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“That’s the way I’ve always learned”:

The Transmission of Traditional Music in Higher Education

A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the School of Continuing Studies and Academic Outreach

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

by

Alexandra Frank

May 2014

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Keywords: Music education, Traditional music, Pedagogy, Appalachia

ABSTRACT

“That’s the way I’ve always learned”:

The Transmission of Traditional Music in Higher Education

by

Alexandra Frank

This research examines the establishment of degree programs in traditional music in institutions of higher education. It defines traditional music and discusses the history of traditional and folk music programs at universities and conservatories in the United States, Finland, Scotland, and England. The institutionalization of American traditional music is compared to the institutionalization of jazz music in the United States. This thesis focuses on the Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music Studies program at East Tennessee State University and features original ethnographic interviews with lecturers from the program. Two similar programs in Tennessee and Kentucky are also discussed. Some of the issues that are explored within these programs include standardization, improvisation and imitation, the use of sheet music, and job potential. The purpose of this research is to examine if and how institutionalization affects traditional music.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Lee Bidgood, Dr. Marie Tedesco, and Jane MacMorran for their constant guidance and support during this process. I greatly appreciate your knowledge and assistance. I would also like to thank all of the kind and talented people who generously took the time to speak with me during my research: Jack Tottle, Raymond McLain, Dan Boner, Roy Andrade, Colleen Trenwith, Adam Steffey, Paul Leech, Brandon Green, J.P. Mathes, Lynn Peterson, Kris Truelsen, and Laura Ford.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Academic institutions of higher education have begun to teach traditional forms of music only within the past thirty to forty years. The study of traditional music at the university level is a relatively new concept. My research focuses on institutions that teach the traditional music of the southern Appalachian region¹ of the United States, particularly the Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music Studies program at East Tennessee State University (ETSU), the Kentucky School of Bluegrass and Traditional Music at Hazard Technical and Community College (HCTC) and the Bluegrass Music Program at Volunteer State Community College (VSCC). I will compare the pedagogy of these programs to others at institutions in Finland, Scotland, and England. Structured university programs and curricula can be successfully developed and implemented to teach traditional music in the academic environment of institutions of higher education without the loss of the music's traditional methods of transmission. My research and interviews investigate both the positive and negative views of placing traditional music in an academic environment. In this thesis, I examine how universities and colleges establish degree courses in traditional music and whether or not the music must be adapted and standardized in order to become part of a curriculum. I also discuss the teaching methods used to teach traditional music in institutions of higher education, and whether or not the traditional ways of teaching this music have been altered. I explore if, and how, components of traditional music such as

¹ According to John C. Campbell, Southern Appalachia begins in Pennsylvania and extends to northern Alabama. It is nearly 400 miles wide at its widest point and contains three major provinces: the Blue Ridge, the Ridge and Valley, and the Allegheny/Cumberland plateaus. It includes the entire state of West Virginia, parts of western Maryland, western Virginia, eastern Kentucky, eastern Tennessee, western North Carolina, northwestern South Carolina, northern Georgia and northern Alabama. The Appalachian Regional Commission, founded in 1963, currently includes 420 counties in their definition of Appalachia. In addition to the previously mentioned states, this includes western and central Pennsylvania, southwestern New York, eastern Ohio, and northeastern Mississippi.

repertoire and improvisation have changed by being placed into an academic setting.

“Traditional” music refers to music that is part of an aural transmission process. It has been passed down from generation to generation and is not commonly written down or notated.² The aural transmission process often results in multiple versions or variations of a particular song or tune.³ This method of transmission allows for the music to change continually and prevents the music from becoming static. Traditional music is usually associated with a specific cultural or geographical group of people. The music of the Appalachian region is diverse. Appalachian music evolved during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a regional combination of various ethnic and popular musics.⁴ Some of the traditional genres of music associated with the southern Appalachian region are old-time or string-band music, country, bluegrass, Celtic and music of the British Isles, Western swing, and religious gospel music. Some traditional Appalachian styles of music, particularly bluegrass and country music, can also be seen as forms of popular music because they have been a part of the commercial recording industry since their creation. They remain traditional because of their emphasis on aural transmission.⁵ The transmission process and the continual changes and variations that the process creates is what defines traditional music. In Chapter Two, this thesis contributes a detailed overview and discussion of “traditional” music and further explores the definition and use of this term.

My own introduction to the topic of traditional music in higher education began while I

² Huib Schippers, *Facing the Music: Shaping Music Education from a Global Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 42.

³ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁴ Ted Olson, “Music,” *Encyclopedia of Appalachia*, University of Tennessee Press, <http://encyclopediaofappalachia.com/category.php?rec=53> (accessed March 19, 2014).

⁵ Bruno Nettl discusses the relationship between folk and popular music in *Folk and Traditional Music of the Western Continents* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1973), and Neil Rosenberg discusses bluegrass as popular music in *Bluegrass: A History*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985). This will be explored further in Chapter Two.

was studying for a Bachelor of Arts degree at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (formerly the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama) in Glasgow, Scotland, from 2008 to 2011. As a student representative for my cohort, I attended meetings with administrators and other student representatives to discuss issues and any possible changes related to the degree program. At one meeting, the discussion focused on how former graduates were using their degrees as musicians. The discussants introduced me to Jo Miller and Peggy Duesenberry's article "Where are they now? The First Graduates of the BA (Scottish Music) Degree."⁶ I found the topic very interesting and I emailed Anne Dhu McLucas, who sent me a copy of her unpublished research paper that Miller and Duesenberry had referenced, "The Scottish Experiment: Incorporating Traditional Music in Higher Education."⁷ In my final year at RCS, I wrote a short paper for one of my classes that discussed some of the issues mentioned by these two sources.

As a student in the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies program at East Tennessee State University, I took classes in the Department of Appalachian Studies and the Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music Studies program. I have taken individual instruction lessons on fiddle and mandolin and played fiddle in Celtic and bluegrass bands. Over time, I began to see similarities between the study of traditional American genres of music in the Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music Studies program at ETSU and the study of traditional Scottish music at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. While trying to research the parallels of which I had become aware, I found there to be very little research examining the teaching of traditional or folk music in American institutions of higher education. Therefore, I decided to focus my thesis

⁶ Jo Miller and Peggy Duesenberry, "Where are they now? The First Graduates of the BA (Scottish Music) degree" (Paper, Palatine Conference, Perth College, UK, June 2007).

⁷ Anne Dhu McLucas, "The Scottish Experiment: Incorporating Traditional Music in Higher Education" (Unpublished paper, 2003).

on concerns related to the teaching of traditional music in higher education, using the Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music Studies program at East Tennessee State University as a case study.

The program at ETSU can be viewed in context alongside programs in traditional music at other academic institutions, as well as programs in world music and jazz studies. I have relied on sources that discuss traditional music degree programs in other countries, particularly Juniper Hill's research in Finland; Simon Keegan-Phipps's work in England; and Jo Miller's, Peggy Duesenberry's, and Anne Dhu McLucas's studies in Scotland. I also have used sources that consider topics in world music education, specifically by Huib Schippers, Patricia Campbell, and Terese Volk. There is extensive research related to the implications of adding jazz studies to higher education, and I have referenced several articles that focus on this topic.

In the rest of this first chapter, I discuss my interview methods. In Chapter Two, I define “traditional” music. In Chapter Three, I trace briefly the history of music in American institutions of higher education. I then review the history of jazz in higher education and some of the problems faced by jazz studies at the university level. Chapter Four provides an overview of several traditional music degree programs at institutions of higher education. This chapter also explores world music and popular music studies. In Chapter Five, I provide an overview of two community colleges that teach traditional music in the United States: Volunteer State Community College in Gallatin, Tennessee, and Hazard Community and Technical College in Hazard, Kentucky. Then, I discuss the establishment and history of the Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music Studies program at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee. Chapter Six explores several aspects of traditional music as it is taught in higher education. These include the use of sheet music versus teaching by ear; how improvisation is taught; how to avoid

imitation and homogenization of the music; and the potential careers to which these degrees might lead. Finally, in Chapter Seven, I present some closing thoughts.

Methods

In March of 2014, I conducted twelve interviews with individuals who have experience either teaching or studying traditional music in institutions of higher education. The interviews included both current and former professors and administrators from East Tennessee State University and current professors at Morehead State University and Hazard Community and Technical College, both in Kentucky, and Volunteer State Community College in Gallatin, Tennessee. Several of the interviewees were involved in the process of establishing these programs and creating curricula. In addition to their role in academia, all of the teachers have had experience performing music professionally. The two students I interviewed both graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music Studies from ETSU. The majority of these interviews took place in person in Johnson City, Tennessee. A few were conducted over the phone due to geographical distances. On average, the interviews lasted between thirty minutes and one hour.⁸

I followed the guidelines and recommendations set forth by James Spradley in his book *The Ethnographic Interview*, particularly the chapter “Interviewing an Informant.”⁹ For the most part, I asked the same questions during all of the interviews. The questions varied slightly depending on each individual's role in his/her respective institution and what types of classes he/she teaches or has taught in the past. Although I followed a list of structured questions, the

⁸ The interviews conducted as part of this research were approved by East Tennessee State University's Internal Review Board. All interviewees were required to sign an “Informed Interview Consent Form.”

⁹ James Spradley, *Ethnographic Interview* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc, 1979), 55.

interviews were more like conversations, and I asked follow-up questions based on the issues and ideas that were raised. Open-ended questions, beginning with the general and then continuing with more specific questions, helped to address my own bias as a researcher.¹⁰ I found that everyone was interested and open to discussing the topic of traditional music in higher education, likely due to their passion for traditional music and their experiences in both teaching and performing it.

During the past two years that I have spent at ETSU, I have taken several individual instruction and band classes in the Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music Studies program. Therefore, I have been taught by several of the teachers I interviewed and I have had classes alongside the students I interviewed. This made contacting them and arranging interviews fairly easy. A few of them already knew about the research on which I was working. Here, I relied on Jeff Todd Titon's chapter "Knowing Fieldwork," in *Shadows in the Field*, in which he discusses his own experiences interviewing his friends and acquaintances as part of his fieldwork. He advocates a "visiting" approach to fieldwork rather than "observing." In a time when interviewing and collecting can often be seen as invasive, Titon writes, "Sometimes a combination of friendship and tacit contract is most effective."¹¹

I am aware of the effect that my own personal bias and the bias of the people I interviewed may have on this study. My experience as a student within traditional music programs makes me an insider to this culture and to the institutions at which I have studied. The instructors and former students whom I interviewed are also insiders to traditional Appalachian

¹⁰ Kathryn Roulston, *Reflective Interviewing: A Guide to Theory and Practice* (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2010), 87.

¹¹ Jeff Todd Titon, "Knowing Fieldwork," in *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*, ed. Gregory F. Barz and Timothy J. Cooley (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 33.

music and to the institutions at which they teach. As employees or students of traditional music programs in higher education and also as active participants of traditional music, their opinions are likely to differ from outsiders who are unfamiliar with traditional music. Nettl states that it is important to recognize the difference between insider and outsider interpretations because both are valid. The insider provides “the perspective that the culture has of itself,” while the outsider provides “an essentially comparative and universalist approach.”¹² The insider stance provides my research with both advantages and limitations. My proximity provides my study with a unique and up-close insider outlook of traditional music programs in higher education. However, a personal attachment to the topic of this study is likely to promote a positive approach and perhaps avoids an overly critical or harsh depiction of institutions that teach traditional music.

As mentioned in my introduction, there is very little research regarding the study of traditional music at institutions of higher education in the United States. The topic of traditional music at institutions of higher education is explored in research from the United Kingdom and Europe, but institutions that teach the traditional music of southern Appalachia are yet to be studied with the same methods and approach. Therefore, the interviews and the information and various perspectives and ideas that the interviews provided me with have been exceptionally valuable. Many of the people I interviewed recommended others with whom they thought I should speak or suggested books and articles pertaining to my topic of research. This was extremely helpful.

I have analyzed the information that I acquired during the interviews by focusing on specific topics related to the teaching of traditional music in higher education. As stated in Chapters Five and Six, many of the people I interviewed have similar opinions regarding the

¹² Bruno Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 153.

teaching of traditional music in higher education, even though their ideas and teaching methods vary. The commonalities among the opinions of instructors likely exists because they are, for the most part, of the same musical tradition and teach in the same region. However, during the interviews and while listening to the recorded interviews, I found there to be many similarities between the programs in Tennessee and Kentucky, programs in jazz education, and traditional music programs in other countries.

In *Reflective Interviewing*, Kathryn Roulston defines thematic analysis as sorting qualitative data into thematic groups in order to define categories.¹³ There are universal themes that arise in the discussion of many non-classical forms of music. While transcribing and analyzing the interviews conducted for this study, four main questions stood out as yielding the most discussion and interest from the interviewees. Three of the topics relate directly to the transmission process of traditional music. These are the use of sheet music in traditional music pedagogy, the methods used to teach improvisation, and the concern of imitation or homogenization within traditional music. The fourth topic relates to the overall effects of institutionalization by focusing on potential jobs and career options for students of traditional music. These four issues are discussed in Chapter Six.

¹³ Roulston, *Reflective Interviewing: A Guide to Theory and Practice*, 150.

CHAPTER 2

THE DEFINITION OF TRADITIONAL

The term “traditional” can describe music from a variety of countries and origins. In most cases it refers to music identified as belonging to a particular culture, ethnic group, or geographic group over an extended period of time. “Traditional” suggests that the music has been passed down through generations, usually via aural transmission and without notation.

Ethnomusicologist Huib Schippers claims that “traditional” can be used to describe “a wide range of art and religious music.”¹ The term can apply to music from any culture or location around the world; it is not limited to a certain region or time period. Schippers purposely refers to musical transmission as an aural process, rather than oral, throughout his work. This includes all transmission that takes place by ear, whether it be via voice, instruments, or recordings. The definition of oral transmission is limited, according to Schippers, because it refers to communication by the mouth rather than by ear.²

Due to present-day availability and access to publications, recordings, and online resources, traditional music does not always rely on aural transmission. Traditional music must have evolved from a process of aural transmission. However, aural transmission does not have to remain the primary way of sharing the music.³ Aural transmission occurs in other genres of music and is not a characteristic exclusive to traditional and folk musics. Philip Bohlman states that although earlier scholarship on folk music suggested certain definitions and requirements, folk music does not need to be “rural and particularly old” and does not need to “circulate solely

¹ Schippers, *Facing the Music: Shaping Music Education from a Global Perspective*, 23.

² *Ibid.*, xii.

³ Simon Keegan-Phipps, “Teaching Folk: The Educational Institutionalization of Folk Music in Contemporary England” (PhD diss., Newcastle University, 2008), 47.

through oral transmission.”⁴

“Traditional” music may be linked to nationalism, but this is not always the case. Musical traditions often encompass a specific region, culture, or ethnic group within a country. One country can have several examples of traditional music. The traditional music associated with a particular country may not have even originated within that geographic location. For example, the origins of some music traditions of the United States and Canada can be found in Great Britain and Ireland. Folk music has been used to promote nationalism in the past. For example, Cecil Sharp attempted to use English folk songs to shape a strong national British culture.⁵

The term “traditional music” can apply to different styles of music based on the culture or geographic region that is being discussed. Therefore, it is difficult to provide a definition that includes a description of musical elements and sound. The sound of the music that these terms imply will vary based on the country or nationality that is being discussed. The definition of traditional music therefore relates to the history, transmission, and status of the music rather than its musical features.

