

**Landscapes of Participation and Tradition:
The Australian Folk Festival as Process and Public Event**

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Abstract

Every year, more than eighty self-designated ‘folk festival’ events are staged throughout Australia. Mainly held in regional and rural towns, these are leisure events characterised by the presentation of formal folk music concerts, the staging of folk dance events as well as oral performances, street performance, and both formal and informal opportunities for music-making and folk engagement with a significant emphasis on attendee participation. Australian folk festivals are modern ‘public events’ – grounded phenomena in their own right, with internal structures of intentionality.

This thesis draws upon multi-sited fieldwork conducted at fourteen Australian folk festivals spanning three years and five Australian states and territories, including deep involvement on the organising committee of one local festival. Examining and comparing the internal technologies of these events and how these structures create eventmental landscapes and generate folk atmospheres that affect participants’ sensory experience of folk, offers a unique anthropological theoretical insight into festivals as process. Theorising folk festivals as public events and interrogating their logics of design provides an innovative analysis of how folk festival structures operate on individual and community experience of folk practice in Australia and perform folk as a process.

Folk process has long been utilised as a method of defining ‘folk’. Folk process refers to the oral transmission of music (and other folk performance) providing continuity between past and present, and in which community selection and variation or evolution by individuals or the community are key aspects. I argue that as an intentional eventmental landscape, the folk festival acts as the primary site of folk process in Australia, and that this process is facilitated and shaped by participant movement within this landscape. I also argue that the concept of *oral transmission* should be expanded to include *bodily transmission*, the body-to-body sharing of folk.

Thesis Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

I give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

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PART ONE

Context – Festivals & Folk

Chapter 1: Introduction – Folk Festivals: What, How & Why

Why Folk Festivals?

Contemporary Australian folk festivals – festivals which present a selection of events and activities broadly categorised by adherents as ‘folk’ (music, dance, poetry and other performative genres) – have become ubiquitous, with a festival occurring somewhere throughout rural or regional Australia on most weekends during the year¹. Situated as part of a broad landscape of Australian community-based leisure and music festivals, folk festivals bring together festival organisers, musicians, artists, dancers, poets, artisans and craftspeople, festival volunteers, paid staff, food and drink vendors, and stallholders selling clothing and other wares, and attract a variety of attendees and audiences including ‘lifestyle folkies’ (what Gillespie [1987] describes as ‘folkniks’, committed members of the folk community), families with children, grey nomads, tourists and casual visitors. With such a varied array of participants converging on (usually small) regional towns, these events can be significant economic and tourism opportunities for host communities. Importantly, folk festivals are multifaceted, multivocal occasions which not only *produce* and bring together the ‘folk community’ (those who regularly engage in folk activity, with engagement ranging from active appreciation, to performance, to scholarly/historical research or simply social involvement in folk pursuits) for the duration of the festival, but *display* the ‘folk ideal’ or *ethos* to the broader (non-folk) community. This thesis will consider these festivals as ‘public events’, drawing on Don Handelman’s (1998) approach of analysing the internal logics of design of the event. An analysis of the internal structures of Australian folk festivals (including the intentional construction of eventmental and atmospheric landscapes) will demonstrate festivals’ role in facilitating ‘folk process’, the mechanism by which particular cultural activities of Australians – music, dance, poetry etc – *become* folk in Australia.

I argue in this thesis that *folk festivals* have become the primary site in Australia for both the presentation and process of folk². As festivals of ‘folk’, it is important to first address

¹ Gibson and Stewart (2009) identify country, jazz, folk and blues festivals as accounting for more than half of regional Australian music festivals, outstripping more commercially lucrative musical genres such as rock. For analysis of festivals as part of regional tourism strategies see Gibson (2007), Gibson and Davidson (2004) and importantly, Gibson and Connell’s (2011) edited volume, *Festival Places: Revitalising Rural Australia*.

² The terms ‘folk’, ‘folk ideal’ or ‘ethos’, and ‘folk process’ are explored in detail in Chapter 2. In this chapter I focus primarily on folk *festivals* and discuss some of the literature surrounding folk festivals and festivals generally.

‘folk’ as a concept. As I discuss in Chapter 2, ‘folk’ is a highly ambiguous term, with its usage in Australia informed by historical debates and folk ‘revivals’ that occurred throughout the twentieth century, particularly in England, the United States and Australia. Broadly defined as ‘of the people’, folk has developed a cluster of associations relating to the rural idyll, romantic notions of the ‘common’ or working-class men and women, ideals of tradition, authenticity, participation and egalitarian performance, and most importantly, is linked to the notion of the ‘folk process’, whereby folk is transmitted orally and demonstrates continuity between the present and the past, individual or communal variation, and selection by the community.

Australian folk festivals – celebrating folk music, dance and spoken word – developed in the early 1960s as alternatives to and extensions of British-style folk clubs and beatnik coffee houses, and since the 1980s have supplanted folk clubs as the major impetus and site for the growth of folk music and traditions (Smith, 2005: 64). These festivals are opportunities for participation and engagement with folk traditions, whilst also providing colourful spectacles for casual observers and audiences through extravagant staged events, street parades and activities. Folk festivals are often carefully curated collections of music, dance and poetry, may be celebratory experiences, and may be either mundane or carnivalesque (or both). They promote and enable social interaction between ‘folkies’ (a colloquial term referring to anyone who actively participates in the folk scene) from around Australia, and they can simply be a pleasant day or weekend outing for families. The functions, roles and experience of festivals is determined by attendees’ perspective and mode of participation, but through the folk process, participants emerge from the festival with intersubjective understandings of what folk is.

Despite the variety (in both scale and programme focus) and number of folk festivals occurring in Australia today, folk festivals share commonalities of organisation and structure which are broadly replicated across sites, meaning that regular participants can expect to experience and participate in certain folk activities, becoming part of the process of folk. Interrogating these structures can offer insight into not only the organisation of specifically *folk* festivals, but can illuminate more broadly how festival structures and organisation, with the participation of festival attendees, work together to create atmospheres of community, in this case, communities of folk.

Folk festivals usually occur annually, are temporally restricted (generally a weekend, sometimes one day, rarely longer than a week), spatially restricted (usually to an oval, rural property or small town), and operate according to an internal logic which provides a participatory space separate from the everyday for the presentation of multiple folk-related activities. At the time of my fieldwork (between late 2011 and early 2015) there were more than eighty festivals or ‘gatherings’ in Australia each year which were either self-designated as folk festivals or considered as such within the folk community. These ranged in size, from small community events of several hundred people (or less) to significant festival events such as Cygnet Folk Festival in Tasmania (attracting between 7000 and 10,000 attendees), the National Folk Festival in Canberra (with more than 50,000 attendees), and Woodford Folk Festival, one of the largest folk festivals in the world with more than 100,000 festival-goers per annum. These festivals also involve a broad range of participants: organisers, ‘headline’ performers (usually from interstate or overseas), local performers, volunteers, assorted technicians (such as sound engineers and stage hands), food/drink and other merchandise vendors, instrument makers, and audiences, both existing members of the folk community and tourists visiting for the day or the weekend. Regarding the National Folk Festival, Kapferer (1994: 65) captures the inclusivity and multiple forms of participation within the festival as she notes:

Participation in the Folk Festival is widespread. Audience and performers intermingle, and much informal teaching and exchange of material and technique takes place; the separation of performers and spectators is much played down, though there are, as always, popular stars who draw the largest crowds [...] Small children and the elderly, black and white, physically disabled people and raucous teenagers and alternative lifestyles, establishment “folkies” and passing tourists, all mix in an atmosphere of open friendliness and goodwill which is produced by the ethos of the folk festival itself.

Folk festivals attract participants from across the spectrum of Australian society, with participants ranging in age (from children to the elderly), income-bracket, gender and ethnicity. However, certain demographic commonalities exist. Folkies (Gillespie’s ‘folkniks’), who represent the major stakeholders of folk festivals (as audiences, organisers and volunteers) tend to be both male and female, middle to upper class, and university-educated – a reflection of the groups that led the folk revivals that occurred in England, America and Australia³. MacKinnon’s (1993) folk audience survey, although somewhat dated now and representative only of the British experience, is nevertheless useful in indicating the demographic profile of folk enthusiasts. It suggests that folk audiences are

³ See Chapter 2 for further detail about the development of folk revivals, particularly the role of the society dilettantes who drove the first English revival, and the university-educated, campus-based protest movement that drove the urban folk revival of the United States (and which influenced the folk boom that occurred in Australia in the 1960s).

by-and-large middle-aged or older, and that contemporary folk (as opposed to during the folk booms of the 1960s) tends not to attract youthful audiences, but rather draws in new participants from more mature cohorts. Furthermore, the majority of MacKinnon's respondents had relatively high levels of formal education, and were drawn from higher socioeconomic groups, with professional workers greatly outnumbering manual workers. Some of these demographic generalisations are reflected in the Australian experience. A 2017 survey of Woodford Folk Festival attendees (Mahadevan, 2017) showed that more than 60% of attendees were aged 30 and above, 40% of attendees earned more than \$80,000 per annum, and more than 70% had either received vocational training or university (including postgraduate) education. The large number of attendees in their 30s and 40s with high incomes can perhaps explain the attendance of family groups, while those aged 50 and above are often (in my experience) festival volunteers (such as the grey nomads that regularly travel to festivals [see Campbell, 2009]). Finally, despite festivals' overt aims of inclusivity, there appeared to me to be very little ethnic diversity within folk festival audiences. Larger festivals (such as the National Folk Festival and Port Fairy) tend to reflect greater ethnic (and age) diversity, but overall, audiences at folk festivals are comprised of middle-aged (or older) Anglo-Australian participants. There was an homogeneity in respect to ethnicity, age, and educational attainment that characterised my experience of folk festival audiences, despite organisers' efforts to present a folk landscape that is broadly inclusive.

Folk festivals establish notions of place, affirm or create folk community values and practices and collectively provide the single largest opportunity for the performance and exhibition of folk practice in Australia. They represent a significant leisure activity/pastime of a section of the Australian community, and draw participants from across Australia, and the broader folk landscape, together in (usually) regional places to share the practice of folk. Importantly, as public events, folk festivals communicate intrinsic notions of what folk is and what it means to practice folk⁴. They reflect the folk ideals and motivations of organisers and participants, whilst providing a space for the practice of folk activities. For example, as will be explored throughout this thesis, an underlying narrative of the rural idyll and the importance of community within the Australian folk ethos connects participants to place, with the location of folk festivals both reflecting these ideals of rurality and community, whilst at the same time, reinforcing such

⁴ See discussion on folk ideals and folk process in Chapter 2.

narratives. The idealisation of the rural can, on the one hand, reinforce stereotypes of what it means to be Australian, but at the same time, the situating of festivals in rural locations can become an important aspect of local tourism strategies and community building, with folk festival events contributing economically to host towns and regions, while simultaneously reflecting and strengthening ideas of community, between the host community and the festival, between the festival and participants, and amongst festival attendees.

Folk festivals, despite variations in size, scale, economic impact and programming, present both folk, and the festival as an event, in a way that is recognisable to regular folk festival participants. With folk as an organising principle, there are logics of design common to and replicated by folk festivals around Australia which identify them as *folk* festivals, such as a particular hierarchisation of events, common programming practices that establish a certain rhythm of a festival as it unfolds over a weekend, as well as the positioning and location of festival venues and folk places within the festival landscape. The most important aspect of this design revolves around the folk ideal of participation. Folk festivals are structured to enable participation⁵. Participation (and therefore engagement with the folk process) is a key objective of most folk festivals, and the design structures of folk festivals reflect this focus. It is these logics of design that characterise festivals as folk, and separate them from other types of festival events, particularly music festival events, that populate the Australian festival landscape.

Despite representing a significant subsection of the broader festival landscape, folk festivals in Australia have been largely ignored as subjects of ethnographic enquiry. This analysis hopes to redress this absence in academic literature through a broadly comparative analysis of multiple Australian folk festival events, experienced from the perspective of an active participant (audience member, volunteer, organiser and performer). It will attempt to illustrate how festival structures (and organisation) and participants coproduce a sensual landscape which facilitates folk process (demonstrating continuity with the past, innovation and community selection⁶) through the oral, and I will argue, *bodily* communication of folk content.

⁵ Refer to the account of festival participant ‘Rosie’ in Chapter 10 for an examination of how festival structures enable and accommodate both planned and spontaneous modes of participation.

⁶ My use of the term ‘community selection’ should normally be taken to refer to selection by the folk community (i.e. folk musicians, folk dancers such as the morris dance community discussed in Chapter 8, folk audiences, and other participants who identify as part of the folk community), but may encompass the broader Australian community (such as the music of Peter Combe and Fred Smith discussed in Chapter 7).



Figure 1.1: Children's concert event, Port Fairy Folk Festival, 2012

Folk Festival Research and Literature

The research on folk festivals in Australia falls within broader discourses on the history, definition and experience of Australian folk music. The most significant contributor to this literature is Graeme Smith (see 2005; 2003; 1999; 1994; 2008; 1985; 2015; 2018), who has been writing about Australian folk music for more than thirty years. Seal and Willis (2003) provide an important social history of folk (or 'verandah music') by focusing on individual folk performers and their relationship to Australian folk music. Other significant contributors to folk music literature in Australia include Stubington (1993), Davey and Seal (1993; 2003), Waters (1993), Pat and Sim Symons (2003), and Fahey (2003)⁷. Although many of these contributors regard folk festivals as significant expressions of folk practice, and some such as Smith and Fahey have provided important histories of the development of Australian folk festivals, their contribution fails to explore the lived experience of festival participation, and how the internal logics of the events

⁷ See Chapter 2 for a more complete discussion of the literature on folk as a concept.

determine participant experience. It is this absence in the literature on Australian folk festivals that this thesis aims to redress⁸.

