77</sup> Patricia Talbert, e-mail message to author, March 31, 2012.

<sup>78</sup> Jan Tappan, e-mail message to author, March 29, 2012.

supposed to be played within the West Highland Scottish fiddling style, a player can not add in elements of the North-East Scottish fiddling style.<sup>79</sup> The distinction between these styles can be heard by a trained ear and seen in the bowings and fingerings of a trained eye. Such an example of fusion is considered undesirable for the revival.

Fusion has more implications besides deductions in points in competitions. It is extremely important to preserve what was and what is considered traditional so that there is a foundation from which to draw and create something new. The “something new” often comes out of personal interpretation. However, this “something new” could eventually distort the style and change the concept of what traditional is.<sup>80</sup> On the other hand, if composers, arrangers, and players only repeat the traditional, the music may struggle to grow. Perhaps this is why personal interpretation is so valued by the Scottish fiddling revival ideology. As long as the foundation of each style is adhered to, personal interpretation can allow the style to grow in a manner that does not undermine the tradition. The Scottish fiddling styles can be maintained while still allowing players to incorporate new ideas and ways of playing without damaging the authenticity of the fiddling. However, this balance is easier stated than put into practice. How much personal interpretation should be permitted within the framework of the traditional?

“After a tradition has been ‘revived’ the question always arises as to the balance between ‘preservation’ of the tradition (i.e. strict adherence to revivalist stylistic parameters) and innovation, even innovation that is intended to win over a greater audience for the tradition. Frequently, this tension is responsible for the breakdown of the revival,” says Livingston.<sup>81</sup>

Perhaps this is one reason why recordings are significant. They can provide a way for the traditional styles to be maintained while allowing for the evolution of the music to develop into something new. Clear understanding of the Scottish fiddling styles in the minds of performers and judges alike will also prevent the Scottish fiddling revival in the United States from “breaking down.” Livingston warns of this when she suggests that “when there is no longer an overriding concern for ‘authenticity’ (i.e. style markers that are consciously employed for historical reference) and the ‘tradition’ is felt to be too constricting of a reference point by the majority of revivalists, that revivals break down into different styles.”<sup>82</sup> However, in this case, the Scottish fiddling revival already contains many regional styles underneath the umbrella of “Scottish fiddling.” Perhaps such an acceptable variety of regional styles actually supports the overall Scottish fiddling genre rather than tearing it apart. Additionally, while there is evidence of a changing revival, there is no indication of an imminent breakdown due to the vigilance of the judges and the strictness of the competitions.

The implications of interpretation, improved and more specific score forms, and fusion are all indicative of a changing revival. “The balance between individual innovation and adherence to stylistic norms of the tradition are a basic point of tension within revivals,” says

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<sup>79</sup> A strathspey is a dance in 4/4 time, often with dotted rhythms, and typically features the “Scottish snap,” which is written as one sixteenth note and an eighth note but performed as a thirty-second note with a doubly-dotted eighth note. The strathspey is frequently found in the West Highland and North-East Scottish regional fiddling styles, but each strathspey is inherently different in performance execution.

<sup>80</sup> John Turner, e-mail message to author, March 22, 2012.

<sup>81</sup> Livingston, op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

Livingston.<sup>83</sup> It should be noted that the fact that this stage of a revival is apparent also supports the notion of a revival happening in the first place. The remaining question is: “what will this revival turn into?” Will it remain faithful to pure “Scottish” fiddling or will it transform into something new like an “American Scottish style,” similar to the way Scottish fiddling in Canada transformed into the Cape Breton fiddling style? Any revival is made up of individuals with different experiences and opinions. To some extent, these individual revivalists “invent” something new within a revival even while they are simultaneously trying to preserve a tradition.<sup>84</sup> While it is unclear how this Scottish fiddling revival will continue to change or even what its lifespan will be, it is present in the United States with its own momentum and direction. It is no longer a footnote or influence in the history of other American styles of fiddling. It is a distinct, style of fiddling in the United States.

### **Other Scottish Fiddling Organizations**

Scottish Fiddling Revival Ltd. is a component of the overall Scottish fiddling revival in the United States. All elements of Livingston’s revival framework can be seen through this one organization. Also, as stated earlier: F.I.R.E. is the only sanctioning agency for Scottish fiddling judges and competitions in North America. While there are other groups contributing to an overall fiddling revival, one in particular grew out of those associated with the Scottish Fiddling Revival organization.

The Jink and Diddle School began in 1983 and is located in North Carolina. There are various levels of instruction available through workshops, private lessons, and classes. Some of the F.I.R.E. judges are on the staff at the school.<sup>85</sup> The camp is available to players of varying ages and skill levels. Typically, the camp lasts for one to two weeks. Other fiddling clubs and societies are prominent all over the United States. These clubs host competitions, jam sessions, and lessons for players of all ages and skill levels. As mentioned earlier, F.I.R.E. maintains a list of these clubs and the clubs’ contact information is on the F.I.R.E. website. The fact that organizations for Scottish fiddling other than F.I.R.E. are present is significant. It allows Scottish fiddling to remain active and vital in the United States in other ways besides competitions.

