



Fiddle Me This (Transcript)

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ESO Offstage - Episode 6

[MUSIC - 00:00]

Max Cardilli (00:02): Welcome to ESO Offstage. I'm your host and ESO double bassist Max Cardilli. Have you ever wondered what the difference between the violin and the fiddle is? The ESO gets to regularly play with amazing fiddle players from Edmonton and around the world, but we wouldn't necessarily call my colleagues in the violin section "fiddlers" - even though the violin and the fiddle are essentially the same instrument. So why do we make this distinction? To talk about this we have to go back, way back. And to help us -

Amber Paquette (00:32): My name is Amber Paquette, and I am the city's sixth Historian Laureate and I'm the first Historian Laureate of Indigenous descent. I'm from the Michel First Nation. Our band was disenfranchised in 1958, and we're the only band in all of Canada actually to be enfranchised in the 20th century - and we're still kind of seeking federal recognition today. My family's both Cree and a little bit of Mohawk too. Then the other side of my family is Métis - very, very strong Métis roots, very much grounded in Edmonton and Alberta. My family has always been documented in this place in Edmonton, *amiskwacîwâskahikan* - Beaver Hill's House. "Amisk" means beaver and *wachiy* means mountain or hill. So, that is why we're called *Amiskwaciy* and you add *waskahikan* to that because that means house. So, later it would be literally Beaver Hill House because Fort Edmonton was on, of course, a massive hill. This area of Amiskwaciy is just a colourful array of nations, really. Edmonton has always been a special place because of its diversity and its location in Turtle Island - like, on this continent that makes it so special. You have the Boreal Forest, and you have our waterways that can connect you you know with anywhere you want to go. So, Edmonton is this place where so many people would come to celebrate and trade.

The first time of contact that's documented is definitely Anthony Henday. He didn't necessarily come through Edmonton - he actually went around it, which is funny because the Anthony Henday goes around and I don't think they even knew that when they did that. [laughs] But yeah, he went around it and Anthony Henday he's kind of documented in this area by 1754. There were people who were here before him, some french folk - we don't know their names, though. But we do know they were there. So, the first fort was not right in Edmonton. It was closer to Fort Saskatchewan and that was originally known as Fort Augustus, and that was built in 1794 by the Northwest Company Usually we get the narrative of the Hudson's Bay Company, but there was - in fact - two companies that were out here in a very bitter and sometimes comical trade war. Like, the Northwest Company would build a fort and the Hudson's Bay Company would come along and build a fort on the other side of the river. Then the Northwest Company would figure out that if they would just build fake forts and just waste Hudson Bays Companys' time they would follow them wherever they went. So, they actually would do that for quite some time - just start building forts and then just, like, ditch. [Laughter] Stuff like that.



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But sometimes it was, you know, violent and whatnot. There were a lot of things that really played out through all the Canadian West, you know, The Battle of Seven Oaks played a huge part in the amalgamation of those companies out here and it's 1821 where they officially kind of merged into the Hudson's Bay Company. That really kind of changes things out here, actually, with that amalgamation. Over a thousand company employees were let go, and only about 300 were kept. So, what that really created was the emergence of Free Traders. We call them proto-Métis. They would later become the Métis themselves.

[MUSIC - 4:01]

The Métis, also known as *Otipemisiwak* - which means “*the people who own themselves*” in Cree or *Nehiyawak*. They're very much a people rooted in a place, whereas often people get the kind of Eurocentric, colonial version that they're a mixed race. It's more of a cultural identity rooted in who you come from and where you come from. So much about Métis culture stems from music, I think and that kind of just takes us back to the Fur Trade. When it was a different time, and it was more of an isolated place, the Métis kind of filled in a large vacuum of people that were once here - that were no longer here due to the effects of disease and colonialism. So, it was very much a time where you needed to uplift yourself - and the Métis did very much that. They were always throwing parties and dances, sometimes that would literally last like days. People would dance days straight - and often these were dry parties too, which is amazing to think of. But, because they would work so hard - gosh, like the fur trade and just Métis life, in general, was just such a rigorous life. You would work so hard but then you would celebrate and party quite hard when winter rolled around. But when it comes to music it's very much just a reflection of Indigenous roots, but also a very unique take on European roots, as well.