For the purpose of this thesis, traditional music refers to the various styles of music that have a strong cultural and historical connection to the southern Appalachian region of the United States. These include, but are not limited to, the bluegrass, old-time, country, and Celtic genres of music. Although not all of these styles originated in the southern Appalachian region, they have become a part of the region's musical tradition and flourished in the area. According to Raymond McLain, the former director of the Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music Studies program at

⁴ Philip V. Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), xvi.

⁵ Benjamin Filene, *Romancing Folk: Public Memory and American Roots Music* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 22.

East Tennessee State University, and the current director of the Kentucky Center for Traditional Music at Morehead State University, “We consider traditional music to be bluegrass, old-time, old-time country, Celtic, blues, Western swing, and gospel from many different traditions.”

McLain notes that, “Basically the music that is associated with our southern mountain region.”⁶

The traditional music of Appalachia has been shaped by a variety of influences. The first European influences came in the form of balladry and fiddling from the British Isles.

Appalachian music was also greatly influenced by African American traditions. The banjo is of African American origin, as are some Appalachian ballads. There is also a legacy of religious music in the region in the form of shape-note singing and southern gospel music.⁷

In *Appalachian Folkways*, geographer John B. Rehder writes that folk is what is established by tradition. He states, “Tradition is the common denominator that makes things folk.”⁸ Traditions are handed down from generation to generation, and often the specific origins of the tradition remain unknown. There is the suggestion from those within the tradition that, “It’s always been this way.”⁹ Rehder also uses the term “folk” frequently, but in the context that folk culture occurs in traditional environments. Appalachia does not have one singular musical tradition, just like it does not have a singular uniform culture. According to Rehder, the traditional music of Appalachia has “a clouded and complicated history.”¹⁰ The musical influences of the region are wide and cannot be linked exclusively to any one culture or ethnic group. Rehder implies that a history of aural tradition is perhaps the main identifying component of traditional music.

⁶ Raymond McLain, interview by author, Telephone conversation, March 3, 2014.

⁷ Olson, “Music,” <http://encyclopediaofappalachia.com/category.php?rec=53>

⁸ John B. Rehder, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004), 17.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 244.

Folklorist Jane Becker examines the construction and preservation of Appalachian folk traditions in *Selling Tradition: Selling Tradition: Appalachia and the Construction of an American Folk, 1930-1940*. She also suggests that “tradition” refers mainly to the transmission process of the culture: “‘Tradition’ refers to the past, of course, but also the way in which the past is transmitted; it refers to the passing down of knowledge from generation to generation and implies value and veneration.”¹¹ Essentially, tradition allows for the current and future maintenance of what a culture considered to be important in its past. It is one’s own interpretation and understanding of their traditions that defines their culture. According to Becker, the definitions of “tradition” and “folk” imply more about the interpreters of the culture rather than the culture itself.¹²

The traditions of folk cultures, music or otherwise, are sometimes viewed as historical or even ancient practices that needs to be preserved before it disappears. The Arts and Crafts movement and its leader William Morris served as the ideological foundation for American folklorists and revivalists, says Becker.¹³ Morris viewed folkways as a unique subculture that needed to be preserved and protected from the negative effects of mass society and mass production.¹⁴ In reality, traditions are often continuing and evolving, and they are not always at risk of being lost. In his essay, “Rethinking Folk Revivalism,” Richard Blaustein relates that folk traditions are often preserved in a romanticized fashion. It is even possible for immigrants to selectively or nostalgically reconstruct their traditional cultures, says Blaustein.¹⁵ According to ethnomusicologist Mark Slobin, it is unlikely for a tradition to die out and disappear completely.

¹¹ Jane S. Becker (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 1.

¹² Ibid., 2

¹³ Ibid., 18.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Richard Blaustein, “Rethinking Folk Revivalism: Grass-roots Preservationism and Folk Romanticism,” in *Transforming Tradition*, ed. Neil V. Rosenberg (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 271.

It is more likely that the tradition will be reconstructed by individuals in order to better suit their social and cultural identities.¹⁶ By doing this, the culture is essentially reinventing their own traditions.

Some scholars debate whether “traditional” implies a static form of music or a music that allows for change and evolves over time. Most sources agree that traditional music involves progress and even innovation. Huib Schippers refers to changing traditional forms of music as “living traditions.”¹⁷ This means that the tradition remains active as long as the transmission of the music is still occurring and the music still has a place within a community. Schippers also quotes ethnomusicologist Laurent Aubert, who provides perhaps one of the clearest definitions of traditional music. “The nature of tradition – musical in this case – is not to preserve intact a heritage from the past, but to enrich it according to present circumstances and transmit the result to future generations,” writes Aubert.¹⁸ Aubert's definition implies that traditional music is not a historical artifact but rather a present and evolving phenomenon. This definition fits in well with the goals of the traditional music degree programs that are discussed later in this paper.

Ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl agrees with this concept. Not only is folk music experiencing constant change in modern times, says Nettl, it must be assumed that the music always has experienced change in the past.¹⁹ Traditional music can retain its original style, characteristics, and canon while at the same time adapting to the current environment.

Another characteristic of traditional music is that it can be composed by many individuals within a community or by the community as a whole. An individual does not have to be the

¹⁶ Richard Blaustein, “Rethinking Folk Revivalism: Grass-roots Preservationism and Folk Romanticism,” in *Transforming Tradition*, ed. Neil V. Rosenberg, 271.

¹⁷ Huib Schippers, *Facing the Music: Shaping Music Education from a Global Perspective*, 45.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Nettl, *Folk and Traditional Music of the Western Continents*, 10.

original composer in order to make changes to a piece of traditional music. Nettl refers to this process as “communal re-creation.”²⁰ The tradition must approve of a piece of music. If the community does not approve, it will not be played, performed, and shared, and it will eventually cease to exist. The community shapes the tradition by choosing what music they like and sharing that music in the tradition. The music that the community chooses to share is usually an unconscious decision. Either way, every piece of music that becomes a part of a tradition is representative of the musical preferences of those who play it.²¹ In this way the musicians and audience are likely to influence the music more so than the original composer.

The very nature of aural transmission suggests that traditional music has always allowed for variations. If the music is not written down, it is bound to be adapted based on the abilities, style, and preferences of the individual performer and his or her community and environment. These adaptations can produce unique regional styles within a tradition. Even when traditional music is handed down carefully and accurately through generations, “musics transmitted almost entirely aurally are subject to change.”²² Schippers cites ethnomusicologist Timothy Rice, who discusses the faults of human memory.²³ The human memory is often faulty and therefore the transmission process does not always result in an exact replica of the original piece of music. Alterations are to be expected when music is consistently moving and being shared between people. It is our own memories that create variations, sometimes unintentionally, within the music. Because there is usually no definitive written version of the music that is being transmitted, these changes are frequently accepted and can easily become a part of the tradition.

²⁰ Nettl, *Folk and Traditional Music of the Western Continents*, 5.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

²² Huib Schippers, *Facing the Music: Shaping Music Education from a Global Perspective*, 78.

²³ *Ibid.*, 77.

In addition to the process of aural transmission, there is a notion that the composer of a piece of traditional music must remain unknown. Scholar George Carney lists three criteria for folk music. In addition to aural transmission and the presence of variations, he states that “the origin of the melody must be unknown to the performer.”²⁴ There are many pieces of traditional music to which this statement applies to, but this is not always the case. In Celtic music, for example, there are traditional tunes that can be traced back to composers in the eighteenth century. Many songs within the modern American musical traditions of country and bluegrass have traceable origins either to a composer or songwriter. When the original composer is unknown, the piece of music may be attributed to its first or most popular performer. To a lesser extent, the origins of some old-time tunes are known as well. The repertoire of the old-time mountain music that was recorded during the development of the commercial recording industry of the 1920s and 1930s contains a variety of influences, including newly composed songs.²⁵

Paul Leech is a lecturer in the Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music Studies program at East Tennessee State University. He instructs several country bands within the program. “To me,” says Leech, “A truly traditional tune is something that -- it's a song that's so old that you don't remember who wrote it. So, in a lot of ways, you could even bump bluegrass off of that as much as you could bump country off of that.”²⁶ However, he does believe that it is natural for the music to continue to grow and change over time. It is possible for the music to change and still remain a part of its tradition. “I think that every tradition picks up new things along the way, so that's where country music -- as a commercial genre -- that's kind of what it's doing, it's just sort of evolving and picking up different things,” continues Leech, “There's enough artists out there, I

²⁴ Rehder, *Appalachian Folkways*, 245.

²⁵ Becker, *Selling Tradition: Appalachia and the Construction of an American Folk, 1930-1940*, 53.

²⁶ Paul Leech, interview by author, Johnson City, TN, March 6, 2014.

think, that are still sticking true to what country music is.”²⁷ Bruno Nettl states that although Western folk music culture is influenced by urban mass media, it continues to remain “somewhat intact.”²⁸

There is no doubt that today's modern country recording industry has moved away from traditional music and towards popular music. Bluegrass, as a genre, can be seen as crossing the boundaries between traditional and popular music. While non-Western traditional music can be classified fairly clearly, Nettl states that the folk cultures of America and Europe can sometimes be difficult to separate from art music and popular music.²⁹ Bluegrass may contain elements of popular commercial music; however, it remains a part of folk culture. Folklorist and bluegrass expert Neil Rosenberg says that it is not desirable to draw a dividing line between the two. “Bluegrass admirably demonstrates the many ways in which folk and popular art commingle in contemporary society,” writes Rosenberg.³⁰ The argument exists because of the fact that although bluegrass has its origins in traditional music and its repertoire consists of many pieces of traditional music, it has always existed as a professional and commercial form of music.³¹ It also features a great deal of newly composed music. If bluegrass is applied to the previously mentioned definitions and criteria of “traditional,” then it is certainly a traditional music. The fact that it is part of an aural transmission process justifies it as traditional music. Although some sheet music collections exist, bluegrass continues to be part of an aural tradition. Bluegrass musicians still share the tradition and learn music by ear, whether it be in person from another musician, by listening to a recording, or watching a YouTube video on the Internet. Variations

²⁷ Leech, March 6, 2014.

²⁸ Nettl, *Folk and Traditional Music of the Western Continents*, 2.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁰ Neil V. Rosenberg, *Bluegrass: A History*, 5.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

and improvisation are also important elements in bluegrass, as they are in many forms of traditional music.

When discussing the traditional music of southern Appalachia, it is necessary to acknowledge the primary racial and gender components of the genres. Bluegrass is a male-dominated genre of music. “Bluegrass was and remains, by all accounts, a masculinized folk genre,” writes feminist scholar Pamela Fox.³² Fox claims that female vocalists and musicians are dismissed as “too frail” to participate. The same principal applies historically to country music, but this has changed to some extent since the 1950s. Fox cites Kitty Wells as the breakthrough commercial artist who paved the way for other female country musicians.³³ Although country music has always allowed for female performers and there are many examples of women within country music today, the genre is usually associated with “straight white men.”³⁴ Country music is also perceived as “white” music, says scholar Geoff Mann.³⁵ It is commonly produced and consumed by white people. Country music is associated with a southern working-class culture that has often “asserted its whiteness more overtly than structurally equivalent whites in other parts of the U.S.,” writes Mann.³⁶ The sources mentioned here focus on performers and consumers of music rather than teachers. However, the faculty of the Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music Studies program at ETSU represents the image of a genre of music that is primarily associated with white men. All of the instructors in the program at ETSU are white and only two are female.

³² Pamela Fox, *Natural Acts: Gender, Race, and Rusticity in Country Music* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 178.

³³ *Ibid.*, 91.

³⁴ Jacqueline Edmondson, ed., *Music in American Life* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2013), 1044.

³⁵ Geoff Man, “Why does country music sound white? Race and the voice of nostalgia,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 1 (January 2008): 74.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 82.

Bruno Nettl distinguishes between the folk and traditional music of cultures and the music that he refers to as tribal. Folk music, says Nettl, exists in countries that also have another professional form of music such as classical art music.³⁷ In this case the use of an aural transmission process is not a result of the people or culture lacking literacy. The people share the music by ear, even though they may have the ability to write it down. Tribal music, on the other hand, usually comes from an illiterate culture that lacks any other form of written music culture.³⁸ However, this does not mean that the tribal music is any less complex or artistic than Western music.³⁹ Regardless of their literacy, folk and tribal communities share music in the same way. In some cultures, particularly in Indian and other Asian music, this concept of traditional music is referred to as “classical” by the people within the tradition. This is different from the Western definition of classical music. For example, Indian classical music is part of an aural transmission process and rarely uses notation.⁴⁰

Other terms sometimes used instead of “traditional” music are “roots” music or “world” music. These terms were created primarily for marketing purposes and are most commonly used to describe non-Western musical traditions. Representatives from British independent record labels reportedly coined the term “world” music in 1987.⁴¹ They were looking for ways to promote the new music they had discovered from Africa and Asia. They decided that “world” music would be more appealing and less scholarly than labeling the music as “international” or “ethnic.”⁴² Although the term may have been invented first for marketing purposes, it is used today in the fields of music education and ethnomusicology. “World” music almost always refers

³⁷ Nettl, *Folk and Traditional Music of the Western Continents*, 1.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁰ Schippers, *Facing the Music: Shaping Music Education from a Global Perspective*, 23.

⁴¹ Ibid., 17.

⁴² Ibid.

to non-Western traditional music. Most world music is considered to be traditional and to have long-standing historical origins in a specific culture, but today the term is sometimes also applied to modern music from non-Western countries.

“Traditional” is often used interchangeably with the term “folk” music, though they do not always suggest the exact same characteristics. In recent years, “folk” has been somewhat overused and has come to represent a large spectrum of music from around the world. The term is frequently used in music marketing to describe popular musicians and modern bands. It would appear that by current standards, almost any musical group that relies mainly on acoustic instruments has come to be marketed as “folk.” German scholars first used the term “folk” in the eighteenth century to refer to a group of people or to the people of a nation.⁴³ In this sense, folk music can be music that belongs to any group of people; however, it usually refers to “national” music and music that has direct links to one's nationality.

In the United States folk music commonly has been associated with protest music. Even prior to the American folk music revival of the 1950s and 1960s, folk music featured left-leaning musicians. It was during the Great Depression of 1930s that folk revivalism first established its left-wing political agenda.⁴⁴ Newly composed folk songs were often used as protest tools. The folksongs of Appalachia were an important part of the early connection between folk music and politics in the 1930s. Aunt Molly Jackson, a nurse and midwife living in Harlan County, Kentucky, wrote several coal mining protest songs.⁴⁵ They were songs of protest against the capitalist system. Her husband and several other members of her family were killed while

⁴³ Keegan-Phipps, “Teaching Folk: The Educational Institutionalization of Folk Music in Contemporary England,” 32.

⁴⁴ Michael F. Scully. *The Never-Ending Revival: Rounder Records and the Folk Alliance* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 34.