### **Future Possibilities for the Revival**

After a tradition is successfully revived, Livingston raises the question of what happens next. Revivals seem to have a variable lifespan. Livingston suggests that “when there is no longer an overriding concern for ‘authenticity,’ and the ‘tradition’ is felt to be too constricting of a reference point by the majority of revivalists, that revivals break down into different styles.”<sup>86</sup> The other alternative involves the music transforming into something else. “Revivalist strains of a genre, distinguished by the term ‘traditional,’ may exist alongside new styles generated by, or

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<sup>83</sup> Livingston, op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>85</sup> “The Jink and Diddle School of Scottish Fiddling,” Last modified 2014, Accessed January 26, 2014, <http://www.jinkdiddle.com>.

<sup>86</sup> Livingston, op. cit., p. 80.

merging with, revivalist genres.”<sup>87</sup> This suggests that music revivals may transform into something new: a new style of fiddling.

Regarding the Scottish fiddling revival in America: a break down seems unlikely. The additions of summer camps for Scottish fiddling are one of the first indications of the revival’s vitality. The ideology of the revival states that their adherence and emphasis on what is fundamental and basic to the Scottish regional styles gives them a solid foundation to fall back on. The changing score forms to reflect better players indicates that the revival is improving and growing, not breaking down. Additionally, the recordings provide another form of stability to the revival. Should some sort of breakdown occur, there is a growing body of “original” material to fall back on. Last, the revival, at the time of writing, has been occurring for nearly 40 years. This length of time is an indicator of strength in the revival, rather than an indication of any sort of breakdown.

The other possibility is the revival transforming into something new. The Scottish fiddling revival in America contains and encourages individual interpretation. If the interpretation of the foundation of the Scottish fiddling style varies enough and with a significant amount of people, it is possible that the tradition will transform, though what it could change into is difficult to say. Further, the “generational gap” described by the judges is what Livingston calls a “basic point of tension within revivals” due to the question that arises regarding “tradition versus authenticity.”<sup>88</sup> Younger judges, being more open to new ways of interpretation may inadvertently cause key changes that eventually lead to the transformation of the fiddling style. On the other hand, the older judges, with their stricter adherence to tradition, may prevent the style from adapting to its new context in the United States.

## Conclusion

This paper examined the Scottish fiddling revival in the United States through an examination of the organization F.I.R.E. as well as a discussion of whether or not such a revival is present according to Tamara E. Livingston’s revival framework. The organization F.I.R.E. demonstrates each element of the framework through the competitions sanctioned by the organization, the jam sessions that they host, the recordings produced, and revivalist activities. All of these elements fall under a broader ideology: core knowledge of the fiddling styles with individual interpretation. Such elements contribute to the structure of the Scottish fiddling revival.

The first element, the core revivalists, consist of competition judges. They are the key factor in the revival because they promote, teach, and preserve the Scottish fiddling styles. They also maintain the standard all players participating in the revival are expected to adhere. Further, they are indirectly responsible for the revival’s direction through their debates on competitions and the relevant score forms, the recordings they make and the students they teach.

The next element, the informants or original sources, are also the judges as well as the recordings made before and during the revival. Both sources are a way for new players to learn this tradition. They also ensure that the revival continues. Should the revival break down, the recordings would be critical to another Scottish fiddling revival.

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>88</sup> Livingston, op. cit., p. 71.

The third element, the ideology and discourse, contains two main components. Each Scottish regional fiddling style has basic musical components that players are expected to follow. Once the basics are mastered, players are permitted to attempt variations on those styles so long as the style is still intact. The ideology also encompasses traditional dress and the continuation of an aural tradition. The ideology of this revival also has implications for its continued existence.

The fourth component, followers, serve several purposes for the revival. They circulate the music, they support the revival through attendance and monetary support, and they are a potential source for new players. The followers typically take the form of the audience, though competitors might also be considered followers as well. Audiences to the competitions come from a wide variety of backgrounds and their knowledge of Scottish culture, Scottish fiddling, and Scottish traditions may vary from very informed to not at all informed. The judges supplement their knowledge by speaking to them at the competitions.

The fifth element, revivalist activities, come in several forms. The competitions themselves are an activity as well as the jam sessions, teaching activities, and fiddling clubs. All of these activities help provide a sense of community vital to the revival. They are also how the revivalists gather and exchange information.

The last component, non-profit and commercial enterprises, often take the form of recordings, though competitions are another source of income. Recordings and competitions provide a means of income to sustain the revival. Recordings are available online and at the Games and competitions. The competitions themselves often consist of an application fee for competitors or an entry fee for the audience. These are additional sources of income.

Additionally, due to Scottish fiddling's history in the United States, the question arises: is this "revival," in fact a revival or is it an introduction of Scottish fiddling to the United States in the first place? Since Scottish fiddling was in the United States long enough to influence Appalachian fiddling, it had to have been present at one time in its original form. Therefore, since it once existed in the United States, it can be revived in the United States. It is also possible that this "revival" is a part of a larger "Celtic revival." While the F.I.R.E. organization was founded during a period of a larger Celtic and folk revival movement, it still meets the framework on its own as a distinct revival. Perhaps it can be thought of as a revival within a revival.

Many shifts have occurred in the revival since its inception, such as adjusted score forms, additional Scottish fiddling organizations, and debates about authenticity. Therefore, these seem to indicate a changing revival, rather than a breakdown of the revival from within. So long as new interpretations are embraced while keeping the traditional as a "foundation" for new players, it seems that Scottish fiddling in the United States is established and has the necessary foundation to sustain itself.

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