[Phone rings - 05:44]

John Arcand (05:47): Good morning

Max Cardilli (05:49): Hi, Mr. Arcand. How are you?

John Arcand (05:51): Right on time you are!

Max Cardilli (05:53): I was lucky enough to speak with a true master of the Métis fiddle who is considered one of the most decorated fiddlers in the country with awards such as one of our country's highest civilian honours - the Order of Canada.



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John Arcand (06:07): My name is John Arcand. My given name is Jean-Baptiste Arcand. I'm a fiddle player and I have been a fiddle player most of my life and I'm 78 years old, and I'm still playing.

Max Cardilli (06:23): How did you learn the fiddle?

John Arcand (06:25): Just by ear. From listening to different people playing. I just picked it up as part of the family thing to do, kind of thing. My family played all the way through the Fur Trade until now. I think the first Arcand, Simon Arcand, he was here already in 1620 or something. I think they were from the French Alps. The fiddle was always hanging on the wall, that's all there was for entertainment. The stuff that we play as Métis people it's all dance music like La Danse du Crochet, The Red River Jig, Danse du Canard, Waltzes and Polkas, and - you name it! That was all always done as a social gathering - like in your houses or one-room schoolhouses. In houses, most of the people had small houses, so they kicked the furniture out until the dance was over and then would bring it back in again.

There was no guitars, no piano, no nothing. But your feet kept time to the music, so it kind of helped the fiddler along. Say on a square dance - they were really particular on how you played a tune and if one of the square dancers was late coming in, coming home when they were dancing, you'd add a bar to it.

[MUSIC - 7:57]

You listen to that music in the car when you're travelling down the road, first thing you know you're speeding. You know, it speeds up the mind, somehow.

[MUSIC - 8:10]

It just about died off here before, in the 60s when all the people wanted to play Rock-and-Roll and the guitars come. I was the only guy playing that stuff for quite a while until we started the fiddle camp in Emma Lake. From there on it grew again in its present form, and it's part of the Canadian curriculum now!

You know, most people will die with the specific tunes that they never taught anybody ever. Since I've been recording Métis tunes - the old ones. They don't even know the names of them so in my case when I do record them, we give them numbers or names of the last people that were known to play them tunes. It wasn't until four to five years, I think after my father died that I recorded these tunes. I remember every one of them that he used to play, and my grandfather, and different people that used to play them tunes. I don't think anybody else even knows they existed, and now all these tunes that we've recorded are in book form, and you can listen to them - you can learn them, you can do anything you want with them! Except for the dance part. Now, that's missing.



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Somebody had to take the reins by the hand and start collecting different dances that these people used to do and then teach them.

Max Cardilli (10:09): Speaking of dancing - I spoke to Lyle Donald of the Edmonton Métis Traditional Dancers about the work he does in preserving and passing on his knowledge of Métis dance to the next generation.

Lyle Donald (10:22): Our group started back in 1985, and was started by my mother. My dad was a dancer, and so we have four generations of dancers in my family. So, when we were kids we were taught the importance of the music, and the dancing, and how it went together. A lot of times, when you have a good fiddle player, the music kind of uplifts the dancers and makes them want to dance better and dance harder.

The Dances of Rupertsland are the traditional Métis dances. That is the Duck Dance, the Drops of Brandy, and the Reel of Eight, The Red River Jig, the reel of four, Broom Dance. When we start off the Broom Dance, we dance with the broom at our side and when the music changes we put the broom between our legs, and it goes into the infinity sign. So, it means two things to us - means Métis forever and also means we have our First Nations side mixed in with our European side. Mostly in the Red River Jig and that kind of stuff - that's where you'll see different styles. First Nation styles. Sometimes you'll see fancy dancing. They move their feet a little bit faster, and they do crossovers. Crossover stuff came from grass dancers in the First Nations community.

So, a lot of those kinds of steps come from the First Nations side, with the Scottish, and Irish, French dancing you dance straight up and down and you keep your arms to your side. All of your motion comes from your hips down. Music is bringing your legs up.

