

Graduate Student Profile

Evelyn Osborne, Memorial University



Photo credit: Janice Tulk

Evelyn Osborne will serve as the graduate student representative on the program committee for the CSTM 2012 conference in Toronto. We are happy to feature her in the second instalment of the Graduate Student Profile column.

Osborne is a PhD candidate in Ethnomusicology at Memorial University of Newfoundland under the supervision of Dr. Beverley Diamond. Her dissertation, titled “The Most (Imagined) Irish Place in the World? The Interaction between Irish and Newfoundland Musicians, Media and the Musical Construction of Place”, explores three influential groups of Irish musicians in Newfoundland since the mid-20th century. Newfoundland, particularly St. John’s, is often

cast as culturally Irish much in the same way that Cape Breton is seen as culturally Scottish. This research examines the importance of radio, television, recordings and personal contact between Newfoundland and Irish musicians in the development of a sense of Irishness in Newfoundland music.

The musicians examined are the McNulty Family (1940s-1970s), Ryan’s Fancy (1970s-1980s) and the late Irish fiddler Séamus Creagh (1990s-2000s). The McNulty Family was an Irish-American vaudeville group from New York City who were featured on the radio in Newfoundland for thirty years during a period when the local Newfoundland music recording industry was in formation. Their music was very

influential on subsequent Newfoundland recordings artists and much of their repertoire is now accepted as local.

Ryan's Fancy was a trio of Irishmen who moved to Newfoundland in the early 1970s. Their group became immensely popular singing a mixture of Irish, Scottish, English and Newfoundland songs. Through their national television shows they interviewed tradition bearers throughout Newfoundland and the Maritimes.

Irish fiddler Séamus Creagh (1946-2009) moved to Newfoundland for a five year period in the late 1980s and became very involved in the local instrumental scene. After his return to Ireland, he maintained close ties with musicians in St. John's and helped create opportunities for them to visit and perform in Ireland. In 2003 he produced a collaborative CD between Newfoundland and Irish musicians titled *Island to Island: Traditional Music from Newfoundland and Ireland*. Creagh's friendships with Newfoundland musicians are now celebrated in an annual Seamus Creagh festival held in late July, which seeks to continue to strengthen the interactions between Newfoundland and Irish musicians.

Osborne has been involved in a number of scholarly archival CDs released through the Museum of Civilization and the Research Centre for the Study of Music, Media and Place (MMaP). She is also the musical transcription assistant for the forthcoming volume of previously unpublished songs from Kenneth Peacock's Newfoundland collection. This collection is being compiled by Dr. Anna Kearney-Guigné. Osborne's other research interests include music education and tourism, childlore, folksong, material culture, and inter-generational music.

Evelyn is also an avid teacher and performer. She maintains a violin/fiddle studio and is a faculty member of the Suzuki Talent Education Program (STEP) in St. John's, NL. Osborne has served as the artistic director of STEP and its summer institute the Atlantic Canadian Suzuki Institute (ACSI). Osborne has given national and international Newfoundland fiddle and dance workshops on four continents. She is a member of the *Terra Nova String Quartet* and *The Spirit of Newfoundland* and performs with her husband, magician Mr. Abra. Feeling the loss of the "Newfie Bullet," she is an avid train fan and travels by rail whenever possible.

Below is a list of some of Osborne's recent publications, conference papers, and recording projects:

2011, July. "From Solo to Ensemble: The Changing Dynamics of Newfoundland Traditional Music Making." Presented at the joint meeting of the *Canadian*

Society for Traditional Music and the *International Council for Traditional Music*.

2011, March 16. "Irish Revivals and Newfoundland Music in the Mid-20th Century: The McNulty Family and Ryan's Fancy's Influence in Newfoundland." Public Lecture, The Rooms Provincial Museum, St. John's, NL

2010. "Crossing Over through the Recording Studio: The *Island to Island: Traditional Music from Newfoundland and Ireland* CD Project." In *Crossing Over: Fiddle and Dance Studies from Around the North Atlantic*, eds. Ian Russell and Anna Kearney Guigné. Aberdeen: Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen in association with Dept of Folklore, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2010. 49-67.

2008. "King William was King George's Son: Adult Reflections on a Childhood Game in Princeton, Bonavista Bay." *Newfoundland Quarterly*. 100:425, www.newfoundlandquarterly.ca/online.php

2007. "Fiddling with Technology: The Influence of Media on Traditional Newfoundland Musicians," eds. B. Diamond, G. Colton and J. Hiller. *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies*. 187-204.