Much of the general research on folk festivals has emerged from the United States and Canada⁹, where there is a long tradition of folk music research, and a significant number of festivals. Unfortunately, despite the relative volume of material related to folk festivals, there are few in-depth *ethnographic* accounts of American folk festivals, which draw on the lived experience of festival participants as they engage with festivals. Bauman, Sawin and Carpenter et al's (1992) look at participant experiences at the Festival of American Folklife provides one notable exception¹⁰, and while highlighting the difficulties in conducting fieldwork in such a complex and dynamic field site, shows how participant identity and activity at the festival is constantly negotiated and renegotiated. The analysis concentrates on "points of friction and indeterminacy", and argues that differing understandings of what 'folklore' meant impacted on participant experience, suggesting that notions of folk as a concept are critical to discussions of folk festivals as public events. Gruning (2006), in his survey of American folk music, dedicates a chapter to folk festivals, in which he explores the Kerrville Folk Festival from an ethnographic perspective. Gruning provides a more personal narrative than Bauman, Sawin and Carpenter et al and better captures the richness of festival experience in which unscheduled, spontaneous events such as campfire sessions are often just as important as rigorously scheduled and timetabled concerts. By actively participating in the festival as a musician, Gruning demonstrates how a participant-observation approach to folk festival research can provide a more nuanced, experiential account of folk festivals. Carlisle's (2006) thesis about the Falcon Ridge Folk Festival, an auto-ethnography of the festival from the point of view of both participant and researcher, also provides a rich account of the community of the folk festival. In drawing on personal experience at the festival, both Gruning's and Carlisle's

⁸ Australian folk festivals have also been the subject of tourism and event management research, such as Mahadevan (2017), Mahadevan (2018a), Mahadevan (2018b), and Raybould, Digance & McCullough (1999). Piazza's (2013) MA thesis on community engagement by folk festivals also has particular relevance for festival organisers. This thesis, however, although acknowledging the usefulness of such approaches, focuses on more ethnographic and/or historical approaches to festivals in Australia.

⁹ In Canada, there have been several histories of folk festivals published, such as Campbell's (1994) history of the Edmonton Folk Festival, and Hill's (2017) more recent history of the Mariposa Folk Festival. Given the similarities between the Canadian and Australian festival formats, such histories raise the question of what makes a local festival, with broadly similar structural formats as those overseas, specifically Australian. From an anthropological perspective, Canadian folk festivals have also been examined in terms of commodity and exchange by both Moranz (2014) and Macdonald (2010). While interesting, these kinds of analysis are of limited benefit here, as for the most part, this kind of economic theoretical approach falls beyond the scope of my project.

¹⁰ The Festival of American Folklife (FAF) is less a leisure-based festival and more an academic demonstration of American folkways.

accounts mirror the approach I have taken in this thesis, although I draw from experiences at multiple festivals to interrogate the logics of design that shape these experiences.

Cohen's (2008) broad historical survey of American festivals, in which he details the development of festivals around the country from the nineteenth century to the early 2000s, while historical rather than ethnographic, is a useful starting point in understanding the relationship between folk festivals and the development of folk practice through twentieth-century folk revivals.

In the British literature, although folk festivals are just as important a part of the folk scene in Britain as in the United States, Canada and Australia (with more than 350 festivals annually worth an estimated £76.98m [see Pilcher & Eade, 2016]), there is a notable lack of dedicated folk festival research outside tourism and event management analysis.

Brocken (2003) attempts to redress this somewhat in his discussion of the current and future role of folk festivals within the broader folk scene, and suggests that as dedicated folk clubs and venues have gradually diminished in importance, further ethnographic analysis of folk festivals is needed as they have become the primary locus of folk activity. MacKinnon (1993) addresses the role of folk festivals in his broader analysis of the folk scene in Britain, situating festivals in relation to folk clubs as central aspects of the folk movement since the 1950s, and is one of the few examples of literature which expressly investigate the social role of festivals in Britain. The increasing importance of folk festivals for the folk community in Britain seems to be reflected in Australia, and I hope that my analysis of Australian folk festivals may inform future analysis of British folk festivals.

In Australia, while researchers such as Garth (2000), Duffy (2000), Neuendorf (2000) and Lewis and Dowse-Magog (1993) have addressed individual folk festivals or aspects of specific folk festivals, and some have examined two festivals comparatively (Begg, 2011), no one has attempted to conduct ethnographic fieldwork at multiple festivals over several years, in order to tease out the elements that characterise a festival as folk, or identify how festivals contribute to the folk process in Australia¹¹. While useful, research into individual festivals does not provide a broader perspective into how these public events function to present folk in a reproducible and recognisable way. This thesis aims to redress this absence in the literature. A multi-festival approach can offer significant

¹¹ I believe that this multi-festival approach is also unique with regard to comparative ethnographic analysis of folk process and festival structures in folk music festivals in Britain, the United States and Canada.

insights into the logics of folk festival design, and therefore the role that festival structure plays in the folk process, and the experience of folk festivals for participants.

With regard to ethnographic and anthropological approaches to folk festivals in Australia, the most noteworthy contributors are Duffy (2000) who examines the Top Half Folk Festival in terms of participation and place, and Lewis and Dowsey-Magog (1993) with their discussion of neo-liminality in relation to the ritualistic ‘fire event’ at Maleny Folk Festival. Duffy’s suggestion that inclusivity fosters a sense of belonging at the Top Half Folk Festival identifies the importance of participation within the folk festival event, and in the way the participants come to understand folk, which is particularly linked to a sense of place, being in the “Top End”. Inclusivity and belonging are closely linked to an undercurrent ethos of participation – where participation is equated with active engagement with folk activities such as music making, dancing, poetry recitations, competitions and other similar events – within Australian folk. Lewis and Dowsey-Magog assert that the Maleny Folk Festival, especially the fire event, fosters a kind of “con-subjectivity” amongst people who have self-selected their participation based on a pre-existent broad folk ethos, and is inherently linked to a sense of cooperation, particularly with regard to hardship experienced at the site. Both these articles have implications for my analysis of the folk ethos (especially with its emphasis on active participation), how that ethos is performed, and the function of festival event-places in structuring participant experience of folk.

Significant anthropological contributions to the literature on music festivals other than folk festivals¹² has been provided particularly by Graham St John (1999; 2001) who addresses Victor Turner and the concept of the liminoid body in relation to alternative lifestyle festival ConFest; and again by Duffy (2005) in her participant observation examination of selfhood and identity conducted at the Brunswick Music Festival (Melbourne) and the Festival of Asian Music and Dance (Sydney). With Waitt and Gibson (2007), Duffy has also employed participant observation methods in relation to sensory experiences at street parades, particularly in relation to sound and music. As touched upon later in this thesis, the incorporation of such events in folk festivals can help define festival boundaries and

¹² Beyond anthropology, ethnographic methods have been used in sociology to examine how neo-tribes are created at indie music festivals (Cummings, 2007), while some researchers in event and festival management have also employed ethnographic methods, such as Stadler, Reid and Fullagar’s (2013) research into knowledge practices at the Queensland Music Festival.

produce ‘thick’ atmospheres of folk experience through sensorially-rich participation¹³. Further discussion in the future of the role of street parades and processions within the festival, explored from a participant-observation perspective, could provide valuable additional knowledge which would complement the work by Duffy et al.

Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Festivals

In addition to contributing to knowledge about folk festival and folk practice in Australia, this thesis endeavours to contribute to the broader theoretical literature on festivals within anthropology. There is a substantial body of literature in anthropology and folklore studies concerning the role/function of festivals and public events. Religious festivals (see Swiderski [1987] for a dialogic ethnography of the Italian-American St Peter’s Fiesta event in Massachusetts), carnevale, street parade and mardi gras events (see Da Matta [1983] on Brazilian Carnavale as an intensification of cultural and political sociality, as an inverted universe [1984], as a ritual vehicle of permanence and of change [1991]; also Abrahams [1972] on carnival and street celebration in Saint Vincent, West Indies; Regis’ [1999] analysis of second-line parades in New Orleans; Lewis’ [1999] contrast of everyday life with Brazilian carnival and capoeira; Lavenda’s [1980] analysis of the Caracas Carnival as an important mediator in the modern capitalist world-system; Jankowiak and White’s [1999] ethnographic analysis of *communitas* at the New Orleans mardi gras), even sporting events (see MacAloon [1984] on the Olympic Games as spectacle contrasted with festival; also Byrne [1987] for an analysis of the 1936 Berlin Olympics drawing on Turner’s liminal/liminoid categories and MacAloon’s performance typology) and agricultural shows (see Gray [2010] for an analysis of Scottish agricultural shows as public events) have been subjected to ethnographic scrutiny. Early functionalist interpretations of such ethnographic data (such as Babcock, 1978) suggested that festival spaces provided an opportunity for symbolic inversion and an opportunity for *secular ritual* (Moore and Myerhoff, 1977). Structuralist approaches (such as Turner, 1977; Terence Turner, 1977) have focused on the processual aspects of ritual, with anthropologists like Handelman (1998) focusing on the underlying *design* of events. These approaches are complemented by those such as MacAloon (1984a) who incorporate a broader focus on cultural *performance*. I will be drawing primarily on Handelman’s (1998) approach in my own analysis of folk festivals.

¹³ Festivals as sensory events which establish folk atmospheres will be discussed in Chapter 6.

In his multi-disciplinary anthology of festival-oriented essays *Time Out of Time: Essays on the Festival*, Falassi notes that little theoretical effort has been devoted to defining the term ‘festival’ in the social sciences, and as a result:

the meaning of *festival* in the social sciences is simply taken from common language, where the term covers a constellation of very different events, sacred and profane, private and public, sanctioning tradition and introducing innovation, proposing nostalgic revivals, providing the expressive means for the survival of the most archaic folk customs, and celebrating the highly speculative and experimental avant-gardes of the elite fine arts. (1987a: 1)

Based on his review of anthropological, sociological, psychological and folkloric literature about festival in relation to social and ritual events, Falassi instead suggests a common definition of *festival* as:

a periodically recurrent, social occasion in which, through a multiplicity of forms and a series of coordinated events, participate directly or indirectly and to various degrees, all members of a whole community, united by ethnic, linguistic, religious, historical bonds, and sharing a worldview. (1987a: 2; original emphasis)

Folk festivals conform to Falassi’s definition – they are periodically recurrent, could be considered as a series of coordinated events (an eventmental landscape, see Chapter 5), and unite a community which shares a worldview (a folk ideology distinguished particularly by an emphasis on participation in ‘traditional’ cultural pursuits). Folk festivals around Australia conform to particular festival norms that signify them as ‘folk’ festivals, despite great variation in size and numbers of participants. The most significant aspect of this ethnography therefore involves an analysis of the *structure* of festivals (including organisational processes and spatio-temporal arrangements) and how this impacts on participants’ experience of the event and the broader world of the folk community, drawing in particular on the work of Don Handelman (with reference also to Casey [2009] and Gray [2000]).

Handelman’s *Models and Mirrors: towards an anthropology of public events* (1998), reformulates the notion of ritual celebration in favour of ‘public events’ by providing a typology of events-that-model, events-that-mirror and events-that-represent. In order to expose the underlying features and constituent logics of public events, Handelman eschews the search for meaning in an enclosed cultural context (and rejects the exclusive focus on performance of some anthropological approaches) and proposes instead a comparative approach to the study of events which takes into account the underlying *design* of the event; in other words, Handelman proposes a *technology of events*: the “identification of logics of their design, themselves embedded in cultural matrices that imbue these designs with significance and that put them to work in cultural ways” (1998: 7).

Most anthropological theory relating to contemporary secular festivals, spectacles and public events draws on earlier analyses of religious rituals and rites. Victor Turner, whose exposition of the concept of liminality (derived from van Gennep's [1960] *rites de passage*) – and later reformulations to include *liminoid* cultural phenomena – has become paradigmatic in this kind of literature (see Turner 1967; 1969; 1982; 1987). For Turner, the anti-structural liminal period – the “betwixt or between” state of the ritual process during which the mundane is inverted or suspended and in which (personal/social) transformation occurs through homogeneity and camaraderie known as *communitas* prior to reintegration into ordinary daily life – is a key aspect of participants' experience of sociality at festival-type events. The notion is commonly utilised in analyses of festivals (anthropological and otherwise) and is often employed without proper consideration (St John, 2008: 15). Turner's work on ritual and performance informs even lay/non-academic interpretations and discussions of the festival experience (see, for example, Cameron [1995]). Turner's later notion of *liminoidality* (Turner, 1978: 286-287), is better suited to the folk festival as a leisure event in Australia, but retains its ability to account for the innovative potential of a liminal-like experience. As Caudwell and Rinehart (2014) note, the liminoid offers opportunities for non-ritualistic engagement in public spaces, and is characterised by its mundanity. In some respects, the theoretical relationship between Turner's notions of the liminal (within ritual) and the liminoid (wherein social realities can be engaged with critically, played with, and explored in mundane spaces) is compatible with the difference between Handelman's events-that-model (ritualistic) and events-that-present (reflecting social realities within a community but not effecting broader societal change).

St John (1999) provides a more contemporary update of Turner's approach in an Australian context in his ethnographic analysis of alternative lifestyle event ConFest. St John deconstructs and reconfigures Turner's approach to liminality and liminoidality in terms of cultural performance (St John, 1999), better allowing for the polydimensional character of contemporary cultural performances such as folk festivals and alternative lifestyle conferences. St John incorporates Foucault's notion of heterotopias ([1986: 24]; further refined by Heatherington [1997]) to describe the physical place of the festival which yet exists beyond the everyday, mundane world. Being one of the few anthropologists concerned with Australian festival events, as well as providing a very

thoughtful reconsideration of Turnerian theory, St John's reconceptualisation provides a valuable addition to the theoretical landscape of festivals.

Folk festivals in Australia pride themselves on their inclusiveness, on emphasising active participation (through musical performance, engaging in art or craft activities, dancing, or volunteering) rather than mere spectating (which is perceived as passive and incompatible with the folk ethos). Analysis of folk festivals should therefore consider anthropological theory of performance, especially as Beeman (1993: 376) notes "surprisingly little work on Western performance has been undertaken by anthropologists". Much of the anthropology of performance as part of the broader anthropology of experience (see Bruner, 1986) relies (again) heavily on Turner, who alongside Schechner, explored the relationship between ritual and theatre; and most subsequent anthropological analyses have focused on ritual performance in non-Western contexts (Schechner and Appel, 1990: 1). While acknowledging the importance of anthropological (especially Turnerian) approaches to performance, experience and the liminoidal in relation to folk festival spaces, rather than providing yet another ethnography drawing directly on Turner, or relying on St John's reconceptualisation of Turnerian approaches to performance in liminoidal events, I instead follow Handelman's approach which prioritises a focus on the logics of design in the analysis of public events, rather than a focus on performance in liminoidal events, as I am particularly interested in the *structural elements* of festival organisation that enables and shapes participation and meaning¹⁴.