My dad was such a great dancer, and he always had a big smile on his face because he enjoyed it. But one thing he really enjoyed was the fiddle playing - it was lifting him off the floor and making them dance even better! And after every time they would finish, the first thing they would do is get up - when they were going off the dance floor there - go and shake the fiddle player's hand because they enjoyed dancing for him. Because they had the fiddle player to bring them up a little bit higher to do their steps, and feel pride.

As a dance group, we've been going for 36 years this year. Half of the group that we had were our family members - my cousins, my nephews, my nieces, and also we had a lot of kids from the community. So over the years, we've probably had a group of over let's say about 90 to 120 dancers.

And the great thing about it - a lot of the kids that stayed with us for a while, when they moved back home up North or whatever, they would go and teach dancing in their communities. My older son was a great dancer, he was an eight-time Canadian Red River Jig champion. He reminded me so much of my dad because he once had this big smile on his face too then. Now, I see it in my grandchildren and the younger



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generations are coming up. It just makes me feel so proud that these guys are great dancers and enjoy it.

[MUSIC - 13:47]

David Gramit (13:52): My name is David Gramit. I taught at the University of Alberta in the Music Department. I taught Music History - I did a variety of topics for the last decade or so I started getting interested in the history of music in early Edmonton. How did European traditions, American Popular music get transplanted here? How did they interact with and/or displace the music of the Métis and the First Nations who were here? That got me into looking at the history of settler colonialism. At what was present in the archives - old newspapers, old photographs. Here are the resources right here. You don't have to go to Europe. You don't have to go around the world to do research, it's right here, in the archives and what can we make of it.

The violin as an instrument proved remarkably mobile and enormously flexible in Canada. In the 19th century, we get accounts of singing and playing voyageurs early on in the 1800s. It becomes part of the cliché of voyageur culture, and of course, that fur trade culture is also the kind of matrix out of which Métis culture grew. Fiddling became a very important part of their musical life as well - still is. It's such a vital and energetic living tradition, that - it clearly was around in early Edmonton. I suspect it has been around all the way through Edmonton's history. But again the process of moving it out of visibility happened by early in the century.

I mean, one of the founding fathers of Edmonton, Laurent Garneau, is a cultural icon for the Métis, but he was certainly known as a fiddler - one of the most sought after fiddlers in Edmonton by the time he got there in the 1880s till he left early in the 20th century. There's a marvellous portrait of him that the City Archives has where he is seated with his wife. He is standing to the viewer's left and on a table in the middle is his fiddle. It's a very formal portrait. It's in a studio with painted draperies in the background, and there's a carpet on the floor - it's clearly meant to convey establishment. He had a fascinating life and clearly learned to negotiate those cultural divides. He wanted to run for the territorial legislature in the 90s but was forbidden because of that association with Riel. But, went on to become a successful businessman, an important citizen, and participant through his musical activities. One of the pleasures of doing this work was to realize that - not all of the U of A campus - but the part of it that the Fine Arts Building, that houses the music department is on, was actually part of Laurent Garneau's homestead!

[MUSIC - 17:15]

Amber Paquette (17:16): Laurent Garneau was the richest man in Edmonton. There was not a time he could not write a six-figure check. This is a very interesting story, and it's an Edmonton story. He had been writing letters to Louis Riel. They were friends and the RCMP during the rebellion - they knew of his relationship with Riel and they knew of



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the letters. So, one day they came marching up to his house on the hill and his wife Eleanor she was scrubbing laundry in her washbasin - she saw the redcoats coming up, and she knew what they were coming for. So, she raced inside the house and she grabbed the letters and she very discreetly and cleverly washed them away in her washbasin as they approached, which very much saved his life! He would have been hung. They were going to hang Laurent Garneau for his associations with Riel. A bishop had to go all the way out to Ottawa to be like, "Hey! Let's not hang this guy because he's not doing anything wrong." You could say that what happened out East was a domino effect throughout the Canadian West, and people had to leave this place.

Max Cardilli (18:25): Professor Gramit wrote a really interesting paper called "*The Transnational History of Settler Colonialism and the Music of the Urban West*". At the very beginning, he poses two questions: 1. What role did music play in the settlement of Edmonton, Alberta, and 2. Why should anyone who lives outside that city, care? I asked him if he could answer these questions for us.