⁴⁵ David King Dunaway, *Singing Out: An Oral History of America's Folk Music Revivals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 40.

working in the coalmines of Harlan County. Jackson's songs include "I Am A Union Woman" and "Hard Times in Coleman's Mines." In 1931, she was discovered by the Dreiser Committee, a group of writers who had come to Kentucky to witness the struggle of coal mining communities. Jackson travelled to perform in New York City in December 1931 and performed for thousands of people.⁴⁶ Jackson and her songs are said to have inspired Charles Seeger's interest in traditional music.⁴⁷ Jackson's half sister, Sarah Ogan Gunning, was also a singer and composed several songs about the Kentucky coal mines. She was recorded by Alan Lomax in 1937 and, later, by Archie Green in 1963.⁴⁸

It is interesting to note that the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) was known as the International Folk Music Council prior to changing its name in 1981.⁴⁹ The council did not discuss or explain its reasons for changing its name.⁵⁰ Some scholars, such as Philip Bohlman, saw the name change as a sign of losing faith in folk music.⁵¹ Although the council changed its name, it still continues to use both of the terms, "traditional" and "folk," almost interchangeably. More than fifteen years after the name change, in 1997, the council published a collection entitled *Historical Studies on Folk and Traditional Music*. The introduction to the collection states that "the boundaries between the various types of music that are mostly orally transmitted are by no means stable, but fluid and blurred."⁵² Traditional music changes gradually over time, just as the cultural traditions of any group will change and adapt to the times. The

⁴⁶ University of Virginia, "Folksinger Aunt Molly Jackson, Kentucky Coal Mining Diva," *American Studies at UVA*, <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA05/luckey/amj/newyork.htm> (accessed March 21, 2014).

⁴⁷ David King Dunaway, *Singing Out: An Oral History of America's Folk Music Revivals*, 40.

⁴⁸ Ron Pen, "Sarah Ogan Gunning," *Encyclopedia of Appalachia*, University of Tennessee Press, <http://www.encyclopediaofappalachia.com/entry.php?rec=104> (accessed March 21, 2014).

⁴⁹ Schippers, *Facing the Music: Shaping Music Education from a Global Perspective*, 24.

⁵⁰ Keegan-Phipps, "Teaching Folk: The Educational Institutionalization of Folk Music in Contemporary England," 42.

⁵¹ Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*, xiii.

⁵² Doris Stockmann and Jens Henrik Koudal, eds., *Historical Studies on Folk and Traditional Music*, (Copenhagen: Danish Folklore Archives, 1997), 7.

council acknowledges that there will be adaptation to repertoire, music styles, and even instruments.⁵³ Although the term refers to music with a longstanding aural history, the definition of traditional music is constantly evolving.

⁵³ Doris Stockmann and Jens Henrik Koudal, eds., *Historical Studies on Folk and Traditional Music*, 7.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORY OF MUSIC IN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Early American education of the seventeenth century in New England focused on practical skills and religion, and it was not until the nineteenth century that music became a regular subject in public schools.¹ In 1938, the Boston School Committee added regular instruction in music to their curriculum.² Before its addition to school curricula, music was only for worship and religious ceremonies. In the New England colonies of the seventeenth century, religious worship music was part of an oral transmission process and written music was not used.³ The concept of singing schools began in the early eighteenth century and became very popular.⁴ These classes taught singing along with basic music skills and notation. They were held in places such as schools or churches. The first printed collections of songs and notation were for church music. Institutions of higher education began to offer music classes in the 1830s. The Harvard Musical Association was founded in 1837.⁵ In 1872,⁶ Boston University became the first American institution to offer a degree in music.⁷ However, the study of music was not always a priority at universities and colleges in the United States. Musicologist Douglass Seaton credits the current status of music in higher education to “a century of devotion and hard work” from faculty, administration, and organizations.⁸ Music in its various formats has been valued in the

¹ Michael L. Mark, *Contemporary Music Education* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1978), 4.

² *Ibid.*, 6.

³ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵ Harvard Musical Association, “A Brief History of the Harvard Musical Association,” Boston, MA, <http://hmaboston.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/hmahistory.pdf> (accessed March 8, 2014).

⁶ Also in 1872, Boston University became the first university to open all divisions to female students. The first African American female to receive a medical degree in the United States graduated from BU in 1864.

⁷ Boston University, “Master of Music, Music Education,” *Boston University Distance Education*, Boston, MA, <http://www.bu.edu/online/programs/graduate-degree/master-music-education/> (accessed March 8, 2014).

⁸ Douglass Seaton. “Music and American Higher Education.” *The College Music Society*, 1. <http://www.music.org/pdf/mihe/m&ahe.pdf> (accessed March 4, 2014).

American education system for hundreds of years. However, it was only after 1900 that music as a discipline in higher education became a respected specialization.⁹ During this time period institutions defined teaching methods and standardized curricula. Music programs, representing all genres and areas of study, make up 1.6 percent of the spectrum of higher education in the United States today.¹⁰ The majority of these programs specialize in Western classical music.

As a discipline, music has borrowed from other areas of study. The development of musicology depended on the disciplines of art history and literary studies. In *Humanities, Culture, and Interdisciplinarity*, Julie Klein writes that music involves the overlapping of value-concerns in the arts and humanities.¹¹ A canon is used to define the discipline of music; however, a musical canon is more than just a body of works. It includes “a performance repertory, a publication apparatus, and a compositional ‘language’ based on shared assumptions,” writes Klein.¹² Literature in the discipline focused on European art music until John Tasker Howard’s 1930 publication of *Our American Music*. This work retained a “high cultural bias,” according to Klein, but it did include “some women composers, Native and African American music, and oral traditions.”¹³ The study of American music can be found in the fields of American studies, ethnomusicology, folklore, and multicultural studies.¹⁴

Traditional Music in American Higher Education

An important event in the history of traditional music education in the United States was

⁹ Seaton, “Music and American Higher Education,” 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹¹ Julie Thompson Klein, *Humanities, Culture, and Interdisciplinarity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 130.

¹² *Ibid.*, 131.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 139.

the Tanglewood Symposium of 1967. The symposium, officially titled “Music in American Society,” took place in Tanglewood, Massachusetts.¹⁵ In addition to musicians and music teachers, individuals from various disciplines were invited to attend. Scientists, politicians, and various groups and corporations were also invited. The Tanglewood Declaration describes the meetings as an “intensive evaluation of the role of music in American society and education.”¹⁶ One of the main issues of the symposium was the discussion of whether music from cultures and styles other than Western classical music should be included in the American curriculum. Folk music was discussed, as were new popular genres of the time such as “rock and roll.”¹⁷ The adaptation of jazz music into university curricula was a recent occurrence, and the concept of including folk or popular music was brand new. The Tanglewood Symposium discussed and debated the idea of teaching the music of various cultures in American schools. By the end of the symposium, the committee decided to recommend that the curriculum should be broadened to include all types of music. Ethnomusicologist Terese Volk describes the declaration and list of recommendations that the symposium produced as “a landmark document in multicultural music education.”¹⁸ The recommendations were particularly influential because the group that had organized the symposium, the Music Educators National Conference (now the National Association of Music Education), had a presence in all fifty states and was involved in all levels of education. There were eight recommendations included in the symposium's declaration. The second recommendation states: “Music of all periods, styles, forms, and cultures belongs in the curriculum. The musical repertory should be expanded to involve music of our time in its rich

¹⁵ Terese M. Volk, *Music, Education, and Multiculturalism: Foundations and Principles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 81.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 201.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 83.

variety, including currently popular teenage music and avant-garde music, American folk music, and the music of other cultures.”¹⁹

Research of multicultural music education and the development of programs increased in the years following the Tanglewood Symposium. Increased federal funding was also available for educators interested in teaching the music of other cultures.²⁰ Although many of these new programs were being developed for elementary and secondary school curricula, educators were also interested in placing American folk music and world music in higher education. Jazz scholars also credit the Tanglewood Symposium and its recommendations with helping to increase the acceptance of jazz programs in higher education. The National Association of Jazz Educators was established just one year after the symposium in 1968.²¹ Jazz scholar and professor Garth Alper suggests jazz was “grafted onto a curricular model that was designed to teach Western classical music” during the development of the first jazz studies programs.²² After the Tanglewood Symposium, jazz programs experienced more freedom to develop their own teaching methods and standard curriculum.

It is significant that the Tanglewood Symposium took place towards the end of the second American folk music revival and shortly after the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Tanglewood Symposium was held in the aftermath of two very important pieces of legislation of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. In 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education* declared separate schools for black and white students to be unconstitutional. Ten years later in 1964, the Civil Rights Act outlawed discrimination based on race or nationality. These rulings likely influenced

¹⁹ Volk, *Music, Education, and Multiculturalism: Foundations and Principles*, 201.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 100.

²¹ Michael L. Mark, “The Acceptance of Jazz in the Music Education Curriculum: A Model for Interpreting a Historical Process,” *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* 92 (Summer 1987): 16.

²² Garth Alper, “Towards the Acceptance of a Bachelor of Music Degree in Popular Music Studies,” *College Music Symposium* 47 (2007): 156.

the Tanglewood decision to incorporate other musical cultures and styles into music education. The folk revival, which began in the mid-1940s, reached its peak in the mid-1960s.²³ The revival was rooted in New York City, but it was the work of collectors and folklorists working in the field throughout the country that led to the revival. This includes the work of Francis J. Child at the end of the nineteenth century, followed by the collecting of Cecil Sharp and then John Lomax in the early twentieth century.²⁴ Sharp collected folksongs in Appalachia. Lomax collected throughout the United States, particularly in Texas and the South. Interest in folklore increased during the first half of the twentieth century.²⁵ This increased interest resulted in the publication of folk song collections. The concept of regionalism also played an important role in the rediscovery of folk music after World War II.²⁶ This included a strong interest and re-emphasis of the music of the southern Appalachian region. A sense of pride in cultural and regional diversity was established during the revival.²⁷ The early twentieth century focus on collecting and preserving folk music, combined with the focus on regionalism that emerged during the revival, can be seen as influencing the Tanglewood decision to include American folk music and the music of other cultures in curriculum.

Although the concept of multiculturalism in music education was accepted by many educators following the Tanglewood Symposium, the practice of teaching it in institutions of higher education did not come easily and American music education continues to have a monocultural perspective.²⁸ Traditional American music currently is not well represented in

²³ Gillian Mitchell, *The North American Folk Music Revival* (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007), 1.

²⁴ Michael F. Scully, *The Never-Ending Revival*, 33.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.

²⁶ Gillian Mitchell, *The North American Folk Music Revival*, 12.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁸ Sammie Ann Wicks, "The Monocultural Perspective of Music Education," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 44, no.18 (Jan. 9, 1998): A72.

university music departments. The focus in university music programs continues to be Western European classical music, which is associated with the elite classes rather than with the middle or working classes in society. In a study of the curricula at public universities within the United States, Sammie Ann Wicks found that 98 percent of music courses revolved around elite Western music.²⁹ Various American traditions such as folk, blues, rock, and bluegrass represented only 1.37 percent.³⁰ Similar trends and percentages seem to exist in scholarly research and leading journals. After examining 1,230 articles published in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society between 1948 and 1996*, Wicks discovered that “American topics” accounted for only 7 percent of articles.³¹ Even in ethnomusicology programs at American universities, Wicks found that the majority of courses focused on elite Asian music, African music, and other foreign cultures. Less than 10 percent of the departments' course offerings focused on American traditions.³²

The statistics that Wicks provides from within institutions of higher education do not represent the American public's music listening habits. Only 11 percent of the 450 people Wicks surveyed preferred to listen to classical music.³³ The majority of respondents, from various races and ages, preferred American popular styles of music. Wicks claims that the programs in American traditional music that have succeeded have done so because of the support and perseverance of university administrators. Without support from administrators and educators, the cultural imbalance in music education will continue to exist.³⁴

Within academia, Western classical music (also often referred to as elite music or art

²⁹ Wicks, “The Monocultural Perspective of Music Education,” A72.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

music), is usually considered to be superior to all other forms of music. Therefore, there is typically an attempt to place non-Western music into a standardized Westernized model of teaching in higher education. This model does not fit all types of music and it can be difficult to place traditional folk music alongside the same structure and teaching methods of Western classical music. This is a problem that has been acknowledged by several scholars.

Ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl writes that “the most significant phenomenon in the global history of music has been the intensive imposition of Western music and musical thought upon the rest of the world.”³⁵ The pressure to conform to Western musical standards has resulted in cultures from around the world struggling to preserve their own traditions. In some cases they have abandoned their unique musical traditions. Cultures may have been introduced to Western music hundreds of years ago, most likely through church music, but the imposition has become much more intensive during the twentieth century.³⁶

Traditional music degree programs are often placed within the constraints of classical music departments. According to Nettl, in order to demonstrate that these traditional forms of music are capable of interacting with Western music, they must be presented “as something not in essence so different.”³⁷ Juniper Hill notes that the standard requirements of Western classical music often have been pressed upon folk music, including the traditional music of Western cultures. For example, students in traditional Irish music at University College Cork formerly were required to take classes in keyboard, notation, and Western music theory.³⁸ The Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music Studies program at East Tennessee State University was formerly

³⁵ Bruno Nettl, *The Western Impact on World Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1985), 3.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 18.

³⁸ Juniper Hill, “The Influence of Conservatory Folk Music Programmes: The Sibelius Academy in Comparative Context,” *Ethnomusicology Forum* 18, no. 2 (November 2009): 213.

a part of the university's music department before being moved to the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services in 2000. Nettl notes that Western art music has become the dominant force in many musical cultures, from Japan to sub-Saharan Africa.³⁹ The styles, uses, and teaching of the traditional musics of these countries have been influenced by elite Western musical traditions.

It is vitally important to continue to value the diversity and complexity that exists within traditional music cultures worldwide. Otherwise, the practices of Western classical music will become the standard in all cultures. “If we denigrate or reject other musics, we tolerate the culture of division,” says Douglass Seaton.⁴⁰ It is not so much the music itself that is being rejected in the case of traditional music in higher education, but rather the established teaching methods and attributes of the musical tradition. Traditional music experiences the pressure to be placed within the regulations and boundaries of a classical music department. It can be challenging to place traditional music within this structure. Instead of having the tradition conform to pre-existing standards, the curriculum and teaching methods should reflect the practices of the tradition. It is not only the music that needs to be preserved but also the pedagogy and the transmission of the music. The teaching methods that are used are often an integral part of the music and the culture itself. In fact, the process by which the music is transmitted is often what identifies it as traditional.

Jazz Education

The establishment of programs in traditional and folk music at the university level parallels the history of jazz music in American higher education. The two genres have faced

³⁹ Nettl. *The Western Impact on World Music*. 5.

⁴⁰ Seaton, “Music and American Higher Education,” 4.

similar problems during their developments and their attempts to be accepted within higher education. Musicologists and scholars of jazz have completed extensive research regarding the effects that adaptation for curriculum has had on jazz. Jazz, like traditional American music, has its origins in a strong ethnic or cultural identity. Jazz originated in the African American community of New Orleans in the early twentieth century. Jazz is widely accepted within professional academic environments now; however, this has not always been the case. Jazz education was fairly informal prior to being placed within the setting of higher education. Even though many institutions offer jazz degrees today, some scholars continue to feel that jazz remains its own unique culture within musical higher education.⁴¹

Jazz originated in the cabarets and dance halls of New Orleans and then moved to parks and outside spaces, restaurants, and assembly halls.⁴² Black and Creole musicians were inspired by European musical and theatre traditions⁴³ as well as ragtime and blues.⁴⁴ Jazz spread to other major urban centers in the United States such as New York, Chicago, and Kansas City. Jazz music experienced heightened popularity during the 1920s and the Great Depression. Following the growth and success of jazz in the United States several universities across the country began to show an interest in teaching the music at their institution in the 1940s. At first, jazz band was offered only as an extracurricular activity and not for credit.⁴⁵ A few schools began adding jazz courses in the early 1940s, and the University of North Texas became the first to offer a

⁴¹ Kenneth E. Prouty. "The History of Jazz Education: A Critical Reassessment," *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education* 26, no. 2 (April 2005): 79.