Handelman (1998) argues that events should be considered as grounded phenomena in their own right. He positions his approach as an alternative to traditional anthropological approaches to the study of ritual events which focus on culturally-specific *practice* (performance), and argues instead for a focus on *intentionality* (or *design*), on the logics of organisational design of public events, allowing for a systematic comparative analysis of the technology of events, which may be categorised as events-that-model or events-that-mirror (events that present or represent)¹⁵. In Handelman's typology, events-that-model are designed to enable and control personal or social transformation *in the world* through

¹⁴ I believe that this approach offers an original contribution to analysis of folk festivals in Australia as public events, and therefore due to considerations of length, I confine the analysis in this thesis to Handelman's approach to public events, particularly public events-that-mirror. However, there is certainly scope in future to explore folk festivals in terms of liminoidal spaces as well as mirroring events, especially with regard to participant experience of community and participation.

¹⁵ See further Chapter 5 for a discussion of Handelman's analysis of public events as models (ritualistic events) or mirrors (or events-that-present), wherein events present, reflect and express the social realities of the lived-in world considered desirable by their creators.

their internal mechanics, whereas events-that-mirror (present or represent) are designed to provide a representational narrative of the world, but do not effect change. In this thesis, by employing Handelman's argument that public events are "privileged points of penetration into other social and cultural universes" (1998: 9), I argue that contemporary Australian folk festivals can be broadly categorised as *events-that-present*, reflecting (mirroring) a narrative of folk which represents the ideology and desires of the Australian folk scene, characterised by an ideology of active participation, as well as narratives and ideals of egalitarianism, a desire to celebrate, share and continue living and past traditions (especially of music, dance and poetry), and a commitment to community and authenticity. Fundamentally mundane and leisure-based events, they do not satisfy the ritualistic elements of events-that-model. Folk festival events are (generally) not intended to effect broader societal change through their logics of design, however they may *incorporate* elements and specific events (that model) that are creative and transformative for the folk scene or folk festival participants.

By exploring the internal design of folk festivals in terms of public events-that-present, and drawing on Casey's (2009) exploration of place, especially with regards to embodiment and, in particular, the spatio-temporal eventfulness of the landscape, to analyse the inherent design of the festival and the way bodies interact with it¹⁶, I will argue Australian folk festivals' organisational logic facilitates 'folk process' through both the presentation and participatory practice of and engagement with folk. Folk process is a broadly inchoate concept suggested by the International Folk Music Council (IFMC) in 1955 (and generally accepted by participants in the folk scene) as the method by which (musical) traditions evolve through *oral* transmission (based on the factors of *continuity, variation and community selection*), and which informs common understandings, definitions and narratives of what constitutes 'folk'¹⁷. Within the Australian folk community, festivals not only provide space for continuity, variation by individuals and groups, and community selection of folk pursuits, *reflecting* the folk community's ideas about what constitutes folk, they are also an important mechanism enabling 'folk process' to occur, not just orally (a specification of the original IFMC definition, but which I question the limitations of in this thesis), but bodily. Festival attendees not only experience folk as a reflection and

¹⁶ Here Gray's analysis of agricultural shows in the Scottish Borders (2010), drawing also on Handelman, MacAloon (1984b), Bateson (1972) and Goffman (1975), as well as his work on place-making in the Scottish borders (Gray, 2000), also drawing on Casey, is also relevant.

¹⁷ See further the discussion in Chapter 2 on the definition of folk process, also Chapter 7 for further exploration of the concept.

representation of organisers', and indeed, the folk community's perspectives of folk (see Barlow 1993), but they also *create* folk, through their active, embodied participation in the festival, and thus, engagement with folk process.

Chapter 2: Putting 'Folk' In Context

Introduction: Australian Folk Festivals – Placing Folk in 21st Century Australia

The musical *bricolage* of the Middle Eastern bazaar is a suggestive metaphor for folk music in the modern world. The bazaar is an amalgam of many musics, styles, and social contexts. Diverse genres of music – religious, popular, folk, and classical – are abundantly in evidence, but almost never in such marked isolation that the stylistic boundaries remain unblurred. The venues for musical performance, too, are manifold, yet sometimes difficult to define and locate precisely. More often, stages exhibit the large measure of flexibility necessary to accommodate shifting audiences and musical tastes. Performers, too, recognize that the bazaar is a setting in which diverse musics are marketed. The most successful know that there is a time and place for the traditional, just as there is an audience more receptive to the innovative. (Bohlman, 1988: 122)

Bohlman's (1988) description of the Middle Eastern bazaar could be analogous to folk music festivals. With its amalgam of musical style and context, diversity of genres, multiple stages and venues it provides a useful description of the variety of performance styles, practices, sights, sounds and shifting performance spaces within a festival. At folk festivals, the creative and innovative is juxtaposed with the traditional, different styles and genres are presented alongside one another, and venues and audiences are constantly shifting. All this diversity of style, genre, context, audience, taste, tradition, transformation and innovation is incorporated within the notion of 'folk' at Australian folk festivals today.

In Chapter 1, I explored some of the reasons for my interest in Australian folk festivals. Both during my fieldwork and in subsequent collegiate discussion of this research, I was repeatedly asked to explain not only what it was that folk festivals actually celebrated, but more specifically, to define the term 'folk'. I know also from my discussions with festival organisers and participants that "what is folk?" is a question they are often asked, and indeed, ask themselves. In this chapter, I will demonstrate that efforts to establish a narrow and fixed definition of 'folk' are problematic, and that contemporary Australian usage of the term in the festival context is both avowedly inclusive (with participation as key), but also coloured by narratives of whiteness, nationalism, and even maleness.

To comprehend the role of the Australian folk festival in developing an understanding of folk in the twenty-first century, it is necessary to explore the broader context of the debates about folk music and other forms of folk performance¹⁸. First, I will consider some of the

¹⁸ In this chapter, 'folk' is often used interchangeably with 'folk music', a result of the bulk of academic material on folk and folk festivals conflating 'folk' with 'folk music'. Many of the arguments, however, about the definitions and practice of folk music, and the history and development of folk movements and folk festivals, are equally applicable to other types of performance and are in fact implicit in much of the

discourses surrounding the attempts to define folk, especially with regard to notions of folk process, which I argue is one of the fundamental aspects and functions of folk festivals in Australia. Second, I will look at the question of how assumptions about who or what is comprehended within the term ‘folk’ has influenced the development of folk music and folk music culture. I will then discuss the interrelated revival movements in England, the United States and Australia which have shaped the experience of folk (whether music, dance or poetry) today. Finally, I will consider how the contemporary Australian folk festival incorporates the value-laden label of folk and the historical development of the folk genre, in order to present and process folk.

The Problem of Definition

We know a folk-tune when we hear it; -or we don't. (Sharp, 2015 [1907]: 87)

It has been well over a century since folklorist Cecil Sharp's elliptical pronouncement that folk song could (and should) be instinctively recognised; moreover, that folk song was such a natural, unconscious and essentially ‘pure’ expression of a communal music that its inherent ‘goodness’ must be instantly apparent (Sharp, 2015 [1907]). Sharp's work, however, on the nature and definition of folk music and dance still informs both academic and popular discourse about folk. Moreover, the sentiment that folk music is somehow an inherently recognisable musical expression still has some unspoken currency amongst the promoters and practitioners of contemporary folk; the inability to specifically define *what folk music is* was a recurrent theme in my fieldwork conversations with Australian folk festival organisers and attendees. According to Stubington (1993: 133), in Australia, “the use and definition of the term ‘folk music’ is still being debated”. The ambiguity of folk music definition amongst folk practitioners is not to be wondered at when one considers that folk music researchers and folklorists also struggle to commit to a clear definition of what constitutes folk music. Dundes (1965: 2) suggests “the term ‘folk’ can refer to *any group of people whatsoever* who share at least one common factor”. This definition, however, provides for far broader interpretation than is useful in the context of Australian folk festivals, since it may include any number of forms and genres of music and dance outside that which are commonly denoted and recognised as folk. Gruning (2006, xii)

literature, and in general, discussions about folk process in this chapter should be considered to include all types of folk performance occurring at Australian folk festivals. Further, given the bias towards ‘folk music’ concerts in the organisation and structure of the Australian folk festival programmes (see Chapter 5), it is reasonable the focus remains on folk music, with the caveat that ‘folk’ within the context of folk festivals, folk revivals and folk definitions refers also to dance and poetry.

notes that “in common usage, the term is mired in ambiguity. ‘Folk’ has become the repository for a surfeit of musical/cultural phenomena”. The difficulty in identifying the key features of folk music is expressed by Posen (1993: 128):

True, contemporary adherents have certain criteria for recognizing folk music – acoustic instruments (usually), audience participation (usually), and political and topical content (sometimes) – and directors of folk festivals justify their rosters (or not) in terms of these criteria. (“Folk music isn’t just some old geezer sitting under a tree playing a banjo,” said one organizer recently, defending his festival’s importation of breakdancers.)

Applying the prefix ‘folk’ to the entertainments on offer at a festival carries implicit connotations about the nature of the performance presented. At its most basic level, folk can be (and often is) interpreted as “of the people”, and folk music as “the true voice of the people” (Gold & Revill, 2006: 55). However, since this denotation could be equally applied to almost any other form of music or dance created *by people* (see Lloyd, 1975 [1967]: 12), it is necessary to explore how the term ‘folk’ has been applied to performance types to signify a much more specific genre of performance within the contemporary milieu.

Defining folk has long been problematic for academia, with folk as an ideological construct being traced to the late eighteenth century (Buckland, 1983: 315). Many folk music researchers and folklorists, rendered uneasy and dissatisfied with the term ‘folk’ (Buckland, 1983: 315) evade the issue entirely: Bohlman, in *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World* (1988) deliberately avoids offering a single definition of folk music, believing that differing contexts deliver different understandings of folk, and that the dynamism of folk music prevents a static definition of the term. Despite this ambiguity, the term continues to have popular currency, as “musicians, record companies, performers and advertisers all know what they mean by folk music, even if they do not always agree with each other” (Smith, 1994: 188).

Some academics prefer to adopt an oppositional approach whereby folk music is defined by what it is not, i.e. folk music is not country music, or art music, or popular music. Sharp positions folk music in relation to composed music, which includes art music (that which is composed by the educated) and popular music (which he considered vulgar in comparison with the natural purity of folk song). List (1972: 364) similarly compares folk music with popular music, noting that although they share some similarities, popular music is characterised by an ephemerality related to mass consumption that is at odds with the traditional music “practiced in a restricted area or by a subculture”. Buckland references

A.L. Lloyd who suggested folk music was part of a continuum, with popular music occupying the centre and folk diametrically opposed to classical (Buckland, 1983: 324). More recently, Smith (2005) has provided a useful and considered analysis of folk music and practice in Australia by contrasting it with commercial country music¹⁹.

A.L. Lloyd suggests that social stratification and history determines whether a song becomes folk, stating that “traditionally, art music is a diversion for the educated classes, while folk music is one of the most intimate, reassuring and embellishing possessions of the poor...” (Lloyd, 1975 [1967]: 17). His argument relies on the differentiation between social classes and their respective traditional consumption of music. This notion that ‘folk’ denotes lower- or working-class is a prevalent one in academic and popular approaches to folk research, and often forms the basis for a social definition of folk music and dance²⁰. The term ‘folk music’ is derived from ‘folk lore’ to “cover the idea of traditions, customs, and superstitions of the uncultured classes [and] is now understood to include arts and crafts” (Scholes, 1991: 365). The connection between folk and the customs of the low- or working-classes is explicit in the works of early collectors such as Cecil Sharp and A.L. Lloyd, and continues to have currency in the modern era, as folk has been politicised throughout the various folk revivals that have occurred during the twentieth century²¹.

The popular understanding of folk as being of the (uneducated) people draws upon values considered emblematic of folk, in particular traditionality, communality and authenticity, which help shape the folk ideology. Returning to a Sharp-ian understanding of folk music, these values were originally associated with the poor and uneducated, or working class, as being representative of a more “pure” (or ‘simple’ [see Takebashi, 2010: 106]) expression of musicality freed from the taint of intellectualism or capitalism. Songs were sung and shared in communal environments by simple people, such as homes and pubs, for the joy of sharing with their fellows rather than pecuniary reward, learned by ear and passed down through generations, and it was these qualities that helped Sharp define folk music in opposition to art music or popular forms of music such as broadside ballads. Folk music is/was vernacular culture. These values still influence contemporary definitions of folk music, where the ‘traditional’ is venerated – whether ‘traditional’ relates to song lyrics,

¹⁹ Harmonic structures, chordal accompaniments, balladic structure and song arrangements can and have all been analysed and compared to classical, art or other music styles and arrangements but in-depth analyses of such musical elements tend to be limited to very specific folk styles, such as English electric folk (Sweers, 2005; see also Young, 2010) or bluegrass (Cantwell, 1992; Artiss, 1975).

²⁰ What – and who – constitutes ‘the folk’ will be explored in greater depth later in this chapter.

²¹ A history of folk revivals will be explored in greater depth later in this chapter.

instrumentation, simplicity, or musical style – and authenticity is determined by adherence to tradition or traditional modes of learning (through oral transmission for example); and genuineness in performance or composition of music not for personal gain (fame or fortune).

The adherence to a notion of tradition remains one of the most fundamental aspects of attempts to define ‘folk’. Despite the wide range of musical styles incorporated under the umbrella of contemporary folk, the notion that folk music is “closely linked with an oral tradition in which songs are passed down between generations and/or places through performance, rather than formal transcription” (Yarwood & Charlton, 2009: 195) remains one of the key features of the ‘folk music’ appellation. This ‘passing on’ of folk through oral transmission and performance can equally apply to forms of folk other than music, such as dance and poetry, and is, I suggest, a key aspect of the *folk process*, a concept generally traced to a definition of folk music formulated initially by Sharp, and formally adopted by the International Folk Music Council in 1955, and which I argue is the primary function of folk festivals within Australia.

Defining ‘Folk Process’

The International Folk Music Council (IFMC) in 1955 agreed upon the following definition of folk music:

Folk music is the product of a musical tradition that has been evolved through the process of oral transmission. The factors that shape the tradition are: (i) continuity which links the present with the past; (ii) variation which springs from the creative impulse of the individual or the group; and (iii) selection by the community, which determines the form or forms in which the music survives.

The term can be applied to music that has been evolved from rudimentary beginnings by a community uninfluenced by popular and art music and it likewise be applied to music which has originated with an individual composer has subsequently been absorbed into the unwritten living tradition of a community.