David Gramit (18:50): How long do you have? [laughs] I'll take the second one, first. Why should anybody care? And, briefly, one of the reasons I think it's interesting - besides those of us who grew up in or spent a lot of time and lived in Edmonton, you know to be interested in your own local history is perfectly natural. But the other part of it is that Edmonton is one of a whole host of cities that grew up as a result of these waves of settlement that worked their way West across North America. Meanwhile, it was happening as well in Australia, and New Zealand, South Africa is a related case. This Anglophone settler-colonialism that, from the late 1700s on into the early part of the 20th century, sent enormous numbers of people into places where uniformly they tried to establish mining - various extractive processes and building cities to supply them. And, also, as a Musicologist what interested me was they brought their music with them, in various forms.

So, the process that happened in Edmonton as it grew from a tiny little place in the 1880s to a city of some 70 000 people just on the brink of World War One happened all over the place. A kind of massive explosive growth of cities, doubling in size every few years for a couple of decades. They typically would crash, because you can't sustain that kind of development for too long, and then gradually find their way back and in the process sought to establish a kind of life that was modelled on what they knew - but often figured as improved. What it obscures first and foremost is the presence of others for thousands of years. The idea that people are coming to a "virgin land". Western Canada, in particular, was often called "the last best west". That is, you know, "one more western settlement - this time we'll really do it." City after city developed huge competition - I mean we were familiar enough with the competition between Edmonton and Calgary - but that kind of struggle for local predominance happened all over the place. And, in fact, music could get involved in that as well. Who has the best band? Can a city develop an orchestra that will sustain itself?



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When you read accounts of early music in a city - and various people have written these about all kinds of cities - it tends to be a kind of story of progress. How institutions gradually developed, and, if First Nations people are mentioned at all it tends to be “this is the way it was” but very quickly that part of the story is left behind. What has happened over the last couple of decades is historians in a variety of fields have started looking back at this, and looking more carefully at what was going on in the city and recognizing that these people who were here first, in fact, were a part of city life - for quite a while. Not always recognized, certainly not always treated - in fact very rarely treated as equals and people with equal rights and a culture to respect - but nonetheless playing a role.

Edmonton was a multilingual community for quite a long time where English, French, and Cree were very common languages. And, the practices of drumming, fiddling, folk song were all heard pretty regularly - and that continued, but as the city building impulse becomes stronger, and the effort to boost Edmonton as a major city in development builds up steam you get more and more of a kind of Anglophone cultural dominance writing out these other practices. So, that you get a sense of rural life, and city life, and its musical accompaniments and entertainments that get by far the most attention.

[MUSIC - 23:27]

In 1897, we had the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. There was a pavilion built for dancing, and it was specifically mentioned in the bulletin that those who want you can entertain themselves dancing to the Red River Jig - which the author certainly knew was strongly associated with the Métis. That's sort of the almost Métis anthem as a fiddle tune. In 1905, Alberta became a province. What's that? Eight years apart, you have two major occasions for celebration. In the meantime Edmonton had grown considerably and, also, it really, really wants to appear sophisticated. There's a grand ball. There's an inaugural concert. There's a parade. There had been a parade in 1897, but this one is bigger and more elaborate. The Governor-General comes. The Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier comes. But there is no mention in anything that I ran across - and there's a lot of press coverage of this in a couple of newspapers that exist now by this point in Edmonton - no mention of First Nations participation. The ball in 1905 is a formal Euro-American Ball with a dance orchestra. Fiddling is no longer something we want to acknowledge as part of our urban life, and in fact, you find ads for concerts and musical entertainments around that time that say “no square dances” even. So, that sort of rural country music - you know, there will be a revival of it decades later and it becomes associated with Albertan identity, for sure. But at that time - no. Classical music - yes. But also urban popular music.

Max Cardilli (25:23):: I also asked Professor Gramit if he could shed some light on the age-old question - what really is the difference between the violin and the fiddle?



