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New England Fiddles. 1983. **New England Dances.** 1990. Two films by John Bishop. 30 minutes each, color. Purchase \$59.95/\$-19.95 (video only) from Media Generation, 8378 Faust Avenue, West Hills, CA 91301 (jbishop@ucla.edu).

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The cultural landscape of New England, in addition to its well-known rural Yankee and urban ethnic cultures, reflects an array of inter- and intraregional influences. Against a dominant English Yankee backdrop are French influences from Quebec Province; Acadian French and Scotch influences from the Canadian Maritime Provinces, particularly New Brunswick and Nova Scotia (including Cape Breton Island); and Irish immigrant communities both new and old. The styles and social occasions of fiddle playing and dancing found in contemporary New England represent both discrete and fused identities of these groups. These folk performance forms are also emblematic of cultural survival and revival in the region.

Taken together, these interrelated films—some of the footage in each was shot on the same occasions— are an edifying and entertaining look at this textbook American region through community performances. **New England Fiddles** opens at a dance dominated by "folk" in beards and sandals, and then proceeds with a series of vignettes of "old-time" fiddlers shot at home, contests, and house or club dances. French fiddler Wilfred Guillette of Derby, Vermont, speaks modestly of his early days as a fiddler, clogging in the French style as he plays. In contrast, another Vermont fiddler, Harold Luce, seems much the Yankee in personal and musical style. His interview mentions his playing in public for contra dances and is followed by fine footage of him at a rural house dance of older people that sprawls front porch to kitchen. The scenes give an inviting experiential sense of the social dimensions of dancing to fiddle music in the context of home and family. At the same time, one wonders if this dance party is essentially a recreation of largely bygone events for the purposes of the film. Younger people— folk revivalists or otherwise—are not present in this private house dance; the dimension of courting found in settings where fiddle dances are essential social occasions seems replaced here by a sort of friendly nostalgia for "the old days." The next segment features Vermont Yankee traditionalist Ron West, who exhibits a markedly different approach to his instrument from that of Guillette or Luce.

The questions of social utility, cultural continuity of the musical traditions, and personal versus community style raised in the above scenes are brought to the fore at a local contest. There an American teenage girl with classical training has studiously followed the oral-tradition music of Jerry Robichaud, an Acadian musician settled in Massachusetts. The new learning mode and cultural impetus for such folk revival apprentices is not developed in the film, but Robichaud's piping-like style is extremely well displayed. Another player, Bell Guillemette, a second-generation New England Frenchman, is shown at ease in his carpentry shop, where he plays and comments that "fiddling is like having a clip of coffee."

Contrastive urban-Irish fiddle style in the hands of Paddy Cronin follows. Cronin links his fiddling to a sense of place and ethnicity, saying "Boston is a grand place. One of the grandest places under the sun," and " The folk music of a country is the best thing." He plays with great intensity and a performance practice different again from any of the other men. Cape Breton Islander Joe Cormier of nearby Waltham then explains his fiddling as "Scottish tunes primarily, there's some Irish mixed in," thereby indicating the acculturative influences on the French communities of Cape Breton Island— Cormier migrated to the Boston area in 1961. He is then seen performing at the local French-Canadian nightclub as patrons waltz and contra dance. The film ends with comments from each of the fiddlers on some aspect of their art and style. This is followed by an appendix of some of the players showing their varied repertoires of jigs, waltzes, and quadrilles.

New England Dances, like its companion film, focuses on documenting performances- in this case single, couple, and group dancing- in a sequence of social contexts. The settings are intimately and unobtrusively portrayed with relaxed, "natural" dancing and directed interviews. Lebanon, Maine, dance caller Phil Johnson notes that he travels to dances outside the region, but when at home "sticks to New England dances" – raising the question of which of the multiplicity of cultural and personal, music and dance styles are distinctly "New England." The sense of cultural merging is amplified as the red-shirted, French-surnamed musicians of the Maple Sugar Band play a mixed English-French repertoire for the Yankee caller at a dance for young and older patrons. The scene shifts to a kitchen in Leominster, Massachusetts, where elders Arcade Richard and Victor Albert demonstrate French step-dancing and speak of the roll of social dances like the quadrille in earlier times back in Acadia. This and local club footage is intercut contrastively with Irish-American and then Cape Breton step-dancing shot at the National Folk Festival in Lowell, Massachusetts, where contest performances are displayed onstage by young male and female dancers. These virtuoso solo styles give way to visits to social, couple dance settings in nightclubs. At the Canadian-American Victory Club in Watertown, Massachusetts, fiddler John Campbell and caller Norman MacEachern perform Cape Breton style. Joe Cormier performs at French-American Victory Club in Waltham.

These French halls, founded in the Depression and named in association with now-aging World War II veterans, shows how a traditional group dance like the quadrille, and attendant community socializing, are preserved within the trappings of mainstream American: Nashville country music- is heard alongside French and Cape Breton forms; ; a reflector ball hangs overhead, dress clothing is a la K-Mart. Yet the young New England folk revivalists arrived, melding in and sometimes outnumbering the older folks, here and elsewhere, under the rubric of contra dancing. While such clubs are bastions of the working class- and in this case of- the older generation Cape Breton French—one club owner, William Chaisson, notes that even here, We get more strangers than club members . . . I give this about ten more years . . . we only got three violinists . . . eventually it's going to come to a stop,"

This sense of shifting community and audience for older dance and music styles is nicely complemented in the concluding filmic visit to tile Blue Goose, it northeast Maine dance hall devoted to local renditions of 1920s popular jazz styles. Here mostly older couples and bounce about the wooden hall to "Baby Face" and "Grand Old Flag." There is testimony that: "We just stick to the old music." Ironically,, national pop music of yesteryear, probably to some degree related to the region's role its a summer- tourist playscape, has become the nostalgic symbol of local heritage for families of musicians and dancers. The Blue Goose is a dance hall where even "Eddie the cop" dances when he's not taking tickets at the door. There are no strangers here, revivalists or otherwise. What emerges is a sense of New England dance's significance as a community play and socializing-- rather than as solely reflecting style based cultural and regional differentiation or integration

Taken together, these survey films on rural or rurally derived New England fiddling and dancing from French, Scotch, Irishs, Yankee, and American popular traditions are a fine introduction to the roots of performance expression in this region that is too often seen only in stereotypers of lobster fishermen, Downeast accents, taciturn attitudes, and dry humor. The intimate and entertaining qualities of the films are a good beginning point for exposing students to regional American folk expression, and the films provide ample material for analytical discussion of the role of music dance in society. Moreover, those in the films seem emboldened by the attention of the camera crew and the validation implied. I hope that this film will be seen in New England and will encourage cultural continuity for music and dance styles within the region.