

# Tapping into Maritime musical roots

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Question: How do you drive a Newfoundlander insane?

Answer: Nail his or her shoes to the floor, and put on a Don Messer record.

That may be the truest Newfie joke of them all, and also probably the only one you could tell in a pub in St. Johns and not get hit with a flying plateful of fiddleheads.

For indeed, the music of the eastern provinces is without a doubt the original form of Canadian folk music. And yesterday at Roy Thomson Hall, the form was celebrated in a show called Down Home Jubilee, a package featuring Edith Butler, John Allan Cameron and others. Among the lot of them, they managed to tap into all facets of the area's musical heritage.

And a rich tapestry it is. The Maritimes' musical roots go back to the earliest days of European colo-

nization. Hence, elements of Celtic and Acadian music and culture have co-mingled, stewed, steeped, and come out as something both traditional and unique at the same time.

The veteran Cameron emphasized the Celtic connection. As he told the audience of Maple Leaf coach John Brophy, Communications Minister Flora MacDonald and about 998 others at the evening performance: "I do the hit parade of the last 1,500 years." And with such folk classics as Lord of the Dance leading the way, the Celtic Connection was very clear.

The appearance here by Edith Butler marked her local debut, which in itself is somewhat hard to believe. After all, the noted singer, songwriter, multi-instrumentalist and storyteller is a member of the Order of Canada, and has been in the music business for more than two decades now.

Butler, originally from Paquetville, New Brunswick, represents the Acadian side of the culture. Although she speaks English, she is a French Canadian and sings predominately in French. Musically, she had little in common with the

artists who proceeded her. Her short but lively set had more to do with Clifton Chenier than it did Cameron.

As Butler pointed out, the currently popular Cajun music style was actually an outgrowth of Acadian folk music (indeed, the very term "cajun" is simply a bastardization of the word Acadian). Thus, her music was heavy on the spices, with great dollops of searing fiddle and earthy, growly vocals peppering such classics as Diggy Diggy Lo and Jambalaya. Although she also showed she could sing torchy ballads with the best of them, Butler came across as an earthy, cocky, funny and completely unselfconscious performer.

The night was rounded out by two other acts which might have been cliches if they hadn't been so much fun. Bobby Brown and the Cape Breton Symphony Fiddlers (the name is something of a put-on) churned out a series of Scots and Maritime jigs and reels. And a 14-year-old step-dancing veteran named Wayne Thompson wowed 'em with the old hard-shoe routine.

Undoubtedly, he owed it all to old Don Messer records.