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David Gramit (25:31): One of the big distinctions is literacy, musical literacy. Fiddling is an oral tradition. There are a couple of pictures of violinists from around the turn of the century. There's one wonderful portrait of a studio that is in the provincial archives now. Professor Chisholm, who was teaching for a couple of years at Alberta College, these very formally dressed pupils ranging in age from maybe 10 years old to in their 20s and right in the middle, next to the teacher, is a music stand facing out towards the camera - with an open piece of music on it. As if to say, "what's distinctive about us, is we are string players. We are violinists. We are not fiddlers. We play written music." I've talked to a number of people who are studying the culture of string instruments in Europe and especially England. They've never seen in the European tradition any pictures like that. Of studios or performers that so highlight the fact that we want to show the music as what distinguishes us. I think that's a real sign of what's going on here. That we want to make a distinction between ourselves as urban literate musicians and other practices of fiddling - and establish that boundary, and music - music is a way of making that kind of cultural boundary.

[MUSIC - 27:05]

Max Cardilli (27:10): I was speaking with Amber backstage at the Winspear Centre, before her performance of her own spoken word poetry, in a concert alongside ESO musicians. She told me about some of the powerful activism that was emerging in the 20s and 30s in the Métis community.

Amber Paquette (27:27): James Brady was an incredible man, who took thousands of photographs of everyday Métis life. He just did that because he knew the importance of archiving it, and saving it, and if he didn't do that - gosh, I couldn't imagine what we would have lost. He was a founding member of the Métis Association of Alberta, and he vanished without a trace in the 1960s. We don't even know what became of him. So our leaders did amazing, incredible things. Like, you know, I'm about to perform and I just keep thinking about Ramona Sinclair and Frances Beardy. They were Métis performers, poets and spoken word artists who performed here in Edmonton in the 1920s. They went through Opera Houses all over Canada - even one of them even went to Sydney and around the world. We don't know who they are. We don't know their pictures. We don't see their faces. But that's amazing, and we should know them.

Max Cardilli (28:28): To talk more about fiddle traditions throughout Canada, I spoke to an incredible fiddle player who has been inducted into the North American Fiddlers Hall of Fame - not to mention being commissioned to compose and perform at the Vancouver Winter Olympic Opening Ceremonies in 2010, a medley called fiddle Nation, which he played with the ESO a few years back.



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Calvin Vollrath (28:51): My name is Calvin Vollrath and I'm a traditional fiddle player. I grew up on the old music of Don Messer and Andy de Jarlis. I've made my living as a fiddle player for the last 45 years! I started recording albums in 1981 and this year I released my 71st album. As far back as I can remember I wanted to be a fiddle player. I mean they would tell me when I was three years old I'd sit right beside my dad and I'd have two butter knives while he was playing the fiddle, I'd be mimicking him. All the tunes that my dad played, I could hum them when I was eight years old. [Hums] So, when I got my first fiddle it was kind of easy for me to find. [Hums] I had the tunes in my head. I mean, I was eight years old and I'd heard my dad play fiddle all the time. My dad, he learned from his mom. They called it a scattin' or *turlutte* or something. They'd say [Hums] and so my dad would play the fiddle from learning from her scattin' the tunes. If she scattered them crooked, that's how he learned them!

We call it a little bit crooked. It might have 19 bars, or it might only have 13 bars, or might not be two beats in a bar - sometimes it's one beat in a bar, sometimes three beats in a bar - and it doesn't matter as long as it has that pulse. You know, like the drum. The people dance to it and it's built for dancing! There's lots of lots of ball movement [hums]. Makes you just feel it's not just notes - it's like the notes come to life. It's really all about dancing.

Even my dad - he played some tunes that he'd had an extra beat and I'd say "Dad, I think you're doing that wrong." He'd say, "what do you mean, I'm doing it wrong?" and I went "well, I don't know. When we hear that tune on the record by Don Messer or Ned Landry they don't add that extra beat". He goes "but it feels good, doesn't it? But yeah, it feels good," he says, "then it's good." It kind of made sense to me right there. There's no such thing as music police. There was nobody there handing out tickets because they were playing it wrong. Later on, when I got playing and travelling more and more I had heard from some old old fiddle players that came from Andy de Jarlis times that they said that Andy, he would travel to Northern Manitoba, or you know down in North Dakota and there was these old tunes, and they were really, really crooked. Andy would straighten them out so they were 16 bars or 32 bars and they were standard - like how the rest of us knew music. A lot of the old fiddle players that I got to meet said that was wrong, Andy shouldn't have done that. He changed our music.