The term does not cover composed popular music that has been taken over ready-made by a community and remains unchanged, for *it is the re-fashioning and re-creation of the music by the community that gives it its folk character.* (International Folk Music Council, 1955: 23; own italics)

The focus of this definition is *oral* transmission, and echoes Sharp, who states “the method of oral transmission is not merely one by which the folk-song lives; it is a process by which it grows and by which it is created” (Sharp, 2015 [1907]: 10). This focus on oral transmission is almost universally, generally without reflection, applied by both enthusiasts and academics, so that “most definitions treat oral tradition as fundamental to folk music, if

not its most salient feature” (Bohlman, 1988: 14)²². Some researchers prefer the term ‘vernacular culture’ rather than folk song/culture to acknowledge and provide a more nuanced approach to the role that oral transmission plays in shaping community tradition (see Filene, 2000; Revill, 2005; Sullivan, 2006)²³. In this thesis I posit that the emphasis on *oral communication* is too narrow, and that the folk process as it plays out at folk festivals is in fact a *bodily* transmission of folk.

The IFMC’s factors of *continuity*, *variation* and *selection* are drawn directly from *Some Conclusions* (Sharp, 2015 [1907]: 17-31). The focus for Sharp is *communality*; he states that folk song is “communal in two senses; communal in authorship, and communal in that it reflects the mind of the community” and further, that “communal authorship and communal expression are the natural corollaries of oral transmission” (2015 [1907]: 15). One of the problems with this proposition is the idea that folk songs somehow emerge spontaneously within the collective and evolve entirely via the community (see Boyes, 2010: 66); although Sharp (2015 [1907]: 31) acknowledges that the individual invents whereas the community selects, his acknowledgement that individuals play a role in the process is superficial. He does not recognise, as Revill (2005: 699) contends “...that folk music does not simply compose and transmit itself ... to thrive and develop it depended on the enthusiasm of particular individuals. Folk culture needs the qualities and aptitudes of individuals in addition to mass participation”. Sharp doesn’t allow for the role of individuals, or individual agency, in continuing, varying and selecting material. The IFMC definition acknowledges more fully the role of the individual, but maintains its emphasis on community refashioning and recreation. One often cited criterion of folk, is that a song (or a tune, or dance) only becomes ‘folk’ when the original composer has been forgotten, and the song or tune or dance has become anonymous (List, 1972: 364; see also Lloyd, 1975 [1967]: 22).

The pre-eminence of the notion of folk as a *tradition* (wherein tradition equates to evolution) in the IFMC’s definition speaks to the idea of ‘folk process’. The folk process is firmly rooted in the notion of continuity as the basis of evolution, incremental variation which leads to development (rather than stagnation or corruption) and community

²² It has been suggested (List, 1972: 363) that this criterion is especially applicable in communities which also have written or composed art music, differentiating it from the traditional music of non-literate societies.

²³ The focus on oral transmission was broadened in 1981 when IFMC became the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) (see Brocken, 2003:12), to include other forms of transmission such as print, and audio technology (Munro, 1996: 2).

selection, which moulds and constructs the material (Sharp, 2015 [1907]: 29). The role of the community in facilitating this folk process is fundamental, and as music is transformed through the folk process, “the music comes to represent the community which has nurtured it” (Smith, 2005: 13; See also Bohlman, 1988: 14). The folk process is paramount in defining folk.

The importance of change in both tradition and the folk process can raise issues of authenticity, particularly if authenticity is “defined as the consistent representation of the origins of a piece (or style or a genre) in subsequent versions or at later moments in the tradition’s chronology” (Bohlman, 1988: 10). Gruning argues that in Europe and the United States, “the need to define folk in terms of oral transmission and traditional practices, for example, is a product of a long history of fetishizing authenticity” (Gruning, 2006: xviii). It has been suggested (Stubington, 1993: 139) that the folk process concept is in conflict with authenticity; however I argue that authenticity is *established* through the folk process, with its focus on tradition as a dynamic force, and it is what enables new material (created by individuals) to be incorporated (by the community) into the existing repertory of folk. Narratives of authenticity must be considered in any attempts to establish a working definition of folk or an understanding of *folk process* in Australia.

‘Just Plain Folk’: Identity, Community and Tradition

Notions of ‘authenticity’ and ‘tradition’ are determined in great part by understandings of who ‘the folk’ are. For Sharp, the folk were the uneducated classes, the remnants of the peasantry, the ‘common people’ from whom folk song arose out of instinct, unaffected by extraneous musical influences (Sharp, 2015 [1907]: 1-4). These were primarily agricultural workers. For Sharp, the folk song was agrarian in nature, arising “instinctively”, and in clear opposition to the popular (sheet) music that was created and produced in towns. Importantly, folk song, the only truly indigenous expression of a national music (in England) – because the sole province of what Sharp perceived to be a disappearing class – was in great danger of passing out of the national consciousness.

A number of Sharp’s contemporaries as well as later folk song collectors did not subscribe to such a narrow view, and other types of ‘common man’ song were collected in the early twentieth century, such as sailors’ songs and sea-shanties, and travellers’ songs. More than half a century later, Lloyd criticised the romantic Sharp-ian idea that the ‘unlettered’ farm workers were the most intellectually pure in the nation, by pointing out that even farm

workers were exposed to newspapers, railways and other forms of modernity (Lloyd, 1975 [1967]: 14). Instead, Lloyd expands Sharp's thesis to encapsulate all workers of the lowest class, "ordinary and obscure working men" (Harker, 1985: 240). In more contemporary times, Gruning notes (2006: xii), "fictions of the folk as rural, working class, 'just plain folk' have given way to a new 'common man': one whose position of privilege is marked by a decidedly middle-class nature". The problematic romanticisation of the 'folk' or 'common man' as 'other' still remains, however, as "the 'folk' are rarely such to themselves" (Cantwell, 1996: 38). As the definition of who the folk are has broadened (see Keil, 1978), the question of authenticity in folk music has been raised – how can something be authentically folk when we don't know who the folk are? Posen (1993: 135), in his ethnographic research juxtaposing the Mariposa Folk Festival with children's summer camps in Newfoundland, suggests that the 'folk' are 'us', and reasons that folklorists in fifty years would consider the practices of folk music revivalists and practitioners today, regardless of their social class, as 'folk'.

The idea remains that authentic folk *tradition* (continuity) has its basis in the "uneducated, rural, peasant people". While middle-class intellectuals may engage in folk practices today, they are part of a continued tradition that links back to Sharp's unlettered custodians of folk culture and his efforts to salvage this culture by introducing it to intellectuals and the middle classes. This has important implications for modern folk, in which notions of preservationism, nostalgia and pastoralism still hold romantic sway. The impetus for Sharp and many of his contemporaries to collect folk songs and dances was the belief that these practices were passing out of national consciousness and had to be 'saved' from the polluting influence of modernity. For Sharp, it was imperative that:

not only the songs, but that all things that relate to the art of folk-singing, should be accurately recorded while there is yet the time and opportunity. They, one and all, form part and parcel of a great tradition that stretches back into the mists of the past in one long, unbroken chain, of which the last link is now, alas, being forged. (Sharp, 2015 [1907]: viii)

The imminent loss of what Sharp considered the pure expression of national consciousness was bound up in themes of Romanticism in which the rural and the peasant was superior to the urban and the factory worker, and the simplicity of folk music was preferable to the sophistication of art music (Boyes, 2010: 7). This notion of the folk as uncorrupted and noble also implied racial and geographically-based purity (see Revill, 2005: 694)²⁴,

²⁴ It wasn't until much later in his career, when Sharp travelled extensively researching folk music in the Appalachians as examples of remnant British cultural artifacts, that he was forced to recognise "the uncomfortable reality of cultural hybridity" (Gold & Revill, 2006: 62).

simplicity, community and history lacking in a more complicated, artificial and modern world. Singers and dancers were located within limited confines of a village and practiced their music on the village green, or in pubs, for the entertainment of themselves and their fellow villagers (Woods, 1979: 30; see also Goodwin-Hawkins, 2016).

There has been considerable criticism that the idyllic pastoralism so valued by Sharp was mostly imaginary (see Boyes, 2010; Harker, 1985; Feintuch, 1993), and the ‘traditional’ music collected by Sharp and others was mediated by their own cultural biases, that in the process of collecting “their own assumptions, attitudes, likes and dislikes may well have significantly determined what they looked for, accepted and rejected” (Harker, 1985: xiii; see also Smith, 2005: 8). However, in my research I discovered that the pastoral idyll still shapes the ideals of modern folk participants, who tap into these deeply embedded attitudes and social histories and help form notions of authenticity which bind folk music communities together more tightly than “any shared characteristics of the musical repertoire” (Smith, 2005: 14). The importance of community and the idea that folk should be played in communal settings (particularly pubs!) remains strong, as is the assumption that folk should be practiced for its own sake, not for monetary gain or fame. Whether or not ‘the folk’, as represented by Sharp and others, actually existed does not detract from the contemporary usage of the term, which is bound up in concepts of communal expression and performance. As Smith (2005: 192) states:

Folk begins with the culture produced in face-to-face communities and passed on through oral traditions. The folk movement has always been engaged with culture that is close to everyday life and experience. This has given it a view of authenticity in cultural production that has been enormously influential, and been applied well beyond the communal cultural forms with which folk began. In particular, folk’s idea of authenticity has interacted with romantic notions of the expressive individual. Folk pulls the exploration of individual experience towards its grounding in place and history; it provides for the self-expressive artist with a way of looking for a community.

Given the complicated relationship between notions of folk identity, community and authenticity, and the underlying rural idyll/idealised colonial past of folk festival discourses, it may also be useful to think of folk festivals in Australia in terms of nostalgia (see Holyfield et al, 2013), as well as nationalism. Williams’ (2006) discussion of the nostalgic effects of traditional Irish music and dance culture amongst non-Irish enthusiasts in Japan may be particularly relevant. Rather than ethnicity, the *continuity* with past performers and orthodox reproduction and transmission of Irish musical traditions provides a level of authenticity to non-Irish performers (Williams, 2006: 111). Despite not belonging *ethnically* to the Irish diaspora, the themes recurrent in Irish traditional music

such as loss, longing and nostalgia for a homeland, resonate with enthusiasts whose *participation* in singing and instrumental sessions imbues them with identity and authenticity (Williams, 2006: 115). As practiced in folk festivals in Australia, nostalgia links people into a notion of tradition (often referred to as a living or evolving tradition) providing links with a shared cultural past which provides a sense of connectedness – to each other, to an imagined past, to a cultural practice or tradition – which may be lacking in other aspects of contemporary life²⁵.

Drawing on the implicit pastoral idyll inherent in folk as an ideology (see Kapferer, 1994; also Kaneff, 1992), discourses of nationalism also link folk performance and practice. In England there have been attempts by the far-right British National Party (BNP) to co-opt English folk music and dance in order to preserve traditional “Britishness”, a move strenuously opposed by many folk performers and audiences through the activist group Folk Against Fascism (FAF). This has coincided with an increased interest in Englishness, especially traditional dancing (morris, clogging, etc), related at least in part to a nationalistic (though not necessarily right-wing²⁶) desire for English roots culture, exemplified by English folk duo Show of Hands’ anthem *Roots*, a call of arms to celebrate English cultural identity²⁷. Though songwriter Steve Knightley has openly opposed the BNP and their use of his song (Moss, 2009), it seems clear that complex issues of national identity are inescapably interwoven in the contemporary practice and performance of folk.

Selberg, in her discussion of festivals as narratives of *place*, becoming inextricably linked to their host location, notes “the articulation of a group’s, or a local community’s, *cultural heritage* can thus be seen as an important purpose of many festivals” (2006: 299). At Australian folk festivals, issues of nationalism and national identity may be articulated as part of a cultural heritage and help to inform folk process, but the narratives and issues are particularly convoluted. On the one hand, festivals often celebrate an idealised Australian bush heritage and colonial past, while on the other, many festivals are incorporating more cosmopolitan world and ‘fusion’ acts into their line-up as a means of diversification and

²⁵ The role of tradition and connection to place/country and nostalgia is highly political, especially for First Nations peoples. Most folk festivals in Australia are cognizant of this, and attempt to acknowledge these connections through events such as Welcome to Country ceremonies, but in practice, nostalgia in Australian folk is primarily related to Anglo-European narratives of homeland and tradition.

²⁶ As discussed in the following section on folk revivals, nationalistic motivations in folk revival have often been the province of left-wing intellectuals and also Communist Party actors.

²⁷ A recent report by Winter and Keegan-Phipps (2010) identifies a resurgence of interest in specifically *English* folk arts in Britain as a site for the negotiation of Englishness and English identity and cultural heritage.

increasing appeal (and ticket sales). Yet, despite the apparent inclusivity, the discourses of identity within Australian folk festivals are often discourses of maleness and masculinity linked to idealised notions of the Australian working man, with deep connections to the Australian landscape²⁸ (and which remain, despite ample evidence that women have been integral in Australian folk music [see Gall, 2008; also Seal and Willis, 2003]), and whiteness, though folk in general in Australia embraces (at least ideologically) indigenous cultural practice. The Queensland Folk Federation has for many years organised an indigenous folk festival known as The Dreaming, and publications such as *Trad and Now* include dedicated sections for indigenous folk musicians²⁹. Indigenous peoples' intimate connection to country adds another layer to the narratives of place as they play out in the Australian folk festival.

Creating Folk – Twentieth Century Revivals

What is a Folk Revival?

Folk practiced in Australia today is built on a series of 'folk revivals' that occurred throughout the twentieth century in England, America and Australia. Usually those practices understood as 'folk' in the festival context are revival folk practices, activities and practices performed by members of the folk movement, rather than the originating (often mythical) 'folk' themselves. It is important to understand this historical context in order to comprehend the role festivals now play in facilitating the folk process.

'Revivals' are characterised by sudden growths of academic interest in traditional cultural forms, leading to the formal collection (or 'salvage') of traditional songs and dances (generally by self-styled folklore experts) followed by the publishing, performance and dissemination of the same songs and dances (often sanitised or bowdlerised to the taste of the collector).

There are two fundamental characteristics of a revival. First, a revival aims to preserve traditional folk practices that are critically endangered. Second, it aims to resuscitate and recreate these practices to ensure their continued existence, and potentially, *change* living culture or *recreate* a past culture (see Livingston, 1999). These aims are not as

²⁸ See the discussion on folk revivals in Australia regarding the notion of the 'Australian Legend'.