⁴² Ted Gioia, *The History of Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 29-30.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁴⁵ Mark, "The Acceptance of Jazz in the Music Education Curriculum: A Model for Interpreting a Historical Process," 15.

bachelor's degree in jazz in 1947.⁴⁶ This degree was originally proposed as a “dance band” program, and the jazz band was referred to originally as the “Laboratory Band.”⁴⁷ The primary band within the program has continued to use this name. Ethnomusicologist Kenneth Prouty notes that Denton, Texas, was an unusual choice for the first jazz degree because the area did not have a particularly notable jazz scene.⁴⁸ The Schillinger College of Music in Boston, now Berklee College of Music, also is credited as one of the first institutions to offer a jazz degree.⁴⁹

Although the first jazz courses were established in the 1940s, it took years before jazz was truly accepted and respected within the music departments of higher education. Jazz professor and conductor Bill Dobbins suggests that the controversy between jazz and academia was a result of “the relationship between black and white American culture.”⁵⁰ The addition of jazz programs in higher education occurred slowly up until the mid-1960s, when the number of programs began to increase rapidly. This rapid increase began immediately after the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The outlaw of racial discrimination paved the way for jazz programs in institutions of higher education. Between 1964 and 1974 the number of institutions offering jazz courses increased from only 41 to 228.⁵¹

Prior to the introduction of jazz to academia, jazz education took place in night clubs, theatres, and dance halls.⁵² Music historian Michael L. Mark suggests that jazz retained an inferior status prior to the 1960s, until a standard body of literature and repertoire was established

⁴⁶ Prouty. “The History of Jazz Education: A Critical Reassessment,” 81.

⁴⁷ University of North Texas, “The One O’Clock Lab Band,” *Division of Jazz Studies*, <http://jazz.unt.edu/node/176> (accessed February 27, 2014).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 82.

⁵⁰ Bill Dobbins, “Jazz and Academia: Street Music in the Ivory Tower,” *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* 96 (Spring 1998): 30.

⁵¹ Prouty. “The History of Jazz Education: A Critical Reassessment,” 97.

⁵² Dobbins, “Jazz and Academia: Street Music in the Ivory Tower,” 36.

within the field. This “standardization of literature and instrumentation” led to the holding of more festivals and competitions and eventually resulted in more recognition for jazz.⁵³ The commercial success of jazz also resulted in the realization of an active job market. The acceptance of jazz within academia took time, just like any change within a structured environment. From the 1970s onward jazz in higher education has continued to grow in popularity. Today it is rare to hear educators criticize the presence of jazz in a curriculum.⁵⁴ The racial tension that existed in jazz education appears to have subsided after the Civil Rights Movement, and anthropologist Eitan Wilf notes that most present-day students and faculty are white and from a middle to upper-middle class background.⁵⁵ Jazz continues to be a male dominated genre of music. Very few well-known jazz instrumentalists are female.⁵⁶ Female singers have experienced success and popularity, but female instrumentalists and composers are uncommon.

One problem that existed in the early days of jazz degree programs, and currently exists in traditional American music programs, is hiring faculty who have credentials as both musicians and educators. The ideal musicians to teach within these programs may not have the academic training or advanced degrees that typically would be required in order to teach in institutions of higher education. In many cases the typical advanced level or terminal degrees might not even be available yet. Prouty states that jazz needed “individuals who would bring to the field a sense of legitimacy, not only in terms of their credentials as performers and teachers, but through their

⁵³ Mark, “The Acceptance of Jazz in the Music Education Curriculum: A Model for Interpreting a Historical Process,” 19.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁵⁵ Eitan Wilf. “Rituals of Creativity: Tradition, Modernity, and the 'Acoustic Unconscious' in a U.S. Collegiate Jazz Music Program,” *American Anthropologist* 114, no. 2 (March 2012): 34.

⁵⁶ Edmondson, ed., *Music in American Life*, 1044.

connection to the jazz community itself.”⁵⁷ This statement is true for traditional music as well. Ethnomusicologist Anne Dhu McLucas notes that many of the teaching staff of the Scottish Music degree at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland are not academically trained but are respected performers from the world of folk music.⁵⁸

The connection to community that Prouty mentions is highly important. Schippers also suggests that it is valuable for tradition bearers within the community to present their music and experience firsthand within the classroom.⁵⁹ The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland holds a master class every week with a professional musician from the field. Although the musicians that RCS brings in are always performers of Scottish music or another subgenre of Celtic music, they are not always from Scotland. RCS has brought in traditional musicians from several different countries. During these masterclasses several students often perform and receive feedback from the guest musician. The guest musicians also often lead workshops on their own instrument or areas of expertise exclusively for the students specializing in the instrument. Jazz professor Bill Dobbins says one of the most important things to teach in jazz education is “a healthy respect for tradition and the artistic contributions of previous generations.”⁶⁰ This is provided by studying the history of the music and classic recordings and also by learning from professional and experienced jazz musicians.

Jazz does not rely exclusively on aural transmission today, but it emerged as an aural tradition. A wide range of notated jazz repertoire has been published. However, jazz continues to be taught in a fashion similar to many aural music traditions. There are still many jazz pieces that

⁵⁷ Prouty, “The History of Jazz Education: A Critical Reassessment,” 98.

⁵⁸ McLucas, “The Scottish Experiment: Incorporating Traditional Music in Higher Education,” 5.

⁵⁹ Schippers, *Facing the Music: Shaping Music Education from a Global Perspective*, 58.

⁶⁰ Dobbins, “Jazz and Academia: Street Music in the Ivory Tower,” 36.

do not have printed scores and, therefore, students learn by listening to recordings and often transcribing the recordings.⁶¹ According to music professor Nancy Gamso, the study of jazz “emphasizes aural learning, memorization, creating new music and/or arrangement of standards, and improvisation.”⁶² Usually, more time is devoted to aural training than to developing technical ability. Gamso, who teaches woodwind instruments to both classical and jazz students, encourages her classical students to incorporate elements of jazz learning into their everyday practice. Jazz musicians learn very similarly to traditional musicians. They learn by listening and by recognizing the tune, chord progression, and other details of the recording.⁶³ Most jazz educators stress the importance of having their students transcribe the music they are trying to learn. This learning technique is not as common in traditional music, although it is used by some teachers.

Within the world of jazz, many graduates of jazz music degree programs end up working within academia themselves. Unfortunately, the commercial jazz market and recording industry is not experiencing the same success that it used to enjoy and, hence, there are also fewer jazz musicians being hired to perform and entertain. Therefore, many highly talented performers teach full-time in higher education. Today, jazz is performed much more within the organized setting of jazz education than outside of it.⁶⁴ Academics have mentioned this cycle of jazz graduates becoming jazz professors. In Finland, the elite group of professional Finnish folk musicians created by the Sibelius Academy now dominates folk music teaching and leadership positions in

⁶¹ Dobbins, “Jazz and Academia: Street Music in the Ivory Tower,” 33.

⁶² Nancy M. Gamso, “An Aural Learning Project: Assimilating Jazz Education Methods for Traditional Applied Pedagogy,” *Music Educators Journal* 98, no. 2 (December 2011): 62.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁶⁴ Wilf. “Rituals of Creativity: Tradition, Modernity, and the 'Acoustic Unconscious' in a U.S. Collegiate Jazz Music Program,” 34.

Finland.⁶⁵ It is too early to tell whether or not the same issue is taking place within traditional American folk music.

⁶⁵ Hill, "The Influence of Conservatory Folk Music Programmes: The Sibelius Academy in Comparative Context," 235.

CHAPTER 4

WORLDWIDE PROGRAMS IN TRADITIONAL MUSIC

Finland

Ethnomusicologist Juniper Hill specializes in Finnish folk music and has conducted extensive research at the Folk Music Department at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, Finland. Her article, “The Influence of Conservatory Folk Music Programmes: The Sibelius Academy in Comparative Context,” examines the impact of institutionalizing traditional musics into degree programs in Western universities and conservatories. The Sibelius Academy's degree in folk music performance first began in 1983, shortly after the academy made the transition from a private institution to a state school.¹ Today, the academy offers both a bachelor's and master's degree in folk music. The decision to place folk music in an institution of higher education was partly inspired by the folk revival. In the late 1960s, Finland experienced a folk revival driven by a conservative portion of the population as an opposition to the recent industrialization and urbanization.² The first Kaustinen Folk Festival, held in 1968, was very successful and folk music grew rapidly in popularity across Finland. There were only five cultural festivals taking place prior to 1968, but by 1972 there were over 800.³

The academy has made a strong and conscious effort to keep the music tradition moving forward, rather than simply preserving it in its past or current forms of existence. The tradition of Finnish folk music has not become static within the conservatory environment and the music

¹ Hill, “The Influence of Conservatory Folk Music Programmes: The Sibelius Academy in Comparative Context,” 208.

² Juniper Hill, “From Ancient to Avant-Garde to Global: Creative Processes and Institutionalization in Finnish Contemporary Folk Music” (PhD diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 2005), 121.

³ *Ibid.*, 122.

remains innovative and creative within the academy.⁴ Students are encouraged to compose and create their own original folk music. The Folk Music Department frequently collaborates with the Sibelius Academy's Music Education Department.⁵ Here, trainee music teachers learn the teaching methods of Finnish folk music and incorporate folk music into their studies of classical music or world music. Hill strongly believes that the Folk Music Department at the Sibelius Academy has had a groundbreaking effect on the nation's perception of traditional music. According to Hill, the influence of this program beyond the Sibelius Academy includes “a radical change in the general perception of folk music and an increase in folk music's status and reputation.”⁶ Originally the department had to make an effort to build a community of folk musicians and protect the students “from the influences and judgements of classical musicians.”⁷ Today, however, these negative attitudes towards Finnish folk music appear to have changed.

Hill believes that placing traditional music within an institution has had a substantial impact upon Finnish folk music. In Finland, says Hill, “the impact of institutionalisation beyond the Sibelius Academy has created a new hierarchy amongst different types of folk musicians, radically changed perceptions of folk music, transformed the performance practices of amateur musicians, and possibly impacted the Western art music education system in Finland.”⁸ In order to determine the effect that the folk music program at the Sibelius Academy has on Finnish folk music as a whole, Hill designed an online questionnaire to compare the ideas and opinions of both Sibelius Academy trained musicians and non-academy musicians. Both the academy and non-academy students had the same general outlook on folk music and agreed that folk musicians

⁴ Hill, “The Influence of Conservatory Folk Music Programmes: The Sibelius Academy in Comparative Context,” 236.

⁵ Ibid., 233.

⁶ Ibid., 235.

⁷ Ibid., 215.

⁸ Ibid., 226.

should learn traditional styles and repertoire and play according to the traditions.⁹ When it came to what defines “traditional,” however, their ideas varied greatly. Musicians trained at the Sibelius Academy felt much more strongly than non-academy musicians that folk musicians should “have the freedom to express themselves personally and incorporate contemporary influences.”¹⁰ Sibelius Academy musicians were also more likely to modify traditional pieces of music and more likely to improvise. Overall, Hill found that academy musicians and non-academy musicians had significant differences in many of their performance practices.¹¹ These results suggest that institutionalizing folk music does affect the tradition of the music itself and the way it is practiced, at least at the Sibelius Academy in Finland.

Scotland

Another university degree program offered in traditional music is the B.A. Scottish Music degree at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (formerly the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama) in Glasgow, Scotland. “Where are they now? The First Graduates of the BA (Scottish Music) degree,” is a paper by Jo Miller and Peggy Duesenberry that examines the goals and the success of the program by looking at the career paths of the first ten graduates. The degree program began in 1996, and the first students to complete the course graduated in 1999.¹² The program originally offered a three-year degree, but this has now been expanded to offer an optional fourth honors year. The origins of the course go back to 1984, when the Scottish Arts Council published a report that recommended the RCS and university music departments in

⁹ Hill, “The Influence of Conservatory Folk Music Programmes: The Sibelius Academy in Comparative Context,” 228.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Miller and Duesenberry, “Where are they now? The First Graduates of the BA (Scottish Music) degree,” 1.

Scotland consider teaching Scottish music.¹³ Individual courses were offered at the conservatory during the 1980s, but it was not until the early 1990s that the development of the B.A. degree began. In common with the United States and other countries in Europe, Scotland experienced a folk revival during the 1960s and 1970s. Scottish traditional music experienced a new level of popularity and many influential bands were formed during this time period.

The focus of the Scottish Music degree is performance practice and musicianship. The main courses within the degree are principal performance study, second study instrument or voice, group ensemble, group singing, and aural listening skills. Courses in teaching, technology, and business are also offered. Although the program is taught in a conservatory environment, the degree that is offered is a bachelor of arts and there are also several academic based classes within the curriculum. These include Scottish history, Scottish music history, folklore, and language studies in Scots and Gaelic.¹⁴ In 2000, a specialism in bagpiping was added.¹⁵ This involves students taking courses at both the conservatory and at the National Piping Centre. There is also an optional music education track for those students who wish to be classroom music teachers. This is run in conjunction with the music education department at the conservatory.

The results of Duesenberry and Miller's study are very positive. Ten years after graduating, nine out of the ten graduates were found to be "earning a good living" from music.¹⁶ Teaching seems to make up a large portion of this work. However, several students have released CDs and make part of their income by performing and touring. The B.A. degree is now

¹³ Miller and Duesenberry, "Where are they now? The First Graduates of the BA (Scottish Music) degree," 3.

¹⁴ Ibid., 4.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 10.

recognized and respected within the Scottish music community. Some of the first graduates commented that it had “brought prestige” and “helped open doors” for them.¹⁷

Duesenberry and Miller's study notes that students are expected to learn notational skills while they are studying at the conservatory; however, these skills are not required to be admitted to the program.¹⁸ Other degrees in the conservatory require strong music reading ability prior to acceptance. Some of the most talented students within the traditional music program began the course with either weak or non-existent music reading and writing skills.¹⁹ All students were taught notational transcription skills. In contrast with other traditional music degrees examined, the Scottish Music program at RCS frequently uses sheet music. This, however, is not a deviation from the Scottish tradition. Both the written and oral tradition are a part of Scottish music. Ethnomusicologist Anne Dhu McLucas points out that a mixture of the formal and informal have existed in the Scottish tradition since at least the eighteenth century onwards.²⁰ Therefore, the use of sheet music within the Scottish music degree program is fairly natural and is not a result of a pressure to conform traditional music to the standards of Western classical music.