You know, I started my first band in 1975 and probably in 1976 or 1977 I got hired to play at the Friendship Center in Edmonton every Friday night. The dances would go from 10 o'clock at night till 2 o'clock in the morning. The hall held 300 or 400 people and we played fiddle music all night long. It was fiddle music, fiddle music, fiddle music and it was square dancing. We'd have an MC on stage and everybody danced - everybody knew how to dance. It's just, every family had a fiddler, every community had a fiddler and they all played a little bit different. Everywhere in the country there's different styles of fiddling. Everywhere. If we only had one style we'd only need one fiddle player!



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[MUSIC - 32:31]

Daniel Gervais (32:45): I love hockey- not as much as fiddling though and music. Music's the best, and then hockey is pretty good.

Max Cardilli (32:53): This is Daniel Gervais another fiddle player - two-time winner of the Grand Master Fiddle Championship and regular collaborator with the ESO, who gave me a demonstration of some fiddle tunes and dances.

Daniel Gervais (33:04): Here's the waltz from Andy de Jarlis. One, two, three, one, two.

[MUSIC -33:08]

Daniel Gervais (33:17): So a waltz. Then you have to play a jig. Another thing from Andy de Jarlis -

[MUSIC - 33:23]

Daniel Gervais (33:32): One, two, three, four, five, six. One, two, three, four, five, six. Okay. I'll just play a reel.

[MUSIC - 33:35]

Daniel Gervais (33:41): So - one, two, one, two. Yeah, so that's called the Manitoba Special.

Now count in four in your head so - one, two, three -

[MUSIC - 33:50]

Daniel Gervais (33:58): And it just goes on like that. Like it's square, right. So, here's like a Duck Dance from Richard Calihoo. One, two, three, four -

[MUSIC - 34:05]

Daniel Gervais (34:12): You can get very far. So you can dance to it - but it's not it's not in fours. it's not an eight. It's not in sixteenths. It's high part and low part, or something like that.

Max Cardilli (34:25): Daniel is a fiddler but he is also a classically trained musician. We talked about what it is like navigating between those two worlds.



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Daniel Gervais (34:34): Where did this separate? Because at one point musicians were playing for kings and queens in Europe. When did they become fiddlers versus violinists? We say fiddling is dance music - well, weren't they playing *Pavanes* and *Gavottes* and *Sur la Danse* and things like that. They were playing dance music - Baroque music was dance music so where did this separate?

In our day and age, lots of the fiddlers that I know are trained classically. They have amazing technique - but they also know the culture of how to make a fiddle tune dance and groove. It's like a question of language right. I've been in trouble for swinging Mozart but also you could be in trouble for playing a fiddle tune too straight.

Yes, if I'm playing Mozart I should definitely play it with the right language and the right style. The same thing with fiddling. You should know the language. Listen to it and immerse yourself in the culture.

Look at Gilles Apap. He's amazing. He's an amazing classical violinist and he plays Irish fiddling. I know a lot of baroque violinists play Irish fiddling. So it's the same instrument - but it is a different culture.

The first fiddle camp in Canada, I believe was 1987. It was in Emma Lake, Saskatchewan - just outside of Prince Albert. It really started like a whole culture and the whole thing - like a whole movement - because now there's fiddle camps everywhere. It's coast to coast! There was a sense of community and I think that was really exciting for people. John Arcand was my first teacher at the fiddle camp in 1997, and we're good friends still and I go to a fiddle festival every year - the John Arcand Fiddle Festival. Then Calvin, for sure, is like one of my biggest mentors and heroes. They're defining Canadian fiddling.