²⁹ The notion of national identity and race at folk festivals has been explored in Slater's (2007) account of her experiences at the Dreaming Festival; Henry's (2000) analysis of Aboriginal dance; also Stubington's (1993) overview of folk music accounts for the role of Aboriginal and ethnic musics in the Australian folk scene.

straightforward as they appear. In the first place, the preservation of songs, texts, dances and so forth is necessarily mediated by the person collecting them; the resulting corpus of material represents only that which has been selected as worthy of inclusion in what becomes a selective, or even *invented* tradition, which is coloured by nostalgia, pastoralism, even antiquarianism (Feintuch, 1993; see also Boyes, 2010; Cantwell, 1996; Harker, 1985). Secondly, the re-creation and broader promotion of these traditions is often the result of the political motivations of their proponents, such as efforts to foster nationalism or cultural purity. One of Sharp's primary motivations was the fostering of national pride through the teaching of traditional English pastimes, songs and dances to schoolchildren. As a result of this imperative to re-establish these (invented) traditions more broadly, concerns with authenticity and purity – of a tradition itself, a repertory, or style – are a cornerstone of revivalism. Feintuch (1993: 184), however, notes that a:

prerequisite ... for a folk revival is a shared sense of *the tradition* as well as a notion of how participants are related to that tradition. There's an irony in this. The term *revival* implies resuscitation, reactivation, and rekindling, and many revivalist musicians assert that they're bolstering a declining musical tradition. But rather than encourage continuity, musical revivals recast the music – and culture – they refer to. They are actually musical transformations, a kind of reinvention. And in reality, each revival achieves its own view of the past.

I would argue that folk revivals are an important part of the folk process in themselves, as they represent the key aspects of continuity (linking the present with the past), variation (which stems from both the deliberate and unintentional motivations of revivalists), and selection by the community, as the material arising from the revivals becomes accepted by the community as a kind of folk canon. A short history of the folk revivals that have occurred throughout the twentieth century will provide a better understanding of how these transformations and reinventions have occurred, and how they shape folk today.

(a) Folk Revivals in England

There are two distinct phases of folk revival in England (Atkinson, 2001: 370; see also Lloyd, 1975 [1967]: 11), broadly corresponding with the specific social conditions and concerns prior to World War I and post-World War II. The first phase is roughly considered to be the period between around 1890 to 1920 and occurred as a response and antithesis to pre-first World War industrial capitalism, with the second phase, often known as the 'urban folk revival', beginning in the period of reconstruction following the second World War, as a response to post-war mass consumption, and coinciding with and

responding to an increasing American cultural hegemony, and continuing throughout the twentieth century³⁰.

The first phase is associated with the work of amateur collectors, and was “a direct and urgent response to a cultural crisis” (Boyes, 2010: 1). Collectors were concerned that the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation through the nineteenth century had resulted in a decline of national culture (artistic and social), the remains of which could only be found amongst the country-folk in rural and isolated locales. In response to the crisis, the English Folk Dance Society (EFDS) was founded in 1911, becoming the major vehicle for the collection and preservation of folk song and dance in England, with the additional purpose of reintroducing this cultural heritage to children through the education system, thus ensuring both the survival of the songs and dances themselves, and the retention and promotion of native cultural heritage.

This folk revival, Brocken (2003: 9) writes, “could be viewed as existing within a greater fashionable middle/upper-class group of concepts, part of a restoration of ideas concerning bohemian, organic intellectual communities, drawing upon the spirit of ‘Merry England’”. Advocates of folk music and dance as a panacea for the perceived cultural decline collected (harvested?) remnant songs and dances from rural tradition-bearers, often exploitatively (profiting themselves at the expense of those who shared their songs and dances); sanitised or bowdlerised the material to ensure it adhered to modern notions of propriety; then taught the material to fellow middle/upper-class intellectuals and dilettantes, or to the working-classes or children as wholesome pastimes to counter urban cultural decay³¹.

The second English folk revival (often designated the ‘urban’ folk revival) began around 1944 and marked a discontinuity with the first revival, and was “characterized by an eclectic, multigenre repertoire, reflecting a political stance of internationalism, to which traditional English rural song contributed only one strand” (Atkinson, 2001: 372). This revival was highly influenced by the importation of American music, such as blues, folk and jazz, which became increasingly available on television and radio post-World War II. Compared to the simple English folk songs taught in schools which constituted the primary

³⁰ Some commentators suggest we have entered a third phase with the development of nu-folk and other contemporary folk genres (Yarwood & Charlton, 2009).

³¹ Harker (1985) and Boyes’ (2010) both critique the motivations and biases which characterised the process of collection and publishing of folk music and dance in England.

exposure to folk music for many young people, post-war broadcasts of blues, hillbilly, political and folk music from America came as a “revelation” (Boyes, 2010: 205). This led to the development of skiffle, a do-it-yourself style of music making which was American in origin – a blend of blues, country and gospel – but became particularly English with its own sound, musical form and repertoire, and could be considered a “fusion of Black rhythms and English folk music” (Brocken, 2003: 73; see also Gregory, 2002).

At the same time as American folk music was gaining in popularity, there was a reaction to the broadening American cultural hegemony and post-war consumerism which provided an impetus for the increasing popularity among a small section of the population for the traditional folk song of the British Isles (MacKinnon, 1993: 60)³². It was from this movement that folk clubs arose, becoming the primary social and performance space for traditional folk revivalists in England. The very venues of folk clubs themselves – generally traditional pubs with real ale – reflects the conscious efforts to establish links with the past (MacKinnon, 1993: 60). Folk clubs, with their emphasis on amateurism and egalitarianism, focused once again on oral transmission as a key aspect of folk; and in many ways became the “backbone of the revival” with regular meetings in a social setting in which members could be exposed to many types of traditional music (Munro, 1996: 173-4). The social and performative atmosphere of the folk club was important in establishing and authenticating a folk aesthetic.

From their zenith in the 1950s to 1970s, folk club participation has declined, with only dedicated folk enthusiasts attending clubs regularly. Today folk *festivals*, although rooted in the folk clubs, have become the primary area of folk growth in England (Brocken, 2003: xi).

(b) Folk Revivals in the United States

Many consider that the American folk revival began around 1958, when the Kingston Trio released their popular version of the Appalachian murder ballad ‘Tom Dooley’ (Cantwell, 1996: 7), and essentially ended at Newport Folk Festival in 1965, with Bob Dylan’s controversial electric performance (Gruning, 2006: 20)³³. In reality, traditional forms of

³² It was during this period A.L. Lloyd released *The Singing Englishman* (1944), a work commissioned by the Workers’ Music Association in order to help rediscover the musical heritage of the “lower-classes” (Lloyd, 1979 [1967]: 6).

³³ Like the second English folk revival, the period of increasingly popular folk interest from the 1950s through the 1960s is often categorised as the *urban* folk revival (Bohlman, 1988: 55). Designating the

music making had been of interest to folklorists well throughout the first half of the century, and the research and recordings of early blues, hillbilly, country and other folk musics formed the foundation upon which the urban folk revival was built; in addition, the rise of the popular folk music festivals during the folk boom (such as Newport Folk Festival) was merely a continuation of a tradition of festivals that was begun in the 1920s (Rosenberg, 1993: 6).

Although American folk songs had been of interest to antiquarian scholars in the late 1800s, between 1900 and 1930 there was a significant rise in academic curiosity in American folk music. Scholars and collectors sought out examples of extant British folk songs still being sung (especially in the Appalachian region) as examples of untouched and unchanged cultural artifacts, at risk, they thought, of disappearing within a generation or two (Filene, 2000: 17). During this period, folk music was not just collected, but was regularly celebrated and performed at conventions and festivals. Many collectors were performers, and festivals which aimed to “preserve these ancient customs for posterity” proliferated through the 1930s (Cohen, 2008: 11).

Folk festivals had a commercial aspect, in that they were often held to stimulate local economies, however, their primary stated purpose was to maintain and pass on folk traditions from generation to generation (Cohen, 2008: 41), making festivals in America a primary site for the folk process. Folk festivals were held in large numbers through the 1950s and “contributed greatly to the awakening of interest in the folksong heritage of America” (Cohen, 2008: 31). It was not until the late 1950s however, after the rise in popularity of folk music that was generated with the beginning of the urban folk revival, that festivals really began to draw widespread and enthusiastic interest.

There was not the obvious disjuncture between folk revivals in the United States that there was in England. Rather, the urban folk revival was a natural extension of the earlier collection and dissemination (via both folk festivals and commercial recordings) of folk music that preceded it, with folk now enjoying popular, commercial success where previously it had been the domain of academics and intellectuals. The urban folk music revival was very much driven by academics and leftist university students, and developed out of a very particular set of social and political circumstances. Lumer (1991: 57) states

second period of folk revival as ‘urban’ speaks to a shift from a focus on rural, pastoral folk culture to a folk culture emerging from the practices of city ‘folk’ (see also De Turk & Poulin, 1967).

that “at its core, the urban folk music revival, although continuing to discover and exploit a wide range of traditional music, developed as an explicitly politically oriented movement”. In the earlier revival, folk music was romanticised, associated with pastoralist, antiquarian and nostalgic tradition, and attempts at revival and resuscitation provided a bulwark against modernity (Cantwell, 1996: 18-19). In the urban (or popular) folk revival, this romanticisation of the past provided an alternative to capitalist cultural orthodoxy (see Cantwell, 1996: 18).

The coffee house movement that developed during this period provided opportunities for folk aficionados and enthusiasts to socialise and share traditional folk music as well as contemporary protest songs by emerging singer/songwriters (see Lund & Denisoff, 1971), and (often university campus-based) music festivals burgeoned. Both the coffee house movement and the festival circuit embraced the participatory nature of folk music. Music festivals were hugely popular, and with their broad inclusion of lectures and performances of traditional ‘ethnic’ folk music, as well as performances by popular modern singer/songwriters such as Bob Dylan, Phil Ochs and Joan Baez, helped reconcile the traditional with the modern, as “an invitation to perform at the [Newport] festival legitimized a group as folk” (Walkowitz, 2010: 199).

Since the decline of the folk boom in the 1960s, folk music remains a minority music genre, and although since the 1990s a growing movement of house concerts has provided continued opportunities for folk music participation, folk festivals remain a key locus for folk music celebration and process (see Gruning, 2006)³⁴.

(c) Folk Revivals in Australia

The Australian folk movement is often also categorised into two main revival periods. The first, generally considered to have begun in the early 1950s, and which, according to Smith (1985: 486) lasted until around 1963, was characterised by a nationalistic, left-wing intellectualist determination to discover, collect and preserve authentic Australian vernacular music, in an attempt to foster a notion of (generally white/male) Australian identity. The second phase of folk revival in Australia, the ‘folk boom’, followed closely upon the first, but is differentiated by an emphasis on performance rather than salvage or

³⁴ In addition to the more commercially-oriented folk festivals and regional gatherings, the Smithsonian Institute’s Festival of American Folklife continues to showcase national folk culture – regional music, craft and dance – as authentic American traditions (see Bauman, Sawin & Carpenter, 1992).

preservation (Smith, 1985: 486), and was highly influenced by the urban folk revivals of England and America, in which the protest singer-songwriter became an important facet of folk performance, alongside the traditionalist practices of the early folk revivalists. This second phase was marked by a cosmopolitanism leading to a more inclusive folk aesthetic, driven by issues-based singer-songwriters protesting the Vietnam War, promoting Aboriginal rights (leading to the inclusion of indigenous music-making and dance in the Australian folk landscape) and greater inclusion of ethnic minorities. The Australian folk festival today represents a folk movement that incorporates facets of both the first and the second folk revivals, with nationalistic tropes of the quintessential Australian ‘man on the land’ coexisting with narratives of multiculturalism and inclusion.

While revivals in the United States and Britain during the first half of the twentieth century attempted to salvage and resuscitate disappearing folk traditions, Smith (1985: 479) asserts that before the 1950s “there was almost no awareness of any comparable folk music or song traditions in Australia”. This absence was felt by leftist cultural activists who were influenced by Communist Party-related movements overseas, such as the Popular Front against fascism, which gave rise to the People’s Songs movement in the United States and the Workers’ Music Association in the United Kingdom (Smith, 2003: 286). In their attempts to establish a national Australian identity grounded in a collective, working-class experience, they “constructed and popularised the canon of Australian folk music” (Smith, 2005: 2; see also Smith, 2003: 286)³⁵. The attempt to establish a core repertoire of Australian folk music was undertaken by several scholars, led by Communist Party of Australia (CPA) members Russel Ward, Edgar Waters, and John Meredith, along with John Manifold (see Sullivan, 2006).

The folklore scholars and collectors of the 1950s searched for folk song both in the printed sources of the nineteenth century³⁶, and through ‘salvage’ fieldwork collecting of living informants and performers (Smith, 2015: 219). The aim was to find material that was orally transmitted, that conformed to the folk process of community selection and variation through oral circulation (Smith, 2015: 220). Through the discovery, assembling and propagation of nineteenth century songs, the revivalists hoped to establish “a narrative of Australian history and national character which became known as the Australian Legend,

³⁵ Meredith, in particular, was notable as “the most persistent and successful collector of all” (Waters, 1993: 153), collecting songs over four or five years from singers in Sydney and central-western New South Wales.

³⁶ The early printed sources included bush ballads, songs and poetry collected from nineteenth century newspapers, songsters and reciters (Smith, 2017: 223).

as advanced by historian Russel Ward's 1958 book of this title" (Smith, 2017: 230-1). The Australian Legend is an idealised, colonialist construct – the Australian version of Sharp's idealised peasant – who is characterised as practical, rough and ready, intolerant of affectation, capable, stoic and taciturn, a hard drinker, hard worker, sceptical of religion and intellectualism, and is best represented by "outback employees, the semi-nomadic drovers, shepherds, shearers, bullock-drivers, stockmen, boundary-riders, station hands and others of the pastoral industry" (Ward quoted in Roe, 1993: 34-5). Ward's Australian Legend formed a foundation for a narrative of traditional Australian values, the ideal worker, as celebrated by the revivalists of the 1950s. The folk revival of this period was based around a romanticised version of the nineteenth century Australian outback.

Although the first revival was strongly nationalistic, it was closely related to the transnational folk movements that arose in the post-World War II period. The Australian revival was influenced by both the British and the American post-World War II folk revivals, with the arrival of recordings of folk music artists from the People's Songs movement such as Burl Ives (who also toured in Australia), Woody Guthrie, and Lead Belly, and the international publication of workers' songs via the Communist Party, especially via the Eureka Youth League. The CPA interest in folk music converged with the interest of historians and collectors in the 1953 New Theatre Melbourne's production *Reedy River*, a musical drawing on vernacular song material and featuring stage-band the Bushwhackers, a group of Communist Party-affiliated musicians³⁷. Although bush bands had been in existence from the early 1900s (Seal, 2018), the Bushwhackers – with their "purportedly authentic accompaniment of the songs on accordion, lagerphone and tea-chest bass" (Smith, 2003: 286)³⁸ – became the first bush band of the revival to effectively communicate Australian music as 'folk' – as a mix of nostalgia and radicalism – to broader audiences.