According to McLucas, the traditional music of Scotland has thrived “in rural communities and in the minds of the so-called musically 'illiterate' players and singers.”²¹ She defines these illiterate musicians as those who have a good knowledge of repertoire but no knowledge of notation. McLucas's research in Scotland focused on how the oral tradition was able to thrive in an academic environment. She stresses that the students who study at these programs today do not always come from a background of traditional music. They may have

¹⁷ Miller and Duesenberry, “Where are they now? The First Graduates of the BA (Scottish Music) degree,” 12.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁰ McLucas, “The Scottish Experiment: Incorporating Traditional Music in Higher Education,” 5.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

studied classical music and they may be able to read notation.²² McLucas found the level of academic work in the program to be “extraordinarily high.”²³ Degrees in traditional or folk music must be capable of standing up alongside degrees in classical music and other areas of the humanities, and McLucas found the Scottish music degree to be respectable and capable of this.

As is the case with the folk music degree at the Sibelius Academy in Finland, the goal of the degree at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is innovation rather than conservation of tradition. Although this may appear to go against the emphasis of oral tradition, innovation becomes important “in order to get noticed by those hiring or recording.”²⁴ In many cases it is the desire for commercial musical success and the need to separate their own music from that of their peers that makes many musicians step away from tradition and take a more innovative approach with traditional music. However, there still remains a strong level of respect for the older traditions. According to McLucas, the focus at RCS is to use archived recordings and historical sources as modern performance models.²⁵

England

In his dissertation Simon Keegan-Phipps studied institutionalization of the traditional music of England by focusing primarily on the Folk and Traditional Music degree at the University of Newcastle. The degree, which accepted its first students in 2001, is the first of its kind in England.²⁶ In previous years traditional music had been offered as an elective course at the university, but no formal degree existed. The majority of students come from an educated,

²² McLucas, “The Scottish Experiment: Incorporating Traditional Music in Higher Education,” 5.

²³ Ibid., 8.

²⁴ Ibid., 11.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Keegan-Phipps, “Teaching Folk: The Educational Institutionalization of Folk Music in Contemporary England,” 178.

middle-class background.²⁷ The degree was established due to an interest from young folk musicians who felt that music degrees in other areas, such as jazz, popular music, and recording, would not suit their style of music.²⁸ Institutionalization comes even less naturally to England when compared to other countries because English folk music does not have a longstanding competition culture like that of Irish music or Scottish bagpipe competitions.²⁹ In recent years this has changed with the addition of the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards. The awards are held annually in London and focus primarily on English music.

Like many other countries, England experienced a folk music revival during the 1950s and 1960s. Unlike other types of traditional music that can be easily associated with cultural traits, “Englishness” is difficult to define and the English national identity is elusive.³⁰ Some of those active within English folk traditions believe that the folk song and dance of England have been hit hard by “political correctness” and the attempt to include other cultures within the English identity.³¹ The music in the degree course at the University of Newcastle is a mixture of various British folk musics. This includes an emphasis on Northumbrian music (from the English counties of Northumberland and Durham) and influences from Scottish and Irish music traditions. A compulsory introductory module is entitled “Traditions of These Islands” and focuses not only on the folk culture of North East England but also the folk music of the United Kingdom and Western Europe. Unlike other degrees in traditional music, the course is not grounded exclusively in one national identity.

²⁷ Keegan-Phipps, “Teaching Folk: The Educational Institutionalization of Folk Music in Contemporary England,” 185.

²⁸ Simon Keegan-Phipps, “Deja Vu? Folk Music, Education, and Institutionalization in Contemporary England,” *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 39 (2007): 97.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 99.

³⁰ Keegan-Phipps, “Teaching Folk: The Educational Institutionalization of Folk Music in Contemporary England,” 83.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 90.

Beyond individual instruction lessons and ensemble classes, several classes in composition and improvisation are offered. Phipps cites specific classes such as “contemporary compositional techniques” and “collective free improvisation.”³² The degree offered is a bachelors of music, and the courses and structure of the program may therefore be slightly more similar to a classical music degree rather than a bachelors of arts. Phipps refers to the attempt to place traditional music within the structure of a Western classical music degree as “classicization.” While the overall reaction from other institutions and folk music organizations has been positive, some English folk musicians have accused the organization of “standardizing and formalizing” the music.³³ The instructors are aware of this issue and make an effort to prevent the content of the course from becoming standardized over time.³⁴ Although the degree program is perhaps not completely loyal or exclusive to the traditions of English folk music, it offers a great deal of freedom to study all the styles that are present in today's English folk community.

Popular Music Studies

Popular music, or commercial music, is a genre of music that is defined as appealing to large or mainstream audiences. Popular music is currently facing some of the same problems as traditional music as it struggles for a place in musical higher education. Popular music can also be compared to jazz programs in higher education. Garth Alper, Director of the School of Music at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, writes that much of the prejudice against popular music in higher education comes from a belief that the music “lacks complexity and intellectual

³² Keegan-Phipps, “Teaching Folk: The Educational Institutionalization of Folk Music in Contemporary England,” 196.

³³ Ibid., 4.

³⁴ Ibid., 242.

content.”³⁵ This preconception is also sometimes expressed towards jazz and folk music. A number of university music departments offer optional classes in popular music, but Berklee College of Music remains one of the few institutions with a well-attended program in contemporary music.³⁶ The University of Southern California has added a degree in popular music since Alper’s article was written. The United Kingdom offers several degrees in popular music. More locally, in Tennessee, Belmont University offers a commercial music major within its music degree program.³⁷ It also has numerous ensembles opportunities for students, one of which is a bluegrass ensemble.

The ways in which popular musicians learn pieces of music are very similar to the ways by which traditional musicians learn. Although conventional notation does play a role, chord charts and tablature are more common when it comes to the process of learning popular music.³⁸ All forms of sheet music are mixed with aural practices and are used “as a supplement rather than a major learning resource.”³⁹ A strong emphasis is placed on listening. Beginning popular musicians learn by listening to recordings and copying them by ear.⁴⁰ Sheet music collections featuring popular music are often found in stores and online today; however, they are not relied upon by professional musicians as a way of learning the music. Session musicians must be able to change the key of the song, play backup, or improvise and contribute new ideas. In most cases,

³⁵ Alper, “Towards the Acceptance of a Bachelor of Music Degree in Popular Music Studies,” 160.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 159.

³⁷ Belmont University, “Major in Commercial Music,” Nashville, TN, http://www.belmont.edu/music/degrees/music_undergraduate/commercial_music.html (accessed March 27, 2014)

³⁸ Lucy Green, *How Popular Musicians Learn: A Way Ahead for Music Education* (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2002), 38.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

they are following a bandleader and must be flexible and adaptable.⁴¹ Finding qualified faculty to teach popular music can also be a difficulty. Teachers must have experience in contemporary music and also the required degrees to teach at the university level.⁴² Alper notes that he has worked with some musicians who have experience performing popular music and also hold doctorates, perhaps in classical music or jazz.

⁴¹ Lucy Green, *How Popular Musicians Learn: A Way Ahead for Music Education*, 40.

⁴² Garth Alper, "Towards the Acceptance of a Bachelor of Music Degree in Popular Music Studies," *College Music Symposium* 47 (2007): 163.

CHAPTER 5

SELECTED TRADITIONAL MUSIC PROGRAMS IN THE SOUTHERN APPALACHIAN REGION OF THE UNITED STATES

Volunteer State Community College

Volunteer State Community College, located in Gallatin, Tennessee, began offering a two-year associate's degree in bluegrass in 2011. It is a two-year model of the program at ETSU. Lynn Peterson, assistant professor of music, helped to develop the degree program and spent two years working with East Tennessee State University to prepare for an articulation agreement between the programs. The college has over thirty students taking individual lessons in bluegrass performance and there are currently two declared bluegrass majors.¹ Students often take bluegrass lessons even though they may be focusing on another area of music.

The location of Volunteer State Community College and its close proximity to Nashville is important, says Peterson. The majority of students in the program are planning on pursuing careers as professional musicians or in some aspect of the recording industry. "If you're not making music, you're in a support area that is supporting the music industry," says Peterson.² The college works closely with the recording industry and musicians in Nashville. Peterson says that several of their students have parents or other family members who work within the music business.

Volunteer State Community College attempts to teach all aspects of music to their students. In addition to bluegrass, the college offers classes in classical music, jazz, choir, songwriting, recording industry management, commercial music business, and artist development. It is a relatively small music department, with approximately 120 students across

¹ Lynn Peterson, interview by author, Telephone conversation, March 4, 2014.

² Ibid.

all genres. Peterson believes it is important for the students to learn about all genres and not necessarily limit themselves to one particular area: “When you're a real musician -- you know, it's like I teach my guitar students, I say look, you gotta play jazz, you gotta play country, you gotta play classical, cause who knows where you're next gig is going to be. You have to learn to play all kinds of music because you don't know what the job is gonna be, you don't know what your career is gonna be 20 years from now. You don't even know if the things you're playing now are gonna be pertinent at that time, you know. So what we do, is we teach them to play the music that's not yet been written.”³ The bluegrass degree and songwriting degree are relatively new, and now the school is hoping to develop a gospel music program. Peterson hopes that students who are interested in bluegrass gospel will be able to combine elements of the bluegrass and gospel music programs. “We like to combine them all together,” he says.⁴

Students at Volunteer State Community College are required to take an introductory theory class and acquire a basic understanding of music notation; however, students are not expected to be able to read notated sheet music, and it is not used to teach bluegrass music. Due to the overlap between musical styles at the college, many of the students have experience using sheet music in the classical or jazz ensemble classes. Although every teacher is different and teaching methods can vary, most bluegrass lessons at the college are taught by ear. Sometimes, tablature is used. “In a bluegrass program, they learn all the tunes by listening to the records and they learn by tabs,” says Peterson.⁵ This represents the reality of bluegrass, he says. Sheet music works well for other genres, but it would be unnatural to use it to teach bluegrass. “Different forms of music require different kinds of disciplines to support that particular type of music,” he

³ Peterson, March 4, 2014.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Peterson, March 4, 2014.

says.⁶

Hazard Community and Technical College

The Kentucky School of Bluegrass and Traditional Music was founded at Hazard Technical and Community College in 2008. Unlike other schools where teachers have had to advocate for traditional music to be taken seriously, this program was the college's idea. The college already operated the Kentucky School of Craft, which offers programs in woodworking and furniture design, jewelry design and metals, and ceramics.⁷ The school decided it would be important to add a traditional music program to its curriculum. J.P. Mathes has been an instructor in the program since it began and he also serves as an academic advisor for the students. “It was actually part of a movement, in this part of Appalachia that depends so much on coal,” says Mathes, “It was part of a movement throughout the whole region of eastern Kentucky to look towards different jobs and different industries because of the decline of coal.”⁸ The college does not have a classical music program or any other music department and, therefore, the focus is centered on traditional music.

Hazard Technical and Community College offers a two-year associates degree in bluegrass and traditional music. There is also the option to pursue a one-semester certificate program, or a three-semester diploma program. Since the degree began, they have had approximately ten students graduate every year with the associate's degree.⁹ Although the program includes all aspects of traditional Appalachian music, the majority of students are studying bluegrass. Most of the performing ensembles are bluegrass and a few are old-time.

⁶ Peterson, March 4, 2014.

⁷ J.P. Mathes, interview by author, Telephone conversation, March 11, 2014.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Mathes, March 11, 2014.

Mathes says the history classes touch on the early origins of the music and instruments in the region and examine the Scots-Irish and African American influences. Around fifty percent of the students are from outside the local area. This is rare for the college—the traditional music program is the only program in the college to have out-of-state students.¹⁰ The location of the school is fairly isolated and this has resulted in a strong sense of community among the musicians in the program.

The degree at the Kentucky School of Bluegrass and Traditional Music focuses more on aspects of music business and promotion than does ETSU’s program. Classes related to business include songwriting, copyrighting, and publishing. In their final semester at the college, students create a portfolio that they will be able to use to promote themselves when they leave the program. “We try to emphasize the craft more than the actual physical performance,” says Mathes, “When you have this unique music program, like bluegrass or traditional music or whatever, it's not really serving just to teach them to perform. You also need to give them other skills.”¹¹ It is important for students to experience performing on stage as a part of their musical and professional training. The traditional music ensembles from HCTC perform throughout the region, as well as on radio programs and sometimes on TV shows. These stage performances provide the students with “a little bit of experience in every aspect of what they might meet in the real world.”¹²

¹⁰ Mathes, March 11, 2014.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

East Tennessee State University

East Tennessee State University has a longstanding commitment to supporting the traditional music of southern Appalachia. Several people have been highly influential in shaping the institution's dedication to Appalachia. In the mid-1960s, Thomas Burton and Ambrose Manning, both ETSU English professors at the time, began recording folk songs, ballads, and other folklore from eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina.¹³ They conducted oral research interviews alongside the folklore. These tape recordings led Burton and Manning to found East Tennessee State University's Oral History Archives in 1968.¹⁴ It is also important to note that Burton and Manning directed the East Tennessee State University Folk Festival from 1966 to 1972.¹⁵ ETSU's Archives of Appalachia was established in 1978, and the Thomas G. Burton and Ambrose N. Manning Collection was the Archive's first folklife collection. Burton also worked to establish the Appalachian, Scottish, and Irish Studies program at ETSU and served as the first director of the program when it began in 1988.¹⁶

In 1978, the Institute for Appalachian Affairs was founded at ETSU by university president Arthur H. DeRossier. Folklorist, musician, and ETSU professor Dr. Richard Blaustein was appointed director of the institute in 1983.¹⁷ The following year, in 1984, the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services at ETSU was founded as a Tennessee Distinguished Center of Excellence and Blaustein became the first director of the Center.¹⁸ The Archives of Appalachia

¹³ East Tennessee State University, "Thomas G. Burton—Ambrose N. Manning, 1899-1989," *Archives of Appalachia*, <http://archives.etsu.edu/?p=collections/controlcard&id=14> (accessed March 27, 2014).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ East Tennessee State University, "History," *Department of Appalachian, Scottish, and Irish Studies*, <http://www.etsu.edu/das/asis/aboutus/history.aspx> (accessed March 12, 2014).

¹⁷ East Tennessee State University, "Richard Blaustein Collection, 1945-1981," *Archives of Appalachia*, <http://archives.etsu.edu/?p=collections/controlcard&id=236> (accessed March 27, 2014).

¹⁸ East Tennessee State University, "History," *Center for Appalachian Studies and Services*,

partnered with the Center to provide “a comprehensive resource for the study of Appalachian heritage and culture.”¹⁹ Another of the Archive’s important collections, the Richard Blaustein Collection, contains audiotapes, videotapes, and other material from 1945 to 1981. Blaustein, a fiddle player who performed with old-time band the Dixie Dewdrops, was also the organizer of the ETSU Homefolks Festival held in the late 1970s and early 1980s.²⁰ As mentioned earlier, the American folk music revival of the 1950s and 1960s embraced regionalism and supported local music scenes.²¹ Following the folk revival, regional studies started to appear as an added element of interdisciplinary liberal studies programs in the late 1960s and 1970s.²² Regional studies is an interdisciplinary concentration that can be pursued within a variety of fields.²³ The ETSU focus on the Appalachian region during the time period of the late 1970s and 1980s emerged from national academic trends in regionalism.

The Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music Studies program was started at East Tennessee State University by Jack Tottle in 1982. Tottle, who had recently relocated to the region from Boston in 1979, approached the university's music department about the possibility of teaching some guitar lessons. Tottle previously performed professionally with Tasty Licks, a bluegrass band that also featured banjo player Bela Fleck, and in 1975 had published a successful mandolin instruction book. “I didn't have any grand plan,” Tottle says about his motivations for starting the program, “I just thought this is something I enjoy doing so let's see what happens if I

<http://www.etsu.edu/cass/aboutus/history.aspx> (accessed March 12, 2014).

¹⁹ East Tennessee State University, “Archives History,” *Archives of Appalachia*, <http://www.etsu.edu/cass/archives/about/history.aspx> (accessed March 28, 2014).

²⁰ East Tennessee State University, “Richard Blaustein Collection, 1945-1981,” *Archives of Appalachia*, <http://archives.etsu.edu/?p=collections/controlcard&id=236> (accessed March 27, 2014).

²¹ Mitchell, *The North American Folk Music Revival*, 15.

²² Julie Thompson Klein, *Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory, and Practice* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 164.

²³ *Ibid.*, 172.

do it.”²⁴ In the past, he had always enjoyed teaching, and he wanted to get off the road after playing professionally for about ten years. The program began with Tottle teaching guitar lessons, one bluegrass band course, and a class in the history of country music. The program has expanded greatly over the years: the single bluegrass band class that Tottle taught has evolved into a degree program with more than 40 student bands.

Interest in the program increased quickly during its early years, however, Tottle remained the only instructor. As a result, the program was able to grow only to the maximum number of students and classes that Tottle could handle. He sometimes taught extra classes without being paid simply “because people wanted to learn and I wanted to see them learn.”²⁵ After working as an adjunct professor for ten years, the university created a full-time tenure track position for Tottle. “It happened organically. There was no master-plan at the beginning, it was just what will work with the resources that we have. And so it grew a little by little,” Tottle explains.²⁶ The university began to take the program more seriously as some alumni began to make a name for themselves in the country and bluegrass music industries.

In 2000, the bluegrass program was moved from the music department to the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services at ETSU. Due to a lack of support, it had become difficult to operate the bluegrass program as a part of the university's music department. During this time, Raymond McLain came to the university to serve as the program's assistant director. McLain became the director of the program in 2007 when Tottle retired. Prior to coming to ETSU, McLain had toured for over twenty years with the McLain Family Band and performed in 62 countries around the world. He then spent ten years living in Nashville playing on the Grand Ole

²⁴ Jack Tottle, interview by author, Telephone conversation, March 12, 2014.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

Opry and with Jim and Jesse McReynolds. While in Nashville, McLain led the bluegrass ensemble at Belmont University and provided instruction in guitar and mandolin. “I realized that there were a lot of young people that were enormously talented that had all kinds of promise, had opportunities, and they weren't necessarily fulfilled,” McLain says of his decision to begin teaching, “I felt it was my mission to help students learn to live their lives as artists.”²⁷ McLain was very well received on campus and had a lot to do with the program's growth from 2000 onwards, says Tottle.

During the early 2000s, the program began to see a large increase in enrolment and the number of student credit hours—approximately 14 percent to 17 percent annually.²⁸ In 2008, East Tennessee became the first university to offer a Bachelor's of Arts degree in Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music Studies. The development of the degree involved a lot of hard work and long hours. The Department of Appalachian Studies was established in order to offer the degree. Dr. Roberta Herrin, director of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services, was instrumental in working to develop the program and establish the degree. After having served as the assistant director since 2007, current director Dan Boner became the director of the program in 2010.²⁹ Boner was a student in the bluegrass program and played with the Bluegrass Pride Band while earning his degree in music education at ETSU. McLain left ETSU in 2010 to become the director of the Kentucky Center for Traditional Music in Morehead, Kentucky.

Today, the program continues to grow. As of spring 2014, there are approximately between 60 and 70 declared majors in the program, and another 50 to 70 students pursuing a

²⁷ McLain, March 3, 2014.

²⁸ Dan Boner, interview by author, Johnson City, TN, February 27, 2014.

²⁹ Ibid.

minor in Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music Studies.³⁰ The program has attracted students from all over the United States, from Alaska to California and from New York to Florida. It has also welcomed a variety of international students from countries such as Canada, Scotland, Norway, Sweden, Japan, and Iran. There are currently twenty-two student bluegrass bands, eleven old-time bands, seven country bands, and four Celtic bands registered in the spring 2014 semester.³¹ While the bluegrass component of the program has always been successful, the old-time, country, and Celtic programs have seen a significant increase in popularity in recent years.

The location of the Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music Studies program, in Johnson City, Tennessee, is significant and has contributed to the success and popularity of the program. The Tri-Cities region of Tennessee (Johnson City, Bristol, and Kingsport), as well as western North Carolina and southwestern Virginia, has produced some of the most respected and well-known musicians within the bluegrass, old-time, and country music traditions. These include the Carter Family, the Stanley Brothers, Jim and Jesse McReynolds, Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs, and Charlie Bowman. The area is well-known for the Bristol Sessions, a series of recordings that took place in Bristol, Tennessee during the summer of 1927. These sessions, which were organized by Ralph Peer of RCA Victor Records, discovered artists including Jimmie Rodgers and the Carter Family. The sessions are regarded as the most important event in country music history.³² The Johnson City sessions, a similar series of recordings organized by Frank Walker of Columbia Records, took place in Johnson City, Tennessee, in 1928 and 1929.³³ The complete recordings of the Bristol Sessions were released for the first time in 2011. ETSU professor Dr.

³⁰ Boner, February 27, 2014.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Charles K. Wolfe and Ted Olson, eds., *The Bristol Sessions: Writings About the Big Bang of Country Music* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc, 2005), 17.

³³ Ibid., 244.

Ted Olson played a crucial role in the release of “The Bristol Sessions 1927 and 1928: The Big Bang of Country Box Set.” Olson served as the writer and producer for the five-CD box set, which was published by German-based record label Bear Family Records. The collection received two Grammy nominations.³⁴

Faculty and students alike value location of the program. “If you tried to do the same program in a different place, it would be more of a challenge,” Jack Tottle says about the program at ETSU.³⁵ Kris Truelsen graduated with a B.A. in Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music Studies in 2013. Truelsen hails from Colorado and lived in Chicago before moving to study at ETSU. He says one of the things that appealed to him the most about the program was “the idea of moving to East Tennessee to learn out of the tradition.”³⁶ “It seemed to make sense to me, it was pretty appealing. That was one of the selling points to me. Having a stamp of Tennessee is a big deal, I think,” says Truelsen. Laura Ford graduated with the same degree in 2012. She grew up in Johnson City and feels it is the ideal location to study bluegrass, old-time, and country music. Ford says her whole family plays music, as do many other families in the area. “I feel like it's the perfect spot for it,” Ford says of the Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music Studies program, “It's just so deep in our culture. The community is very supportive of it.”³⁷

Music business is an area of study that students would like to see added to the curriculum. Laura Ford works in management and booking for the bluegrass music company Moonstruck Management. Ford says that she has used skills from almost all of the classes she took at ETSU

³⁴ Staff report, “ETSU professor Ted Olson picks up two Grammy nominations for ‘The Bristol Sessions’ box set,” *Kingsport Times*, December 20, 2011.

³⁵ Tottle, March 12, 2014.

³⁶ Kris Truelsen, interview by author, Johnson City, TN, March 7, 2014.

³⁷ Laura Ford, interview by author, Johnson City, TN, March 14, 2014.

in her current job. Classes such as music history, theory, and recording were particularly useful. However, Ford noted, a course in business would have been a great source of preparation. “I wish there would have been some sort of business aspect to this program,” says Ford, “There needs to be, because that's the difference between the students that make it and the students that don't. It has to do with how to market, and your business mind.”³⁸ Kris Truelsen would also like to see music business classes incorporated into the curriculum. Truelsen performs with several bands in the east Tennessee area, including Crazy Water Crystals. “I think business is one of the most important things, that's lacking in the program right now,” Truelsen comments.³⁹ Although he learned a lot during his experience in the program, he feels it would have been helpful to take courses related to finance management and promotion. Music business is not an area of study that is often included in performance-based music degrees, although it would make sense to offer it in a traditional music program. Many musicians manage the business details of their career themselves, especially when they are just starting out. Courses in business would also introduce students to other career possibilities in the music industry.

The issue of hiring jazz education faculty members who have credentials as both musicians and educators, as mentioned by Kenneth Prouty, is present in the study of traditional music as well. Raymond McLain mentions the difficulty in finding qualified faculty for the traditional music program at ETSU. “We had to have professionally credentialed teachers, because there were no programs to produce teachers with terminal degrees,” says McLain, “And the institution had to recognize people's professional experience as being important.”^{40 41 42}

³⁸ Ford, March 14, 2014.

³⁹ Truelsen, March 7, 2014.

⁴⁰ Raymond McLain, interview by author, Telephone conversation, March 3, 2014.

⁴¹ ETSU is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and abides by Comprehensive Standard 3.7.1. of the Commission on Colleges. This document states that consideration is given to the highest degree

Kenneth E. Prouty and other scholars also discuss the importance of connecting the students to the music community. All instructors at East Tennessee State University are professional musicians. The university also has several high-profile musicians currently serving as part-time faculty members. They provide an encouraging and visible example of the opportunities that exist within traditional music. These include Adam Steffey of the Boxcars and Tim Stafford of Blue Highway, both of whom previously played with Alison Krauss and Union Station, as well as Hunter Berry, who performs with Rhonda Vincent and the Rage. Additionally, ETSU brings many professional musicians to the program in order to give seminar talks and lead workshops, including both local musicians and high-profile artists. In recent years, this has included Mark O'Connor, Tim O'Brien, Pete Wernick, Rob Ickes, and John Doyle.

The success of the program and the increasing student enrolment demonstrates the demand for a degree in traditional American music. "It's been an evolution," says Jack Tottle, "But it shows that there is a demand for music that people relate to culturally."⁴³ The program appeals to traditional musicians from a wide variety of backgrounds and musical styles who were previously unable to pursue this music in higher education. Dan Boner echoes these sentiments: "I know that a lot of students aren't as interested in classical music, they don't necessarily want to dedicate their time to those studies. And so, why not offer a program that offers traditional, folk

earned in the discipline when determining the qualifications of faculty. However, "the institution also considers competence, effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate, undergraduate and graduate degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes."

⁴² The Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music Studies program at ETSU is not accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music. Other ETSU degrees in music performance and music education are NASM accredited. Several high-profile music institutions, including Berklee College of Music in Boston, are not NASM accredited.

⁴³ Tottle, March 12, 2014.

music studies—bluegrass, old-time, country music.”⁴⁴ The program has grown gradually over the years, and this process has included hard work from everyone involved. “It wasn't something that happened without a great deal of effort and without a great deal of struggle from the people who were implementing the program,” says Jack Tottle.⁴⁵ “What he (Tottle) has done is remarkable,” Raymond McLain comments.⁴⁶ The Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music Studies program has increased levels of respect for the studying of traditional music within institutions of higher education, both at East Tennessee State University and throughout the local region. It has also inspired similar music programs in the area. In the following chapter, four specific issues related to the study of traditional music in higher education are discussed.

⁴⁴ Boner, February 27, 2014.

⁴⁵ Tottle, March 12, 2014.

⁴⁶ McLain, March 3, 2014.

CHAPTER 6

AREAS OF CONCERN IN THE STUDY OF TRADITIONAL MUSIC

Sheet Music

As discussed earlier, the definition of traditional music suggests that it is part of an aural transmission process and infrequently written down. This seems to interrupt the standard procedures of higher education, where curricula and their corresponding material are almost always outlined and recorded in written form. Today it is accepted to use sheet music as a standard way of teaching Western classical music. However, this was not always the case. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, as music was becoming an accepted part of American higher education, a battle of pedagogy occurred among early American music teachers. They could not decide whether the teaching of music should be approached by purely reading, or if would be better to teach by rote.¹ How is American traditional music taught in institutions of higher education? Has it remained an aural tradition and continued to be taught by ear, or has it conformed to modern standards of Western art music?

ETSU fiddle instructor Colleen Trenwith says whether she teaches by ear or uses sheet music often depends on the students and the way in which they learn best. “I’m very flexible and adapt my teaching methods to the needs of the student,” says Trenwith.² Trenwith is also a classical violinist and is not opposed to using sheet music; however, she feels that teaching by ear is better for traditional music. “Everyone has their own way of remembering. It depends on the student. I’m not opposed to using sheet music, but I do encourage students, if they do learn

¹ Mark, *Contemporary Music Education*, 8.

² Colleen Trenwith, interview by author, Johnson City, TN, February 26, 2014.

something from the music, to learn it off-by-heart as quickly as possible,” Trenwith says.³ If you learn music by ear, she explains, you are more likely have it in your mind and your memory. It is possible to rely too much on sheet music. While most do learn by ear, some of Trenwith's students find it helps them to see the sheet music and the notes written down. Trenwith records the piece of music that the student is learning in each lesson, so that they can continue to learn by ear while practicing at home.

Banjo and dobro instructor Brandon Green also encourages his students to memorize music as quickly as possible. Green first shows the student a tune by teaching it by ear and then writes out tablature for the tune. “I like for them to see me play it, and then I like to use tab only for a learning tool,” says Green, “I try to get the student to memorize it pretty quickly. That way they're not using tab as a crutch, but only as an initial learning tool.”⁴ Mandolin instructor Adam Steffey says the majority of his students are comfortable learning by ear and only a few rely on tablature. They learn while listening and by repetition. He is also aware of continuing the aural transmission process that has been used to teach traditional music. “It's all just done as an aural tradition. I don't use tablature and I don't use written notation. That's the way I've always learned, and I think a lot of the folks in the program are that way,” says Steffey.⁵ Like Trenwith, he also records tunes for the students to listen to and refer to while practicing on their own. This allows the students to “sharpen their ear to where a tune is at, and get more familiar with the mandolin fingerboard.”⁶

“I like learning tunes off of the page,” says assistant professor Roy Andrade, “but on the

³ Trenwith, February 26, 2014.

⁴ Brandon Green, interview by author, Johnson City, TN, March 7, 2014.

⁵ Adam Steffey, interview by author, Johnson City, TN, March 5, 2014.

⁶ Ibid.

fiddle, you can't learn old-time music off the page. You can't, it can't be done.”⁷ Although it is possible to learn the notes from the page, you can't notate the feeling of the music. You have to be able to hear the music in order to know how it propels itself, Andrade says. Sheet music cannot replace the absence of a good recorded version of a tune. “But I'm not against it. If you can read, you have access to thousands of more tunes,” Andrade adds.⁸ Program Director Dan Boner does not think that sheet music is necessary for bluegrass, but he is also not opposed to it. “I think people benefit greatly from learning to read standard musical notation,” says Boner, “You can communicate more ideas to more people, more easily and quickly.”⁹ Boner also acknowledges that there have been times when he has obtained work because he can read music, and others who can't read music have sent the job his way. “The thorough study of any aspect or style of music can only help one to become a more complete musician,” says jazz musician and educator Bill Dobbins.¹⁰ Although you may rely on one primary method of learning music, it can only help you to pick up other skills and learning techniques along the way.