[MUSIC - 36:20]

Calvin Vollrath (36:23): I think it was 1974 - my dad was taking me to my first fiddle contest that was hosted by the CFCW radio station. We got to the fiddle contest and there was no kids! I was the only kid. It was kind of like an old timer's game. I was just absolutely shocked - I thought everybody was playing the fiddle. That's all we knew at our house is we knew fiddle music! Then in 1988 was the very first fiddle camp in Canada, which was held in Emma Lake, Saskatchewan. I got a call to teach at that, and when they called me I said "well, no I can't teach. I don't know what I'm doing. I play by ear." The guy that was going to run it, his name was Sandy Cameron, he said "I got your records," and he said "you play good. Don't tell me you don't know what you're doing." And, he said, "well, I was going to offer you this amount of money." It was really good money- more than I was making playing in a band and so I said "well, when does it start? I'll be there." [laughs]



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So, I taught at that first camp in 1988 and fiddle camps have now spawned - I mean they're everywhere. Every province has two or three fiddle camps, and they all spawn from that Emma Lake camp. So now the culture of the fiddle - there's so many youngsters playing fiddle today. That's largely in part as well to the fiddle camps and to Natalie MacMaster and Ashley MacIsaac who really made it popular. I know Ashley quite well - I'm gonna say this is maybe 20 or 25 years ago, he was playing with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra and he had everybody in the Symphony Orchestra playing the spoons with him.

Maybe 1996 there was a fella up in Sherridon, Manitoba - his name was Blaine Clippenstein. He taught in a one-room schoolhouse that had 24 students, Grade One to Grade Eight. He thought something that might really help these kids is if they could learn how to play the fiddle. One year this Blaine Clippenstein showed up at this fiddle camp and talking to him I said "you a fiddle player?" he said "no, I'm not a fiddle player. But I teach school and so I want to teach the kids how to play fiddle. So, I'm here to learn how to play fiddle." So he took the beginner class, he learned a couple of things and when the camp was over in five days he bought 24 fiddles for the kids and he went back to Sherridon with him. The next year after that, he called me up to see if I would come for a week to give a workshop to these kids in the school. So, I did that. Stayed at his house. The other schools were seeing what was happening with this little school in Sherridon. Well, this program has grown! Now they've got 37 teachers teaching throughout Northern Manitoba in this Frontier School Division. There's 5 000 kids in Northern Manitoba playing the fiddle now.

[MUSIC - 39:04]

Senator Elizabeth Hubley from Prince Edward Island who is a fiddle player put a bill together and presented it. The Canadian Grand Masters Fiddling Association flew us all in, and we went and met with the Senate. We each had maybe 10 minutes to do a presentation on why we thought Canada deserves a National Fiddling Day. When we finished our little 10-minute speech each, we were able to pull out our fiddles and play for them. We were told that was the first time that there was ever live music in the Senate - and a dance broke out! They started dancing and step dancing. Then it got passed on to the House of Commons and it was passed. The third Saturday in May has become a National Fiddling Day. We couldn't quite convince them to give everybody the day off, but it's a holiday just the same. [laughs]

Max Cardilli (40:06): A quick announcement - on our website we have a short survey that will be open until April 1st, we would love to hear from you about what you think of the podcast - and you can be entered to win one of several prizes! Thank you for listening to ESO Offstage, we truly appreciate it and your feedback is important to us.

In this episode, you heard the amazing fiddle playing of John Arcand and Calvin Vollrath. In the Show Notes you can find links to their websites from where you can



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purchase their music as well as many resources to learn more about our guests, fiddling, Laurent Garneau and Métis music and dance.

Thank you to our wonderful guests Amber Paquette, John Arcand, Lyle Donald, David Gramit, Calvin Vollrath and Daniel Gervais who shared their time and voices for this episode.

This episode was produced in *amiskwaciy-wâskahikan* also known as Edmonton on the traditional lands referred to as Treaty 6 Territory - a place that has been a meeting ground, travelling route and home for many Indigenous Peoples since time immemorial including the Cree, Métis, Dene, Nakota Sioux, Saulteaux, and Blackfoot whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence and enrich our vibrant community.

This episode was produced by me, ESO double bassist Max Cardilli. If you want to connect with me about the podcast you can write to eso.offstage@winspearcentre.com. If you like our show, please consider leaving us a rating and review on Apple Podcasts.

[MUSIC - 41:38]