Reedy River enjoyed great popular success with an estimated audience of 450,000 people over four years (Samuels, 2011: 292). The Bush Music Club in Sydney was inaugurated as a response to the large number of people who wanted to join the Bushwhackers (Samuels, 2011: 292) and was one of a number of folk music organisations developed around this

³⁷ Not to be confused with later popular bush band The Bushwhackers.

³⁸ The "authenticity" of the instrumentation as uniquely Australian is doubtful. It is probable that the tea-chest bass was imported from the skiffle movement in the United Kingdom. However, this type of do-it-yourself kind of instrumentation remains part of the narrative of folk music in Australia.

period³⁹, which hoped to provide a radicalist cultural bulwark against encroaching American mass culture.

It is important to note that folk *festivals*, similarly to the early American revivals but less so in the English, have had a significant role in Australia's folk revivals since almost the beginning, with the first national Australian Folklore Festival held in Sydney, hosted by the Australian Folklore Society in 1955 (Samuels, 2011: 294). From the earliest period of the Australian folk revivals, folk festivals have been an important and centralised location for the practice and process of folk.

The revivalist movement of the 1950s and early 1960s shaped the Australian folk music movement, but essentially only “drew on a relatively small body of collected oral performance and linked this to material from songsters, reciters and nineteenth century newspapers” (Smith, 2017: 223). The second phase of the folk revival (driven by the expansion of folk performance venues and contexts over preceding years, such as radio broadcasts, concerts, historical societies and adult education classes) broadened and diversified audiences for folk, and could be said to have essentially begun when the week-long Australian Folk Festival organised by the Victorian Bush Music Club, working together with the Folk Lore Society and the Council of Adult Education, was held in Melbourne in 1963. This event was pivotal in precipitating a ‘folk boom’ (Smith, 2005: 6).

The ‘folk boom’ period extended the repertoire of folk enthusiasts, from colonial Australian material, to an embracing of folk music from the United Kingdom and America in particular. The period from 1964 to 1967 was the zenith of folk music popularity in Australia (Smith, 2003: 286). This period saw the rise of beatnik-style coffee-houses and folk clubs which differed fundamentally from the earlier bush music clubs, in that the radical nationalism of the earlier revivalists was abandoned, or perceived as irrelevant, by the young middle-class urban enthusiasts, and instead, authentic performance which connected the modern folk aficionado to what they considered folk tradition replaced preservation as the dominant paradigm in the folk movement (Smith, 1985: 486). The influence of the American protest song movement was felt, with students and white-collar workers moving “towards new forms of solidarity which later became evident in the

³⁹ Including: the Folk Lore Society of Victoria (1955); the Queensland Bush Music Club (circa 1956); the Federation of Bush Music Groups in Queensland (1959); the Victorian Bush Music Club (1959); the Tea and Damper Club in South Australia (1961); the Western Australian Folksong Society (1963); and the Folk Lore Council of Australia in Victoria (1964) (Samuels, 2011: 292-4).

growing student action movement, the Aboriginal rights movement and, most importantly, the movement against the Vietnam War” (Smith, 2005: 26). The earlier nationalism of the working class associated with the 1950s folk revival was replaced by a cultural cosmopolitanism. In 1967 the Port Phillip District Folk Music Festival, the first folk festival broadly modelled on the influential Newport Folk Festival was held in Sydney, and became the first of the National Folk Festivals held annually until today (Samuels, 2011: 295).

The popularisation of modern ballads and protest and union songs that occurred with the rise of the folksinger (a process that reflected the impact of the American folk boom on the Australian folk scene), was not accepted uncritically by the folk community. Indeed, there was great conflict between the ‘traditional’ preservationists and those who embraced ‘popular’ folk. Turnbull (2014), in his overview of the debates and controversies of the Australian folk revival, relates how an ‘arch-traditionalist’ once reduced Glen Tomasetti to tears about her defence of topical songs, and revival singer Martyn Wyndham-Read lamented that contemporaries were forgetting traditional music in their enthusiasm for the more contemporary styles. It was suggested that the folk scene had been inundated with Dylan imitators (Turnbull, 2014), and there was much concern among traditional revivalists that the American-influenced cosmopolitan ‘popular’ folk singer was superficial and hypocritical in the Australian context, and thereby inauthentic. Turnbull (2014) writes that the division between the two groups was only overcome “once singers and songwriters moved beyond the abstract or international to focus on issues directly affecting ordinary Australians”, when the two factions united on social issues such as conscription, with anti-Vietnam War and anti-conscription movements associated with the political left, and pro-Vietnam and pro-conscription being associated with the political right. As the traditional revivalist movement in Australia had generally been associated with the left, with significant Communist Party influence, and the contemporary folk boom was based on protest and anti-capitalism, the two broadly left-wing factions converged.

The folk boom of the 1960s which (uneasily) incorporated both working-class nationalistic nineteenth-century Australian vernacular song and the more international, white-collar and student-led protest song movement, gave rise to the folk movement of the 1970s and 1980s. This period coincided with increasing migration from Ireland, which brought about socio-political changes in the folk community as Australian folk music became influenced by groups such as the Dubliners. Smith (2005: 54) notes that:

...players from the Irish community were generally working class, employed in manual labour, socially conservative, and by Australian standards devoutly religious. By comparison the typical Australian-born folk enthusiast was a tertiary-educated, white-collar employee with politically radical views and little interest in religion.

The arrival of the Irish worker in some respects harked back to Ward's Australian Legend, and Irish music and Australian traditional song merged successfully, creating the boisterous, masculine bush-bands that exist in broadly the same form today. These vocal and instrumental ensembles drew upon the repertoire of Irish groups, often performing Australian vernacular ballads and "relatively unsophisticated" Irish dance tunes, generally for folk dances (Smith, 1994: 186). As more folk musicians with greater musical competence arrived in Australia, there was a rise in instrumental sophistication, and Australian folk music began to incorporate the do-it-yourself amateur nature of the early revivalist bush bands with the highly adept traditional instrumentalist.

In the late 1960s and the 1970s many folk clubs quietly emerged around the country, broadly based upon the participatory 'singing from the floor' model of the British clubs (see Bean, 2014). The folk clubs of this period were highly influenced by the arrival of British ex-patriots (and ex-skiffers) who modelled the new clubs on those popular in England, and brought with them a practice of English folk music which became an important aspect of the Australian folk movement. Many of these performers became enthusiastic collectors of songs in the Australian tradition, and Australian folk repertoires thus became interwoven with repertoires from Britain or even further afield in a clear example of folk process exemplified by continuity, variation and community selection. Added to this was the rise of the Irish session, "an open, informal gathering of musicians, often in a public place like a pub, to play instrumental dance music for their own enjoyment" (Smith, 2005: 54). Folk music in these settings was avowedly democratic and encouraged participation (Stubington, 1993: 141), and embraced folk music which was played *authentically*, from the earnest political singer/songwriter, to the traditional English or Australian revival singer, to the bush band or the musician playing an obscure traditional instrument.

Since the first Australian Folklore Festival in 1955 and the beginning of the National Folk Festivals with the Port Phillip District Folk Music Festival in 1967, folk festivals have remained an important part of the folk movement in Australia, and in more recent decades, have broadly replaced folk clubs as the core of the movement (Smith, 2008: 156). On this basis, therefore, I suggest that Australian folk festivals have become the primary events

wherein the folk process is enacted. Contemporary folk festivals vary in their focus, generally incorporating folk music such as that which emerges from Australian/British-style folk clubs and Irish music sessions, but also include traditional music from non-Anglo/Australian sources, all joined together as part of folk process⁴⁰. However, even though various and multiple genres of music, including not only what Seal and Willis (2003) refer to as ‘verandah music’ (the mixture of traditional music including the Anglo-Celtic Australian, indigenous musics and non-English speaking migrant musics), but also more popular genres such as rock, modern blues, country, and world music are included in the programmes of Australian folk festivals, Australian folk festivals differentiate themselves from commercial music festivals, such as world music festival WOMAD, through their emphasis on non-commerciality, amateur performance, egalitarian participation, community and traditional transmission.

Contemporary Australian Folk – Ideology, Authenticity, Community

As a performed genre, folk music can live in a community only through repetition or re-creation, both of which characteristically require performer and audience [...] In short, folk music requires a vital social basis for its continued practice. (Bohlman, 1988: 53)

Folk as a process, which includes continuity, variation and community selection and in which *oral tradition* is paramount, as expressed by Sharp and the International Folk Music Council, is still cited by many in the Australian folk community as an essential aspect of folk. In addition, performativity and sociability (key aspects of *participation*) are vital aspects of contemporary folk practice in contemporary Australia. From the ‘folk revival’ of the 1950s, through to the ‘folk movement’ of the 1960s and 1970s, folk in Australia is generally referred to now in relation to the ‘folk scene’ or ‘folk community’. Folk community is expressed through the activity of folk clubs, regular sessions, open mics, pub gigs by folk singer/songwriters and bands, and importantly, festivals.

It may be more productive to consider folk as *ideology* (Frith 1981; Smith and Brett 1998; Smith 2005). Here, ‘folk’ becomes more an issue of values (political and philosophical), a “cluster of associations” as it were, as opposed to style or musicality; notions of ‘common man’, the pastoral idyll, nostalgia and tradition are bound up in this “cluster of

⁴⁰ Sullivan (2006: 81) argues the 1970s saw an Anglicisation of the folk music movement through the heavy incorporation of English traditional dance (particularly at the Brisbane National Folk Festival in 1981), but there remains a core of traditional revivalist Australian bush songs and vernacular culture presented at folk festivals, especially the National Folk Festival, which offers scholarships to contemporary collectors and performers to uncover traditional Australian folk from archival and other sources.

associations”, along with a commitment to particular ideals of community, participation and authentic performance (Smith and Brett, 1998: 5)⁴¹. Authenticity in folk performance encompasses not only aspects of revival, preservation, or nostalgia, the use of so-called *authentic* folk instrumentation, or the faithful adherence to a traditional corpus of a collected folk style but also includes individual creativity and innovation as part of the folk process. Folk authenticity can be determined by all these factors, but can be also framed in terms of authentic performance and personal authenticity, practiced within a folk milieu.

The folk *ideal* is inextricably linked to Sharp’s concept of the folk *process*, the sharing, development and dissemination of folk songs and dance within the folk community. Here, *participation* is key; folk is not learned through observation, but doing. Audiences at folk festivals don’t merely participate or passively consume, they are expected to *perform*, and perform *authentically*, if they are to be part of the community. Participation of various kinds is encouraged within, and a key feature of, the folk scene and can include active engagement with music making through workshops, folk sessions, singing, actively listening or simply interacting with the rest of the folk community (such as through volunteering at festivals)⁴². Audiences are typically expected to be engaged rather than passive. Referring to highly respected English folk legend Martin Carthy, MacKinnon (1993: 57) writes:

it did not matter how quiet they were, he felt his performance demanded that the audience give something back. Audiences which did not he described as ‘voyeuristic’ and he felt that for an audience to sit passively with an air of ‘now entertain me’ was alien to the folk scene.

The intimacy of folk performances, wherein the audience is in close proximity to the performer, could be likened to a conversation, and as such, for audiences to not listen politely or not engage with a performer would be considered the height of rudeness (MacKinnon, 1993: 58).

⁴¹ Considering folk in terms of ideology allows us to differentiate folk festivals in Australia from other contemporary music festival events (such as commercial music festivals like Big Day Out). Gibson and Connell (2005: 213) note that generally contemporary music festivals are “explicitly commercial”, a significant point of difference with Australian folk festivals. The folk ethos promotes non-commerciality; few folk festivals make much profit, and profits tend to be reinvested into the festival. Few staff are employed, large pools of volunteer staff are relied upon, and even services essential to a musical festival, such as PA/lighting systems (and operators), marquees and stages, are often provided through generous sponsorship arrangements (see Anderton, 2015).

⁴² These varying aspects of participation are explored ethnographically in Chapter 10.

Framing Authenticity

Authenticity remains a significant preoccupation of folk music and other folk performance today. Authenticity can be established by: displaying adherence to or knowledge of (what the folk community perceives to be) a recognisable folk corpus or established tradition; close adherence to a folk 'style' or genre; 'truthful' song writing; and finally, 'genuine' performance (especially when it's broadly non-commercial). In relation to the first, Harker's (1985) and Boyes' (2010) criticisms of the veracity of the folk song ('fakesong') corpus collected by Sharp et al as genuine examples of extant folk songs are valid, in that we know that the political, social and economic motivations of early collectors led to incomplete repertoires, and bowdlerised songs; however, these criticisms are widely understood, and few revivalist or traditionalist folk singers would embrace these folk canons unreflectively. Many traditionalist folk performers have themselves engaged in both the collection of folk tunes and dances that have been transmitted through performance within small communities, and have actively researched historical sources to find songs and dances and trace their various incarnations. By performing these songs (and dances), these self-proclaimed "folkies" ensconce themselves within a living tradition. These types of preservationist performers are often highly regarded for their deep knowledge of the material they present. MacKinnon (1993: 113) writes that:

a wide repertoire drawing upon a corpus of traditional material and a deep knowledge of the historical contexts of a song are greatly respected. It is not enough to have sufficient repertoire to fill a performance spot or even the performing spots of a whole folk festival. Someone like Martin Carthy is respected not just for his performances in isolation, but because of his vast repertoire and knowledge of Britain's folk music traditions.

Such performers constitute a minority of the contemporary folk scene; while many will sing songs and play tunes from within a specific traditional corpus, few have the encyclopaedic knowledge of material and context as someone like Carthy. In the Australian context, those who have a thorough working knowledge of both Australian and British folk material like the late Australian British-expatriate Danny Spooner are particularly sought after for festival and folk club performances because they provide a living conduit by which folk participants can access a continuous folk tradition, fulfilling the *continuity* aspect of the folk process.

Performers can also demonstrate this continuity by adopting an established musical or dance genre (such as bluegrass, gospel, blues etc), or employing instrumentation perceived as traditional (i.e. pipes, banjo, fiddle, squeezebox) and writing and composing original songs and dances within that style. By positioning themselves within a specific genre and

creatively employing it to produce new material, performers are constructing folk authenticity. This type of folk performance represents community selection, variation within the continuity of an established tradition that helps move folk music/dance forward, creating new traditions as part of an authentic process.