Instructor Paul Leech teaches guitar, mandolin, bass, and group guitar classes at ETSU. Like Trenwith, he finds the use of sheet music also depends on the student's preference and ability. Leech tries to get most of his students to learn by ear. “You can just absorb so much more whenever you can hear stuff,” he says, “Once you can hear everything, then your only limitation is your technique.”¹¹ If the student knows how to read music, however, he may print out notation or write out tablature for a piece of music. Otherwise, he uses the Nashville number system to chart chords for the students. The Nashville number system is a method of preparing chord charts

⁷ Roy Andrade, interview by author, Johnson City, TN, March 3, 2014.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Boner, February 27, 2014.

¹⁰ Dobbins, “Jazz and Academia: Street Music in the Ivory Tower,” 41.

¹¹ Leech, March 6, 2014.

that involves transcribing a piece of music based on its chord structure and using scale degrees to represent each chord change. Each chord is assigned a number based on its distance from the root chord.¹² Arabic numbers, and in some cases Roman numerals, are used to depict the scale degrees. To use the system, one must know the chords of the scale and the corresponding notes that make up each chord. For example, in the key of C, C would be the “1” chord, D would be “2,” and E would be “3.” The system allows musicians to transpose keys with little effort.¹³ Although the system was originally only used by session musicians specializing in country music and sometimes popular music, it is now common among professional session musicians in many genres of non-classical music.

In recent years, Leech has begun the process of notating many folk tunes and songs. “As far as what I’ve been trying to do for traditional music is to sort of bridge the gap between the classical tradition and the folk tradition by notating as many folk melodies as I can,” Leech explains.¹⁴ Notation is one advantage that classical music has over the folk tradition, he says. If a student would like to learn a particular classical piece, he/she can simply use sheet music to learn the notes that he/she is supposed to be playing. In traditional music, Leech finds there is a lot of music that simply cannot be written down on paper. “Most of it you can’t notate,” he mentions, “I’ve notated probably a few thousand tunes at this point, and that’s probably sifting through like several thousand, even more, that I just decided you can’t really notate.”¹⁵ That so much of traditional music cannot be notated demonstrates a greater level of importance for why it should continue to be taught by ear.

¹² Jason, Blume, *Six Steps to Songwriting Success*, (New York: Billboard Books, 2004), 147.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Leech, March 6, 2014.

¹⁵ Ibid.

At the Sibelius Academy in Finland, instructors highly value oral transmission and aural memory and, therefore, have worked to avoid an increased use in notated sheet music.¹⁶ A conscious effort was made to ensure that their fears would not be realized. McLucas questioned whether it would be possible for the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland to maintain the musical culture's oral tradition while frequently using sheet music. At East Tennessee State University, the oral music tradition seems to be thriving and is not at risk for disappearing. Sheet music is used occasionally by some instructors, but aural transmission is still the main method for teaching traditional music at ETSU. In this sense the institution of higher education has not changed very much at all the way traditional music has been shared. It is still being passed down from generation to generation. It still involves one person sharing a tune with another person. Colleen Trenwith does not think that the university has changed the tradition of the music. She says that traditional music is still very much alive within the institution and has not become cold or clinical. In fact, the tradition is continuing to take place within the university, she says:

“We've got a lot of teachers sitting down with individual students passing on tunes. You walk around the university, around the rooms here where the music's being taught and you look in a window, and there's just one person sitting down with another person teaching them, note by note, a tune. Then, that student will go out and sit on their own and work it out and try and play it, and then they might get together with another couple of musicians and play it with them. It's the same sort of process, in a way, we've created a community here—just the same as a community out in a small valley or holler, or something like that.”¹⁷

Improvisation

Improvisation is perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of music to teach. Jazz education has always supported classes in improvisation; however, the method of teaching

¹⁶ Hill, “The Influence of Conservatory Folk Music Programmes: The Sibelius Academy in Comparative Context,” 215.

¹⁷ Trenwith, February 26, 2014.

improvisation has never been quite perfected. Even within jazz there remains a strong need to improve methodologies for improvisation.¹⁸ Because improvisation relies on one's own interpretation and creativity, it can also be difficult for instructors to evaluate and grade. Music education specialist Kevin E. Watson conducted a study that found that improvisation improved significantly from approximately 3 1/2 hours of instructional support. Watson states that this proves that improvising is not a pre-disposed talent but rather a skill that can be developed and improved with training.¹⁹ Within both jazz and American traditional music, most instructors believe that improvisational skills can be taught and developed. However, there is no standard procedure and teaching methods vary. Teachers often have their own ideas and approaches that they rely on when teaching improvisation.

Jazz students often imitate, or replicate, recordings of songs and solos. In recent years it has become easier to imitate recordings due to technological advances that allow students to slow down a piece of music and learn it note for note. Jazz scholar Eitan Wilf states there must be a balance between creativity and imitation; this is something he refers to as “a coconstitutive relationship.”²⁰ Wilf observed classes in a collegiate jazz program in order to study how instructors were teaching improvisation. “They instruct their students to produce precise replications of the recorded improvisations of past jazz masters and then play them in synchrony with the original recordings in the classroom,” writes Wilf.²¹ This technique allows students to recognize the details and nuances that the jazz masters used in their solos. It seems students are replicating another individual's originality rather than experiencing their own creative process;

¹⁸ Kevin E. Watson, “The Effects of Aural Versus Notated Instructional Materials on Achievement and Self-Efficacy in Jazz Improvisation,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 58, no. 3 (October 2010): 251.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 250.

²⁰ Wilf, “Rituals of Creativity: Tradition, Modernity, and the 'Acoustic Unconscious' in a U.S. Collegiate Jazz Music Program,” 32.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

however, Wilf argues that this is deeply creative for the students as well.²²

Improvisation can refer to different practices. When one thinks of improvisation, one most often considers it to imply what is called “free” improvisation. This is when musicians make up the music they are playing on the spot as they are playing it. In this situation the musician does not use “pre-agreed” melodies, structures, chord progressions, or other organized aspects.²³ This usually applies to an individual performance or to the composition process. When the members of a group are improvising together, there is usually a set key, chord progression, rhythm, and speed that has been established.²⁴ Elements of the song, such as the individual solos, may be improvised, but the piece of music itself is pre-arranged. There are many ways to improvise. When playing a solo in a song, musicians may have a specific memorized solo that they use, they may take riffs and licks that they already know and change or adapt them to suit the song, or they may make up something new by following the chord progression as they go along. They may play an improvised solo that they have heard on a recording, or they may take elements of previously recorded solos and insert them into their own playing. Variations and ornamentation are also a part of improvisation. When it comes to improvisation, there are no rules that will apply to every situation.

There are different ways to teach improvisation in traditional music. In a fashion similar to jazz instructors, instructors of traditional music have their own methods and there is no standard technique. During my interviews with instructors of traditional music, I asked them to speak about improvisation. Can improvisation be taught or is it an ability that is absorbed over

²² Wilf, “Rituals of Creativity: Tradition, Modernity, and the 'Acoustic Unconscious' in a U.S. Collegiate Jazz Music Program,” 40.

²³ Lucy Green, *How Popular Musicians Learn: A Way Ahead for Music Education*, 41.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.

time? What methods do they use to teach improvisation? “Traditional musicians tend to improvise more on the melody. Jazz players tend to improvise on chord structure,” Raymond McLain explains, “I think the way we think about it is different.”²⁵ Adam Steffey also mentions the importance of focusing on the melody. “I don't know that you can teach it, as much as you can just make suggestions about it,” comments Steffey, “There's different approaches to it, but I try to just get people so comfortable in each key and over each chord.”²⁶ Steffey teaches students a variety of licks or phrases that they can draw from in each key. “I try to get a student comfortable with interlacing those around the melody, keeping the melody emphasized but using those and working with the syncopation of things—you can toy around with the beat and come in and stagger things, and mess with stuff like that and make it interesting—to where you're playing the melody but you're doing your own thing with it,” says Steffey.²⁷

Several instructors mention using blues scales to teach improvisation. Colleen Trenwith is a bluegrass fiddler originally from New Zealand who has been teaching at ETSU since 2010. Trenwith has been playing bluegrass fiddle since the 1960s, but she is also classically trained. Her band from New Zealand, Hamilton Country Bluegrass Band, played on the Grand Ole Opry with Bill Monroe in 1971. She uses blues scales in order to help her students develop improvisation techniques that they will be able to use in a band situation. “I usually go to a simple blues progression,” says Trenwith, “I usually try and teach improvising by teaching them how to play the blues and how to feel the chord changes, and what notes to choose over certain chords. I start simple, just in one key like in the key of G for instance. Once they can find the notes to play over the three chords in the key of G, they should be able to transfer that to other

²⁵ McLain, March 3, 2014.

²⁶ Steffey, March 5, 2014.

²⁷ Ibid.

keys if they really grasp it.”²⁸ Teaching students how to improvise is not an easy thing to do, Trenwith says. One of the keys to improvisation is courage, she adds, the courage to simply give it a try. “A lot of the time you learn by the mistakes you make,” explains Trenwith, “Often, it's a matter of learning what notes not to play over a certain chord. It's a matter of trial and error sometimes.”²⁹ Sometimes it just takes time for students to become comfortable improvising. Once students develop courage and abandon the fear of making mistakes, Trenwith finds that they often improve greatly as time goes on.

Lynn Peterson also uses blues scales to teach students improvisation techniques at Volunteer State Community College. They begin by teaching simple scales and having the students jam along with the scales until they acquire the feeling of it. “They start learning how to play the blues scales and jam along to blues tracks. And then they branch off into their own areas from that, as they learn more and more scales to improvise,” explains Peterson.³⁰ Peterson says that students must be taught improvisation immediately. At VSCC they use the same process to teach improvisation to members of the jazz and rock ensembles.

At Hazard Community and Technical College, J.P. Mathes teaches his banjo students phrases that will work in multiple songs and then demonstrates how those phrases can be put into several different pieces of music based on the number of measures and the chord structure. He describes this process as similar to learning a musical language: “I try to make them understand that you can exchange this phrase for this phrase. It's the same amount of time, the same measures, the same chord. Then I try to get them to kind of mix it up and then after time, after they learn so many songs, they've kind of built up a vocabulary just like learning a new

²⁸ Trenwith, February 26, 2014.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Peterson, March 4, 2014.

language.”³¹ In *Facing the Music*, Schippers writes that improvisation is usually learned by absorption, though it requires “subconscious analytical skills” and is similar to the ways in which a child learns a language.³² Though it can be taught via formal explanations, a gradual absorption into the practice seems to be the most natural process.

In order for spontaneous improvisation to occur successfully, one must feel as comfortable improvising as when speaking a language. “As soon as you start over thinking it you'll become paralyzed and you'll have to rely on your bag of tricks,” says Dan Boner.³³ Although it is okay to rely on this bag of tricks, the emphasis should remain on creativity. “I like to put the ownership on the student to create rather than learning by rote,” explains Boner.³⁴ Sometimes improvisation comes down to having a good idea and being able to transcribe that idea instantly onto your instrument, says Paul Leech. “In some ways, it's like the ultimate skill,” he explains.³⁵ Leech also comments that there are different types of improvisation, and it isn't always about playing a fancy and brand new guitar solo. What begins as a moment of improvisation may evolve into a standard part of the song. “One day's improvisation could become your arrangement for the next six months,” Leech says.³⁶ The specific rules of improvisation are not often discussed and, therefore, the practice can be seen as including everything from spontaneous new creations, to the rearranging or recombining of pre-existing music.³⁷

³¹ Mathes, March 11, 2014.

³² Schippers, *Facing the Music: Shaping Music Education from a Global Perspective*, 71.

³³ Boner, February 27, 2014.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Leech, March 6, 2014.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Schippers, *Facing the Music: Shaping Music Education from a Global Perspective*, 70.

Imitation and Homogenization

Traditional music welcomes creativity and changes. Is there a risk of traditional American music becoming static and losing creativity within an academic institution? Are all the students in these traditional music degree programs going to graduate sounding the same? Will students develop the same musical style because they are studying with the same teachers as one another and learning the same material? The fear of everyone sounding the same has become an issue in jazz music studies in the United States. Jazz historian James Lincoln Collier asserts, “With students all over the United States being taught more or less the same harmonic principles, it is hardly surprising that their solos tend to sound much the same.”³⁸ Some British folk musicians have claimed that the educational institutionalization of English folk music will result in a standardization of musical style and repertoire.³⁹ At the University of Newcastle, there is the fear that students are taking on the styles and repertoires of their teachers. If all the students are studying with the same teachers and learning the same music and technique, this could become a problem.

After interviewing several instructors of traditional music at schools in Tennessee and Kentucky, it appears that the possibility of all students imitating their instructors and one another is not considered to be an overwhelming problem in the institutionalization of traditional music. Although the risk does exist, there are preventive measures that can be taken and ways to avoid the issue of everyone sounding the same. High levels of imitation are more likely to occur in smaller or more isolated college programs. The program at East Tennessee State University has

³⁸ Alper, “Towards the Acceptance of a Bachelor of Music Degree in Popular Music Studies,” 157.

³⁹ Keegan-Phipps, “Teaching Folk: The Educational Institutionalization of Folk Music in Contemporary England,” 243.

expanded to include well over one hundred current students and over two dozen faculty members. This larger community of musicians allows for diversity and the blending of musical styles rather than pure imitation.

The nature of traditional music itself allows for students to decipher it and make it their own. “How somebody interprets a melody may be completely different,” says mandolin instructor Adam Steffey, “Like if you hear 10 mandolin players here play 'Whiskey Before Breakfast,' you're gonna hear 10 different versions of it. There'll be certain melody notes that are always there, but it's gonna be different. Just the way they interpret it, how they feel it.”⁴⁰ Steffey says the fact that you're never going to hear the exact same version twice is one thing he loves about this music. J.P. Mathes teaches banjo and bass and is the ensemble director at Hazard Technical and Community College. Mathes grew up in Elizabethton, Tennessee, and studied at ETSU prior to teaching in Hazard. Even if students are taught the same material, he believes their own personality will always shine through. “No matter how you teach somebody, no matter how many songs you teach them or how many chords they learn, they always feel their personality comes through on their playing. And that's something you can't change,” says Mathes.⁴¹

Students of traditional music are encouraged to be creative and, therefore, they feel free to incorporate their own interpretation and expression into their playing. “I tend to be more of a proponent of creating music and students writing their own material,” current director Dan Boner says, “I tend to be of the thought that if you're going to create music, it's important to understand the elements of the music and what makes it do what it does.”⁴² Boner says it is important for students to listen to a variety of artists and understand what makes all of those artists sound

⁴⁰ Steffey, March 5, 2014.

⁴¹ Mathes, March 11, 2014.

⁴² Boner, February 27, 2014.

different from one another. Once students recognize the elements that make the music sound different, they can attempt to replicate it. “You'll never replicate it exactly, but you can pull from it, you can draw from it,” says Boner. He continues, “It's not enough, I don't think, to just imitate somebody else's performance.”⁴³ Boner directs the Bluegrass Pride Band, which performs frequently both in the local area and outside the region. Boner says that while sometimes the band will perform a song in a style that is close to its original version, they also often make a conscious decision to perform it entirely differently.

