

Session format: Papers (three presenters)

Session Tracks: s. Music
v. Social Conditions, Social Life, and Customs

Title: Transmission of Tradition: Music and Dance

All presenters were 2013-2014 Fellows with the Berea College Sound Archives

Convener: Susan Eike Spalding

Session abstract:

These three presentations grew from work supported by Berea College Sound Archives Fellowships. Each one traces the evolution of tradition as it is transferred geographically or generationally. One describes the migration of old time fiddle styles from Appalachia across the Southeastern United States, one examines multi-generational musical families, and one documents the evolution from community-based square dance to competitive clogging teams in one area. In each case, the kernel of the tradition is maintained even as the style changes. Interpersonal connections, in families and local communities, or in networks of those drawn to the art forms, serve as an important factor in the transmission of tradition. The music and dance also help to create bonds among participants and formal and informal institutions have a role in the continuation of these arts. The work of each of the presenters included use of existing materials in the Berea College Sound Archives, primary research, interview, and participant observation.

Migrations of Old Time Appalachian Fiddling Styles. Aisha Ivey, Florida State University.

The focus of Aisha's research is the migration of traditional old time fiddling styles from the Appalachian region throughout the southeast United States. In this presentation, she will share some of her collection of video interviews with fiddlers from within and outside of Appalachia. The focus of the presentation will be the effects of the diaspora on the tradition, both positive and negative. The importance of events, camps or organizations that facilitate connections between the musicians in this era of increased mobility and information sharing will also be discussed.

Appalachian old time music, being a culmination of many different traditional musical styles even within itself, has migrated over many mountains, changing in many ways yet remaining much the same. For those committed to preserving the style, it is important to understand the ways that the tradition adapts to changes. Methods of ensuring "authenticity" and "connection to place" are of utmost importance to many traditionalists. We will discuss why these ideals are important and what we can do to help preserve in a way that enables the most beneficial changes.

Family Music: The Role of Kinship in the Preservation and Transmission of Traditional Music in Kentucky. Page McClean, Colorado Mountain College.

This presentation will share my findings from ethnographic field research conducted in 2014 across the state of Kentucky. Through participant observation and interviews, my research focused on the role that kinship can play in preserving and passing on a variety of traditional musical styles. While kinship can be interpreted as blood bonds, one essential finding of the

research was the broader notion of what anthropologists call “fictive kinship.” My research explores the ways in which music can help create kin, and also the deep bonds shared through music when playing with one’s own family. The research was designed to document not only multi-generational musical families, but also those where a tradition was lost, or recovered after a gap in transmission. I looked also at the role that institutions can play in fostering and supporting musical traditions both new and old, and at ways these musicians interpreted what it means to preserve and transmit their music, which is as varied as the geography of the state.

Square Dancing in Madison County, Kentucky: Evolving Tradition. Susan Eike Spalding, Berea College.

Berea and the surrounding counties were home to a thriving square dance tradition from the early twentieth century into the 1950s. This presentation documents, through interviews, photos, video and news articles, how individuals helped to sustain the tradition as it evolved from a community social event to team competitions. In the late 1930s, several families established a private “party house” outside the Berea city limits, specifically for square dancing. The people who danced there called square dances at public events held at area schools and lodges, and trained others to do so. Some of the younger dancers became the first square dance teams at the Renfro Valley Barn Dance, beginning in 1939, and called for the immensely popular street dance that was part of the Berea Community Home-Coming that took place from 1950 to 1965. In the 1950s, as competitive team square dancing grew in popularity, these same people were actively engaged in supporting their children’s square dance teams, making costumes, transporting them to performances and contests, and sometimes calling their dances and organizing intergenerational dances with their families.

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Biographical summaries:

Aisha Ivey, presenter, is an award-winning fiddler, teacher and researcher. She started and directs The Old Time Ensemble class at Florida State University, a class that focuses on Appalachian old-time music and dance. She also teaches the Tallahassee Youth Orchestra Fiddlers and she is the president of The Florida State Fiddlers Association.

Page McClean, presenter, is a visual anthropologist who has engaged in ethnographic research in Europe and the Americas on diverse topics such as immigration, food, and outdoor adventure sports. Her work has screened at the Ethnografilm Festival, the Montreal International Black Film Festival, and the Caribbean Tales Festival. In addition to her work in anthropology and video, she is a singer-songwriter and an acoustic guitarist. She currently works as an educator and a writer in Colorado.

Susan Eike Spalding, presenter and convener, has been dancing in the Appalachian region for almost three decades, and has served as a consultant for the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife and the Kentucky Folklife Festival. She edited the dance entries for the *Encyclopedia of Appalachia*, and co-produced two Appalshop video documentaries on old-time dance. Her book *Appalachian Dance: Creativity and Continuity in Six Communities* has recently been published by the University of Illinois Press.

Special requirements: computer and projector/screen and speakers; dvd projector; A/V connector for a Mac laptop, with screen and speakers.