The last two methods of establishing authenticity in contemporary folk (honest composition or song construction and authentic performance) relate very much to the notion of folk as standing in opposition to commercial, mass produced culture, and is exemplified by protest singer-songwriters (fundamental in the 60s folk boom). Even though their original compositions reflect individual creativity rather than community refashioning, they represent opposition to mass consumption implicit in the folk revival movements. An authentic singer/songwriter is one whose lyrics – whether they be political or personal – are perceived by audiences to be expressed sincerely and with integrity. This goes to the heart of the idea that folk musicians should not seek fame or fortune, but should remain true to themselves, the music, and the community, without ‘selling out’⁴³. This emphasis on integrity and authenticity is by no means restricted to the folk genre (indeed, is an element of genres such as Australian country music and even sometimes pop music), however the motivation here is key. The IFMC definition specifically states that folk does not include composed popular music ready-made for consumption and unchanged by the community. The emphasis on commercialisation, consumption and personal success inherent in contemporary country or pop music separates these genres from folk music, even where songwriting is perceived as sincere (and indeed, in cases such as country music, often reflecting tropes of rurality broadly commensurate with folk). Although some folk artists become broadly and commercially popular, their status as authentic folk performers is often questioned: Smith argues that due to his broader success Eric Bogle, who is highly respected within the Australian folk world, is now perceived as having a “folk sound” rather than being the “essence of folk” (Smith, 2003: 288). Authenticity which is based on truthful expressions of self, although not necessarily situating itself within part of a broader traditional corpus, fits with the values of the original revivalists, who were concerned about the mass commodification of culture. In terms of folk process, the folk singer/songwriter, who composes and performs songs with integrity, sits within a tradition (continuity between past and present) of *personally authentic* folk performance.

⁴³ The equating of ‘selling out’ with inauthenticity is not unique to folk, but is common to many genres which define themselves in opposition to mass, commodified culture. For example, see Rodger (2020) on notions of ‘underground’ in hip hop.

Folk Community

Although it hasn't always been the case, the folk scene in Australia today has overcome many of the disagreements of the 1960s revivals in which 'trad' folkies, those intent on preservation, dismissed the contemporary protest singers and popular folk performers that emerged in the wake of the American folk boom as not being legitimately 'folk', and is so inclusive of styles and traditions (not only of music, but dance and spoken word performances) that some scholars have advocated for a *social* definition of folk⁴⁴.

Stubington (1993: 134) suggests that "instead of searching for a definition of 'folk music', we might do better to take a holistic view of the musical life of the folk clubs and of the substantial section of the Australian population which has an interest in them".

MacKinnon (1993: 129-130), in his discussion of the British folk scene, reflects that the "dominant structuring ethos within the genre is the celebration of conviviality, direct human communication". "Direct human communication" is a fundamental aspect of the contemporary folk scene; although folk enthusiasts may listen to cds and access music online, or look up dance notation or poetry in books or via media such as YouTube, the folk community remains dependent upon direct social interaction as a fundamental organising concept, and it is here that festivals can directly contribute to the folk process, being a community locus for continuity, community selection and variation. Smith argues that drawing upon the idea of the folk community enabled the folk movement since the 1960s to evade the "worst effects of individualism, while accommodating innovation and change through the ideas of community selection", and that "without the idea of a creative community, folk is at best no more than an attractive musical style, at worst a pop fad" (Smith, 2005: 13).

The performance spaces of the folk movement tell us much about what folk, and the folk community, means to participants. Folk performance spaces reflect the ideology of the community in which face-to-face communication, active participation, amateurism, informality, conviviality, accessibility, democracy and egalitarianism, lack of (social and spatial) separation between performers and engaged audiences are all aspects. Folk clubs, festivals and even concerts are characterised by performer-audience interaction, in which even the 'star' performers of the folk scene are treated with respect but rarely reverence, a characteristic which is particularly suited to the Australian folk scene, still influenced by

⁴⁴ For a discussion of the concept of musical 'scenes' see Bennett and Rogers (2016).

notions such as Ward's irreverent Australian Legend. Performers and audiences mix and socialise during performance breaks, and often there is little infrastructural demarcation between the two groups, with stages generally small, positioned low to the ground (and the audience) or altogether absent. Folk clubs are usually to be found in accessible community settings such as the pub or local bowls club, and even larger concerts are rarely held in typical concert venues, but rather pubs (again) or local community halls. The house concert, in which a domestic residence is used to host a folk performance for a small, intimate audience, and which has increasingly become a venue in which folk music can be found, "humanizes the performance experience and speaks to one of the primary attractions of folk: the sense of community" (Gruning, 2006: 97).

Smith and Brett note that "at the core of folk ideology is the ideal of a folk community, a face-to-face social grouping in which culture is maintained and created through oral transmission" (1998: 5). Traditionally folk is the product of small communities in which audiences and performers know each other; the intimacy of folk venues replicates (or attempts to replicate) this communicative relationship. Folk sessions, workshops and folk club nights all facilitate social closeness among participants – participants are physically positioned near each other in often crowded spaces, and these types of folk participation require interaction amongst participants. Thus, the notion of a *folk community* is established within the physical spaces of folk performance, as well as being an idealised abstraction.



Figure 2.1: Intimate Danny Spooner concert, School Hall venue, Port Fairy Folk Festival, 2012

Conclusion: Folk Festivals in Australia Today

In contemporary Australia, Smith (2008: 152) argues:

the current folk movement brings together the ideals of authenticity of expression, a preference for live performance, word-centred song styles, localism, a tendency towards archaic or nostalgic subject matter, a promotion of explicit cultural, national and identity-based expressions and a preference for small-scale genres fostered through direct face-to-face communication. As their diversity suggests, none of these ideals are necessary elements of ‘folkness’.

This chapter has explored the difficulty of defining folk as a distinct genre with clear rules and identifying characteristics, and instead adopts the view of Smith and others who have advocated for a more social, contextual understanding of folk more as a “cluster of associations” by which folk enthusiasts mark out their musical preferences (Smith, 2008: 166). An examination of transnational folk revivals in England, America and Australia has demonstrated how contemporary understandings of folk and its connotations have developed into how folk is practiced today; and these histories have shown how interpretations of folk as developed through the revivals, have influenced contemporary notions of ‘authenticity’ in the folk scene, and created the idea of the ‘folk community’.

Folk festivals have become, in Britain, America and Australia, the preeminent forum in which folk is articulated through live performance and direct communication, two of the aspects of ‘folkness’ that Smith identifies (see Brocken, 2003; MacKinnon, 1993; Gruning, 2006; Cohen, 2008; Smith, 2005; Smith, 2008). Rather than attempt to define folk as a genre with clear boundaries and rules (of inclusion and exclusion), Stubington (1993: 133) instead suggests that we look to folk club culture in order to define folk in terms of the place it is usually heard. *Context* then provides the definition of folk. Since the decline of the folk clubs and the rise of the folk festival through the 1980s and onwards, Australians are more likely to be exposed to, and participate in, folk in the context of festivals than through any other folk activity. Therefore, folk festivals should provide the context by which folk is defined and communicated.

Gruning (2006: 163) suggests that “festivals present opportunities for mass enactments of a folk idealism punctuated by the intersections of power relations and economics. As a site for enacting community, the festival is a microcosm of the folk landscape”. MacKinnon, in his discussion of folk festivals in Britain, suggests that the limitations of scale at festivals – multiple venues with limited audiences – facilitates informal music making akin to the folk club (MacKinnon, 1993: 72). The folk club, and by extension, the folk festival, provides the space for the expression of folk community, and provides opportunities for

active (collective and individual) participation in folk activities. Folk as a concept and an ideal (characterised by an emphasis on community, participation and authenticity) is both practised and defined within the folk festival, and provides the apparatus by which contemporary folk performers, audiences, organisers and all other participants in the folk scene interact and create meaning. Folk festivals are the primary instruments of the ‘folk process’ in the twenty-first century.

Chapter 3: Aims, Methodology and Mode of Analysis

Australian folk festivals – clearly a significant community pastime – not only provide the context in which folk is performed in Australia, but are themselves a significant aspect of the folk process. There is a lack of anthropological and ethnographic enquiry into Australian folk festivals, which has resulted in an academic focus on Australian festivals from the perspectives of history, tourism studies and social geography. I propose that a participant-observation methodology informed by anthropological theory could provide insight into the structural aspects of folk festivals – their reproducible logics of design – and how these impact and influence participant engagement with folk, and folk process. Further, consideration of the atmosphere produced by the interaction of festival participants and the organisational structures of festivals is important in developing an understanding of folk practice at festivals. An ethnographic participant-observation based investigation into folk festival participation, wherein as a researcher participating in the festival in a meaningful way and able to interrogate my individual experience of the actions of other participants, and how their actions impact on the festival ‘vibe’, will explore what people *actually do* at folk festivals, not on what people say or think they do. My methodology of *participant-observation* enabled a focus on the on-the-ground ‘feel’ of folk festivals and how the internal logic of the festivals I attended created this particular folk festival feeling. In approaching an analysis of festivals which draws on atmosphere as a determinant in the success or otherwise of folk festivals as public events, I hope to address one of the questions that Handelman believes are raised by his typology; that is, “how do public events structure, coordinate and play with the mood states, emotions and sentiments of participants and onlookers?” (Handelman, 1998: 61).

My methodology of participant observation enabled me to explore these aspects of festivals as public events, but it was not without its problems and limitations.

Anthropologist Olga Nájera-Ramírez (1999: 183) writes:

If fieldwork is demanding, conducting fieldwork for a festival study is especially so. Trying to capture all the nuances of the festival was an overwhelming experience, causing me to feel that I was “missing something.” And yet that nagging impression compelled me to review the data frequently and to reflect critically on what I understood and how that understanding had been shaped, both by the kinds of events I observed and by the various human interactions I experienced in the field. In short, the complexity of festival research demanded that I ask myself what I knew and how I knew it.

Nájera-Ramírez conducted fieldwork at La Fiesta de los Tastoanes in Mexico over several years, and experienced many of the problems I encountered as both a ‘native’

ethnographer, and as an anthropologist conducting fieldwork at festival sites which were highly multidimensional. She attempted to overcome some of the problems of “missing out” by following festival participants over many years, noting that engagement each year varied in intensity and participant perception, with participants perceiving the festival differently each year. Not having the luxury of being able to return to individual festivals over multiple years, I instead structured my research to enable me to attend as many festivals as possible around Australia at least once, and engaged in deeper year round research at a local folk festival, by joining the organising committee and attending the festival over successive years during my fieldwork period.

With so much occurring at a festival – multiple concerts programmed concurrently, alongside parades, workshops, dances and many other activities – I too experienced a ‘fear of missing out’, compounded by the knowledge that I had only three days (sometimes four days, on several occasions one day only) to conduct in-depth participant observation at each festival. At the festivals I visited early in my fieldwork, I often rushed from venue to venue, occasionally participating in workshops knowing that I was missing a different workshop elsewhere, taking frantic photographs of the people, the site, and the performers, trying to ensure I experienced every aspect of the festival. I soon discovered that in trying not to overlook any aspect of the festival, I was in fact only gaining a superficial understanding of what was happening. At that point I realised that ‘missing out’ was an important aspect of festival participation for all attendees – performers, audience members, volunteers, organisers – who have to make constant decisions about what to watch, what to participate in and importantly, what to miss. Having reached this realisation, I relaxed, engaged more in casual conversation with other attendees, and participated more fully in dances and workshops. I interrogated my experience more closely, and aimed to get a *sense* for how a festival *felt*, rather than attend every programmed activity. As a result, my field experience was much richer, and I gained a better understanding of how multiple different festivals evoked *folk* similarly through their festival structure, their scheduling, their spatial layout, their sensory landscape and importantly, through programming and curatorial decisions. By slowing down and more fully participating – engaging bodily and intellectually in musical workshops, craft sessions, dances, working in the festival ‘office’ and festival shop or monitoring venue capacities and managing audiences as a volunteer, as well as *actively* listening to concerts – rather than simply observing the activities, events and people of the festival, I was also able to get a sense of how participants interacted with

their environments, and how all the aforementioned factors intertwined to create a folk experience.

The problem of the dynamism and complexity of festival field sites was only one aspect of my ethnographic project. My personal involvement with folk music and attendance and performance at folk music festivals also raised issues for my research.

My interest in folk festivals arises from my personal involvement in the South Australian folk scene over the last twenty years, both as an English morris dancer (involved in two separate folk dance groups), and working as a (hobbyist) sound engineer, for local bands and at folk festivals. My involvement with a morris dancing group provided my first introduction to folk festivals, as my first official ‘dance out’ was a stage performance at the (now defunct) South Australian Folk Festival. Much of my social engagement is with people who dance, sing, play or otherwise perform within the South Australian folk scene, and I am a known participant in the same folk community. This history undeniably positioned me immediately as an ‘insider’ within the local folk scene.

My position as an ‘insider’ ethnographer was both positive and negative: on the one hand, I had greater access to my field as I was taken for granted by informants as just another participant in the scene; on the other, it was difficult to engage with my research participants and field in a disinterested or ‘distanced’ manner. This familiarity with my field was initially problematic (in making it difficult to perceive ‘what is really going on’). However, my previous experience provided me with a level of credibility (‘folk cred’) which assisted in quick development of rapport necessary to conduct fieldwork within such limited time frames. In addition, my ability to perform (and indeed, organise performances) provided insight into the participatory processes of the festival. Parallels may be drawn with Helena Wulff’s multi-sited ethnography of the international ballet world; her experience growing up and training to be a ballerina imbued her with “the kind of social capital that structures the idiom in the theatre, both frontstage and backstage” (Wulff, 1998: 5).

The multivocality of Nájera-Ramírez’s festival field site – along with her position as a ‘native’ ethnographer – caused her to reflect critically and often on her own position in the field. I found, like Nájera-Ramírez (1999: 186), that “the “insider/outsider” distinction changes according to the specific context of interaction”. It varied for me both as a

participant in activities within festivals, and between festivals themselves in their entirety, and depended a great deal on whether I was perceived as a participating ‘folkie’ or an observer/researcher.

