Music in Nova Scotia - The Oral Tradition (Curatorial Report #84)

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Abstract

European settlement of Nova Scotia began in 1604, with the founding of an Acadian settlement on the Island of St. Croix. In time, the French settlers were joined by Germans, Gaelic-Scots, Irish, Lowland Scots, and the English. More immigrants, from countries like Holland and the Ukraine, followed, resulting in a multicultural society with many different languages, accents, and traditions. Among these traditions, music holds a position a great importance. Each cultural group brought with them their own unique storage of songs and instrumental music, much of which survived and has been collected during the past century. A great deal of this music still carries on today in living tradition.

The following is a guide to the traditional music of the five largest European ethnic groups in Nova Scotia. This is the music that has been passed down 'from knee to knee,' orally and aurally, and plays an important role in contemporary Nova Scotian society. It is also a guide to the collections, collectors, repositories, and people who carry these musical traditions, so that a greater understanding of Nova Scotian music may be had and further research be facilitated.

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