At the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, students often switch teachers from year to year in order to expand their technique and learn different repertoire and styles. I studied with two fiddle teachers during my time at RCS, Alistair McCulloch and Pete Clark. Although both are incredibly talented and knowledgeable Scottish fiddlers, they have different playing styles and preferences in repertoire. Studying with both of them allowed me to develop my own style rather than simply copying that of one individual. The same process also takes place at East Tennessee State University. Brandon Green teaches individual instruction in banjo and dobro at ETSU. He encourages his students to take lessons on the same instrument from different teachers. “I think we have enough instructors here that hopefully the students will get a little of everything while they're here. I think it's nice when say, a banjo student maybe takes with one instructor for a little while and then they come to me, or if they're with me awhile then they go to another instructor,” Green says.⁴⁴ J.P. Mathes encourages a similar idea at Hazard Community and Technical College. “With our students, we try to pass them around to at least different instructors, at least a

⁴³ Boner, February 27, 2014.

⁴⁴ Green, March 7, 2014.

couple of times so they kind of get a different approach,” says Mathes.⁴⁵ This allows students to experience different aspects of the music and develop their own musicianship.

Even within the program, students are introduced to many styles beyond those of their individual instructors. Brandon Green teaches his students a variety of ways to play their instruments and demonstrates the style of a number of musicians rather than just his own. “With banjo, at least in the way that I like to teach it, Earl Scruggs is the foundation. If every student learned that, only that, then they would sound alike. But if they move on and progress beyond that, then there's all kinds of different players,” says Green, “When I teach, I try to not just show them the way that I would play it. I try to show them other people's breaks--if they want to learn a Ron Block banjo solo, I try to play it just like the way he played it. So they're not learning what I do so much as other people.”⁴⁶ Like Green, J.P. Mathes believes it is important for students to learn a variety of styles and develop their own. “I make an effort to teach them as many different styles as I can,” Mathes says. “I want to teach them something, but when they bring it back a week or two later, I want it to be different. I don't want to force them to play exactly this way.”⁴⁷ By familiarizing themselves with approaches and techniques of many other musicians, students can choose the way they want to play and create their own style.

Rather than limiting the students' musical approach, Raymond McLain believes that traditional music programs in higher education expand students' performance style by introducing them to a wide variety of influences. He does not see these programs contributing to a homogenization of traditional music. “I think actually, the schools might encourage more

⁴⁵ Mathes, March 11, 2014.

⁴⁶ Green, March 7, 2014.

⁴⁷ Mathes, March 11, 2014.

diversity in the sound and material, because in schools we're encouraged to listen to a lot of different artists—not necessarily just the ones that we happen to hear on the radio. Students are encouraged to understand more about the development of this music, how it has even gotten to this point,” says McLain.⁴⁸ By listening to and learning about a broad variety of artists, students are exposed to more influences and have more options available to incorporate into their own individual style.

There are some beginner students taking lessons within the program at East Tennessee State University, although the majority of students who enter the program have already been playing music for several years and have already developed at least a sense of their own individual style. They may have had experience playing in family bands or at church. They have likely spent time listening to the genre they are studying and may have already established a preference towards what sounds they like best. The presence of students in the program from all over the United States, and around the world, adds to the diversity of styles and influences within the institution. The instructors in the program also have their own individual styles and musical preferences. With so many various influences surrounding them, students are likely to develop their own preferred sound and express themselves differently from one another. Although graduates from the same program are likely to know some of the same repertoire and perhaps play their instrument in a comparable style, it is impossible that they will sound exactly the same.

Job Potential

There is some debate among university administrators and others within academia as to whether or not degrees in traditional forms of music will lead to professional career opportunities.

⁴⁸ McLain, March 3, 2014.

Many students who have been a part of the Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music Studies program have gone on to have careers as musicians, music teachers, or in other areas of the music industry such as management, promotion, or recording. However, a university education involves much more than simply preparing the student for a defined career path. The first universities were not designed simply to prepare their students for a specified career or job market. They provided an environment for students to expand their knowledge and hone their crafts without worrying about a certain profession or vocation. Religious studies were often a part of a university education as well. The traditional music programs currently available at American universities provide an invaluable learning environment and community for those who wish to improve their ability and increase their proficiency and comprehension. In reality, studying traditional music is not unlike studying in any other field or subject area.

The degree at East Tennessee State University goes beyond teaching musical ability, says Dan Boner, Director of Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music Studies. A career in music involves a lot more than just musical ability. “It has a lot to do with work ethic,” explains Boner, “I think the most successful ones are the ones who work hard and have a goal of 'I'm going to do this' and they're determined.”⁴⁹ The degree offers both musical skills and professional skills that will help students. The bachelor's degree is itself very valuable. “The piece of paper is important, because a person may not want to play music their entire lives, professionally. And it is only going to be increasingly difficult for people without a bachelors degree to get any well-paying job in this country,” says Boner.⁵⁰ Lynn Peterson of Volunteer State Community College acknowledges that musicians are not necessarily hired based on their degree. They are likely to

⁴⁹ Boner, February 27, 2014.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

be hired based on their skills and capabilities, but the degree is advantageous. “If you have a degree, that's a real bonus,” says Peterson.⁵¹ A Bachelor of Arts degree develops a student’s critical thinking skills and delivers a well-rounded education in literature, history, languages, and social sciences.

Adam Steffey was one of the first students in East Tennessee State University's bluegrass program in the mid 1980s, shortly after its establishment. He played in the program's first bluegrass band and took Jack Tottle's class in the history of country music. “It speaks volumes how many people that are in the program, or have been in the program, are out playing now—from country to bluegrass bands to different things, and I'm one of them,” says Steffey, “I had been playing before I got here to the program, but certainly this program was a big boost for me and it helped me. It's something that's been important to me.”⁵² Steffey feels that the program has something to offer all students, whether they wish to major in bluegrass and become a professional musician or if they would simply like to take a few classes while majoring in another subject. “It's great for students to have access to these classes and instructors,” he says, “This program is something that if people are serious about it and take it seriously and use it for what's there, I think it can be as beneficial as anything offered here on campus, any curriculum of study,” says Steffey.⁵³

A degree in traditional music offers students much more than just the learning of repertoire. Classes in the history of the music and seminars in musicianship have the potential to greatly enhance one's skills as a musician. Traditional music is not always about being able to play the most difficult piece of music. “I do think that as a musician--in a very broad sort of

⁵¹ Peterson, March 4, 2014.

⁵² Steffey, March 5, 2014.

⁵³ Ibid.

philosophical way--to contribute something to the tradition in which you're participating, that's original and valuable, takes some understanding of the depth of the tradition and what's happened within it," explains ETSU assistant professor Roy Andrade, "It's not just about the notes and playing the notes in time. It's about a feeling and about an understanding of phrasing—all these things."⁵⁴ With both jazz and traditional music, technical ability is not always the most important factor. There must be a balance between technical musical ability and a musician's ability to connect with the audience emotionally. It is the "musical, emotional, and spiritual interaction" that truly captivates an audience, more so than the technical content of the music says jazz educator Bill Dobbins.⁵⁵ This is something that can be difficult to measure and grade within higher education. In some forms of art and music, the goal of the test has become not to make mistakes. However, this outcome is not rewarding for the musician or the audience, says Raymond McLain. "If the test can be to connect with an audience, to play from your heart, and for someone to feel that—that's harder to measure. But that is what will help sustain a person's career," McLain explains.⁵⁶ Artistic expression is challenging to evaluate, but it is an important aspect of traditional music.

A degree in traditional music may not guarantee a job, but then again neither does any other degree. In that regard, J.P. Mathes says that a degree in traditional music is not unlike a degree from a classical music department—not everyone in the music program is going to become a professional violinist in an orchestra. Mathes encourages his students to continue with their education and transfer to other institutions after completing the two-year associate's degree

⁵⁴ Andrade, March 3, 2014.

⁵⁵ Dobbins, "Jazz and Academia: Street Music in the Ivory Tower," 304.

⁵⁶ McLain, March 3, 2014.

at Hazard Community and Technical College.⁵⁷ Several of their graduates have gone on to study music business or recording engineering at Middle Tennessee State University. There are many opportunities to which studying traditional music can lead. Mathes mentions two unique examples of students who pursued degrees at MTSU after graduating from HCTC. After graduating with a degree in business, one student went on to attend law school and is planning on becoming an entertainment lawyer. Another student studied audio engineering at MTSU and worked in the field for a couple of years, but she is now going to begin studying for a doctoral degree in audiology at ETSU later this year.⁵⁸ There are many career opportunities available to those who have a background in traditional music, and these options are not limited to becoming professional performing musicians.

Roy Andrade compares studying traditional music in higher education to attending an art school. Even if an artist is already a great painter, he/she can still go to art school and gain new perspectives and different ideas about how to paint. “I don't think it's that unnatural a thing to put traditional in an institution. It is a bit unnatural, but I think it can work really well,” says Andrade.⁵⁹ ETSU instructor Brandon Green agrees that the program can offer students a lot and prepare them for future careers: “I think it's very healthy for the students to come through a structure before they go—if they want to play professionally. Because they're gonna have to discipline themselves more so, in my opinion, than the average musician that just goes straight from playing at home and learning in that way to playing in a band.”⁶⁰ Green feels that the program offers a balance between the disciplined learning of the tradition and the ability to be

⁵⁷ Mathes, March 11, 2014.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Andrade, March 3, 2014.

⁶⁰ Green, March 7, 2014.

creative.

At the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland the goals of the Scottish Music degree are oriented toward how to make a living and there is an emphasis on how to be commercially successful.⁶¹ Part of this is the business classes in which the students in years two and three prepare promotional material for themselves and plan a tour for their year group. They schedule gigs, arrange transportation, and manage finances. At the end of the academic year, their plans are followed through as they go on tour together and get to witness just how successful or not were their preparations. Guest speakers such as managers, promoters, and record label executives are brought in to talk to the students during the year as they plan their tour. The majority of students who graduate with a degree in Scottish Music are creating new jobs for themselves and their fellow musicians. This includes starting bands or new school programs and community programs.⁶²

Finnish pedagogues believe that folk musicians should be versatile and skilled at all musical roles, from instrument building to teaching to performing to composing, and so there there has not been a segregation into different musical specialities in the folk music program at the Sibelius Academy.⁶³ The Sibelius Academy believes contemporary folk musicians should be able to fill all musical roles. They maintain that each musician and every student has the potential to develop her or his own artistic expression and creative contribution.⁶⁴ The folk music degree in Finland has resulted in the creation of many new jobs for its graduates. The majority of respondents to Juniper Hill's questionnaire felt that institutionalizing folk music had allowed the

⁶¹ McLucas, "The Scottish Experiment: Incorporating Traditional Music in Higher Education," 10.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 13.

⁶³ Hill, "The Influence of Conservatory Folk Music Programmes: The Sibelius Academy in Comparative Context," 215.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 217.

music to garner more respect and appreciation. Respondents commented that folk music was now taken seriously in Finland and that the music's status had increased within Finnish culture and also had been popularized abroad.⁶⁵ This general change in attitude was brought about by the Folk Music Department at the Sibelius Academy. However, it led to more performances, festivals, camps, and other folk music events throughout the country. It is through events that take place outside the academy itself, that the academy actually has the most impact upon Finnish folk musicians.⁶⁶

Very few university degrees can guarantee a job for their graduates, with the exception of perhaps training in a very specific field or vocation. A degree in political science does not guarantee its graduates positions as elected officials. In the humanities the learning process that comes with earning the degree is what is important. The degree also develops critical thinking and writing skills and the ability to evaluate and solve problems. An individual's hard work, effort, and determination is what is likely to lead to a job whether it be in traditional music or any other profession. "I think we study this music because we love it, because we think it's a significant enough part of our lives that we want to pursue that," says the Director of the Kentucky Center for Traditional Music, Raymond McLain, "You can make your living doing something you hate so that you can do what you love in your spare time, or you can make your living doing something you love."⁶⁷ Founder of the ETSU bluegrass program Jack Tottle also stresses the value of studying what you enjoy. Colleges can teach students a variety of important skills, says Tottle. These include how to organize material, how to communicate well with people

⁶⁵ Hill, "The Influence of Conservatory Folk Music Programmes: The Sibelius Academy in Comparative Context," 229.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 230.

⁶⁷ McLain, March 3, 2014.

through speech or writing, how to think clearly and critically, and how to evaluate what is important and what's not important.⁶⁸ “If you can use something that you love in order to learn those skills—great. If you have to learn those skills by memorizing a bunch of things that don't really interest you, then that's not the best way to have an education. It's not the most effective education,” says Tottle.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Tottle, March 12, 2014.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Judging by the growth of the traditional music program at East Tennessee State University, and the recent establishment of new programs at Hazard Community and Technical College and Volunteer State Community College, it is possible that other institutions of higher education will begin offering classes in traditional American music or even develop comprehensive degree programs of their own. It will be interesting to see how the addition of new programs affects the placement of traditional forms of music in higher education. Jazz music has been a part of American higher education only since the 1940s, and since then it has expanded immensely as an area of study. Jazz has experienced the influence of standardization on its techniques and repertoire. It is possible that regional or even national standards gradually will be implemented for traditional music as well. Although there are similarities between the programs discussed in this thesis, the curricula, repertoires, and teaching methods currently vary depending on the institution. Each program is unique and is organized differently depending on its institutional and departmental setting. The program at East Tennessee State University has already influenced other institutions, as demonstrated by the articulation agreement with Volunteer State Community College. “If we do standardize it,” says instructor Paul Leech, “It might just be the ETSU standard.”¹ A new standard could be created that focuses on the unique elements of these programs rather than adapting traditional music to pre-existing academic structures.

Many questions arise about the future of degrees in traditional music in the United States. Miller and Duesenberry’s study of the first graduates of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland’s

¹ Leech, March 6, 2014.

degree program took place ten years after the students' graduation from the institution. The first student to earn the B.A. in Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music Studies graduated in December 2011, and, therefore, it will be several years before a comprehensive study can be completed on the graduates and their professional careers. ETSU program Director Dan Boner hopes that more specific or intensive lines of study can be developed within the program to meet the needs and interests of all students. This would include focuses on musical performance, music business, and music history.² Students and faculty alike feel that an emphasis related to the business aspect of music could benefit the program. The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland assists its students in the organization of a tour across Scotland; however, these cohorts include only approximately ten students at a time. With a larger program like the one at ETSU, it is not feasible to send every student in the program out on tour like RCS does. However, students can gain experience by practicing booking local concerts and preparing contracts. A degree in traditional music may not lead to a specific job offer, but neither does a degree in classical music or any other area of the humanities. It does, however, give students the opportunities to become better all-round musicians, to develop their individual skills as instrumentalists and vocalists, both as soloists and members of an ensemble; and to prepare themselves for many aspects of life as a professional musician.

At this time traditional music does not appear to have conformed to the standards of Western art music in higher education at the institutions discussed here. The aural transmission process that defines traditional music has continued to exist within the Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music Studies program at East Tennessee State University. This is likely due to the individuality that the program retains by being a part of the Department of Appalachian Studies.

² Boner, February 27, 2014.

It is possible that the best way to institutionalize traditional music is by placing it within a cultural studies or liberal arts department rather than a pre-established music department. As mentioned earlier, it is important that instructors retain flexibility to be able to adapt their teaching methods to suit the individual needs of each student and the particular style of music they are teaching. For example, no particular method is used to teach improvisation and the process is by no means standardized. It is positive, though perhaps surprising, to find that the aural transmission process and teaching methods commonly used to teach and share traditional music within cultural or geographic communities can also be applied within institutions of higher education.

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