My field site was methodologically problematic not only because I was an ‘insider’, but also because ‘the field’ was not a bounded location with a static population, but rather involved multiple sites with highly mobile participants (see Marcus, 1995). In order to connect the disparate places and people of the Australian folk festival landscape, this project focused on two broad field ‘sites’: first, the multiple festivals I attended around the country; and second, the more bounded site of a single local folk festival in South Australia. My research method – participant-observation – was the same at both sites, in terms of my interaction with individual festivals including participation as a festival volunteer⁴⁵, general audience member, participant in workshops and sessions, and performer. However, my active involvement with the local festival’s organising committee gave me a deeper understanding of the festival as a process, and this in turn informed my approach to participant-observation at other festivals. My involvement in the festival committee locally was particularly useful in helping me gain insights into my fellow committee members, festival volunteers, and provided a different perspective on the ground at the festival.

My interest was in the dynamic experience of festivals *on the ground as they happened*. What the atmosphere was like at particular moments, how participation in various aspects and activities of the festival *felt*. This was not something that I believed could be captured through interviews with participants after the fact. Nor were interviews at festivals particularly useful, as few attendees were interested in spending time with a researcher instead of experiencing what a festival had to offer. Part of this problem related to the positioning of folk festivals for participants as sites of leisure (see Crouch, 2001: 64). Folk festival attendees sometimes invest large amounts (of both finances and energy) in travel and ticket purchases to attend festivals, and musicians, organisers and volunteers are rarely able to pause for an in-depth interview, and doing so, would inevitably disrupt the usual process of participation. Endeavouring to overcome this problem, I relied on ‘on the spot’ unstructured conversations with other attendees in order to grasp their immediate

⁴⁵ Volunteering not only provided insight into this mode of participation, but also enabled me to ‘give back’ in an act of reciprocity to festivals that hosted me as a ethnographer (see Russell, 2006; also Gupta & Kelly, 2014; and Glowczewski, Henry & Otto, 2013).

experience. This method was particularly successful when I spent significant time with other attendees (such as during a voluntary shift in a festival shop) or while waiting for a concert to start. My field notes represent a mix of conversational titbits from informants, and my personal experiences and feelings of the various events at each festival. As a result, much of this thesis is broadly auto-ethnographical (especially in Chapter 6 in the discussion of atmosphere), and, although it draws somewhat on ‘vox pop’-type conversations with informants, it aims instead to give participants a ‘voice’ through description and analysis of their actions, their ‘doing’ of the festival (such as in the discussion of Rosie’s movement through the festival in Chapter 4 and her varying modes of participation in Chapter 10), rather than their speaking of it.

In the period during which I conducted my fieldwork (between 2011 and early 2015) there were more than eighty folk festivals held around Australia every year. My fieldwork comprised attendance at 14 different folk festivals, some twice or three times. The festivals I attended were determined by practical considerations of timing, distance and cost of travel, and therefore were limited to South Australia, Australian Capital Territory, Victoria, North Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmania⁴⁶. Although many strands of connection exist between festivals (similar performers, regular travelling attendees, the ideology of ‘folk’), it was the fact that I chose these particular sites on the basis of my own personal, family and financial requirements that drew this particular assortment of festivals into a single piece of research.

The problem of multiple festival field sites I managed by limiting my field to annual Australian festivals which self-identified as ‘folk festivals’ (as opposed to festivals like WOMADelaide which self-designate as ‘world music’ festivals). Although on occasion I attended other local folk events such as concerts and sessions, I limited my research to *festivals* (rather than local folk events such as weekly sessions), as my focus was not on the day-to-day ‘folkie lifestyle’, but rather on the lived experience of *folk festivals* by participants. As a participant-observer, I was able to focus on the operation and structures of festivals and explore how my individual experience of specific festivals was informed through festival infrastructure such as programming and site geography. Here, in addition to my personal experience of doing the festival, and my observation of other participants,

⁴⁶ In addition to the folk festival sites themselves, my fieldwork was supplemented by attendance at several other related festivals and events (such as the English Ale celebration at Mylor, South Australia and the Kapunda Celtic Festival), conferences, exhibitions, regular music sessions and local folk events.

the print ephemera of the festival, in particular festival programmes, with their information including maps, performance schedules, performer notes and other relevant information, provided a key element of analysis. Chapter 5, with its discussion of festivals' logics of design, draws specifically on such material, to examine commonalities and differences in festival organisational structures reflected in festivals' official publications.

At every festival I attended, I took field notes as I negotiated the festival, recording impressions of events (including my impression of the atmosphere at particular times/events, and how engaged I felt audiences were based on bodily language and movement within venues), what I noticed audiences doing, hand-drawn maps showing such things as the locations of campsites in relation to festival venues, notes of conversations I held with chance-met participants, notes of longer-form unstructured conversations. At the beginning of each day, I would consult the official festival programme and make a rough plan/timetable of events I planned to attend, based on opportunities for different types of participation (ensuring I attended a range of participatory workshops, engaged in dance or craft activities, or attended concerts of a range of different types, genres and sizes – both headline concerts and lesser-known performers) and set aside time for volunteering shifts (sometimes as a roving volunteer, filling in different roles as needed, or staffing the festival shop and office). Usually, the timetable I planned at the beginning of the day would alter significantly as the day unfolded, but I recorded in my field notes where and why I deviated from the original plan. At the end of each day, whilst sitting in my campervan prior to sleep, I would refer to my scratch notes and fill in any relevant details I could remember. Whilst at the festival, I collected all paper ephemera available (not only official festival brochures and programmes, but any posters/flyers advertising other events and performances), and also purchased t-shirts, mugs and other souvenir merchandise, both as an action of reciprocity to the festival for their provision of free or discounted admission and their willingness to have me conduct research at their festival, but also as a reflection of another aspect of festival participation – the purchase of souvenirs. When I returned from the field, I typed up my handwritten notes in a more narrative form that reflected my experience from arrival at the festival to departure, with the aid of photographs and sound recordings taken whilst at the festival, and recorded, scanned and carefully stored all paper ephemera and souvenirs. My typed notes provided the basis of the narratives I provide in this thesis, and they allowed me to compare experiences across multiple festivals, particularly where I had written accounts of concerts given by the same performers at different festivals (such as

those performances by April Verch and Fred Smith described in Chapter 7), and to describe archetypal events (such as Rosie's walk in Chapter 4 and her festival engagement in Chapter 10, the morris dance performances in Chapter 8 and the Poet's Breakfast event in Chapter 9) informed by the similar experiences and commonalities between participants across festivals.

In my work on a festival committee, I acted in a general secretarial role, recording committee meeting minutes and distributing them to members, as well as participating in all committee meetings and discussions, assisting with performer selection and acting as liaison between the festival and performers during the selection process. As I was occupied taking 'official' notes for the benefit of the committee, I was only able to write notes of my impressions of the meetings on my return home (either late that night or the following morning). Although this committee experience provided me with personal contacts, and opportunities to engage with aspects of festival preparation including such things as seeking grants and attending meetings with tourism bodies, at the request of the festival committee, I have kept all committee proceedings confidential. However, although I don't expressly describe the proceedings of committee meetings or relate committee discussions in any detail, my committee participation informs all aspects of my personal experience of other festivals, especially my impressions of the organisational aspects of festivals broadly and how these structured my experience at various festivals. My analysis of festival events and landscapes (particularly in Chapter 5) is therefore informed by my committee experience, but in order to provide a comparative discussion of festivals' logics of design, I have utilised the official programmes of festivals (including maps, timetables and performer notes) to analyse commonalities and differences in festival event landscapes, as they may be experienced by a casual participant.

A high degree of self-reflection as to the role of the ethnographer in the field site becomes necessary when the researcher becomes, as I did, the main connection between disparate field sites across different states and at different times for differing durations. The data I collected in the field – fieldwork diaries detailing my personal sensory experience of the festival as well as the events and activities I attended and participated in, and how I moved within and around the festival, which performers I saw and how the audiences seemed to engage (or not engage) with them, scraps of conversation with chance-met festival-goers alongside longer discussions with other volunteers and participants, descriptions of what other festival participants were doing at various times and during different events, physical

souvenirs such as posters, programmes and festival merchandise, and photographs and ambient sound recordings – reflected my own experience as a mobile participant in the festival landscape, and suggested a more personal, more auto-ethnographical account might provide the best insight into the dynamic, complex, sometimes confusing, even dull aspects of a folk festival *in the moment*. With huge numbers of constantly shifting festival participants across multiple field sites, moving not only through and between events within specific festival landscapes but travelling the broader folk festival world, it was my own experience as an active participant that informed the bulk of my fieldwork, and thus this thesis reflects that.



Figure 3.2: 'Shanty Singalong' event in the park (Wharf venue), Port Fairy Folk Festival, 2012

Thesis Structure

This thesis is organised into four main parts. Part One is broadly contextual. Chapter 1 focused on the position of folk festivals as contemporary Australian public events, that are broadly overlooked as objects of ethnographic enquiry. Folk festivals provide opportunities for folk communities to gather, and they present notions and ideals of folk (particularly in relation to the importance of community and participation) to the broader community. Chapter 2 examined how definitions and ideas of folk practice in Australia have developed historically, through the process of folk revivals in not only Australia, but England and the United States. Understanding how the concept of folk is shaped by the notion of folk process is a necessary step in fathoming how festivals not only enable the

folk process to play out in Australia, but how they function as the mechanism by which folk is comprehended. Chapter 3 outlines my research methodology of participant-observation and the modes of analysis I employ throughout this thesis.

Part Two focuses particularly on the *logics of design* of the festival, specifically how festival landscapes – both spatio-temporal and sensory – combine to facilitate *folk-ness* and develop and promote notions of folk. In this section, I explore how participants and organisers co-produce a folk festival experience. In Chapter 4, I introduce the ethnographic account of festival participant ‘Rosie’ as she walks the festival, exploring the eventmental and sensory landscape through her feet. Rosie’s movement through the festival demonstrates the consumption of the festival by participants may be influenced by the structural imperatives of organisers (festivals’ logics of design), but that a participant’s experience of folk is fundamentally shaped by their own movement (their ‘doing’ of the festival) within the landscape. Drawing on Michel de Certeau and Tim Ingold, I explore how individual participants frame their own experience of a folk festival via their movement within the festival site. Chapter 5 is a less ethnographic, and more structural analysis of the eventmental landscapes and festival logics of design that informed Rosie’s walk through the festival landscape. It explores how the spatio-temporal landscape of folk festivals stimulates participation, a key aspect of the folk ideal, by examining the role of timetables, maps and physical spaces. This chapter draws on the work of Don Handelman and Edward S. Casey, and demonstrates that Australian folk festivals, despite significant variation in size and scale, have common and reproducible logics of design intended to structure (a recognisably folk) participant experience. Chapter 6 is broadly auto-ethnographical and draws particularly on the work of Gernot Böhme and looks at the role of the sensory landscape – how sensory experiences are shaped by both the physical landscape and participatory involvement – and the role of festival atmospheres in shaping the folk process as an embodied experience.

As I will discuss in Part Two, folk festivals are eventmental landscapes comprised of a multitude of events and activities, from concerts to circus workshops to instrument masterclasses and street theatre and processions and many others besides. Part Three draws on specific case studies and explores how three major examples of these event types – concerts, dance performances and Poet’s Breakfasts – contribute to participants’

understandings of folk, and in themselves, facilitate the folk process⁴⁷. Chapter 7 examines musical concerts, events which are fundamental to the contemporary folk festival, and which are the primary events around which a festival is organised. Here I examine three concerts which demonstrate and articulate folk in different ways, to show how the folk process operates within contemporary folk music at festivals. Chapter 8 involves a discussion of dancing in terms of presentation, pedagogy and participation, through a three-fold examination of morris dancing when performed as a formal display, when taught as a workshop, and when disparate groups of morris dancers join together in massed, informal displays. Chapter 9 will look at Poet's Breakfasts, a much more marginal event at most folk festivals, but one which is important in shaping ideas of participation, performance and an Australian ideal, important aspects of folk practice in Australia.

Part Four of this thesis is broadly conclusory. It focuses on participation, meaning and folk interaction, and explores how participants' movement through the spatial, temporal, sensory and event landscape of the festival, and their resultant interaction with other folk festival participants, informs their experience of modern Australian folk practice. In Chapter 10 I draw together many of the themes of earlier chapters, in particular the folk ideals of participation and community, and how despite festivals' logics of design (especially the spatio-temporal landscape) providing a 'map' for participant engagement, it is participants' own movement through the landscape that ultimately creates folk meaning. Here I revisit Rosie, to illustrate the role of serendipity arising through movement in structuring participation for the festival-goer. Through a series of four vignettes, I describe how folk festival logics of design create a space for both planned and unplanned participation, wherein festival-goers' movement within the festival landscape can lead to unexpected and meaningful interactions with folk, and importantly, other folk participants. Finally, in Chapter 11, I conclude by discussing how this ethnography has shown that through the intersubjective experience of festival participants moving within the festival landscape, folk festivals perform and facilitate the folk process in modern Australia.

⁴⁷ These event types are chosen because of their significance in the festival landscape, but it could be argued that other event types, such as communal music sessions, are equally significant, especially in terms of their highly participatory nature (since participation is a key aspect of the folk ethos).

PART TWO

Logics of Design – Event Landscapes & Festival Atmospheres

Chapter 4: Introducing Rosie – Imagining Folk Through Movement

Introduction

In Chapters 5 and 6, I will discuss how festivals' logics of design both establish the folk festival broadly as an event-that-presents, reflecting the folk 'values', or cluster of associations (i.e. participation, authenticity, tradition, community) that define Australian folk, and shape participants' experience with and participation in the folk process, through embodied transmission of folk. Firstly, however, in this chapter, I explore how a typical festival-goer creates an individual and unique festival experience through marginally-directed perambulatory movement. Drawing on de Certeau's (1984) notion of 'walking the city', I follow Rosie, an experienced festival attendee as she 'walks the festival'. As I will explore in following chapters, organisers spatio-temporally structure the festival *for* attendees through maps, signage and programmes. Festival maps and scheduled performances are designed to provide various opportunities for the experience of folk process by participants; I argue here that participants' movement determines their own unique folk experience.

In this chapter, I relate the story of Rosie as she walks throughout the festival landscape because, as de Certeau states, "Every story is a travel story – a spatial practice." (de Certeau, 1984: 115). Rosie is an experienced festival-goer in her early fifties, who attends multiple festivals a year, driving a small campervan and staying on site. She attends festivals by herself, but with long experience on the folk scene (attending not only festivals but her local folk club on a regular basis), she has many friends and acquaintances within the folk community and is generally well-liked. She doesn't consider herself a true folk "musician" because she doesn't play an instrument with a high proficiency, however she plays ukulele to a basic standard, and often carries it with her at a festival, ready to join a workshop, or potentially join a folk session. Although not a performer, Rosie volunteers at many festivals in return for free admission, and has often acted as an MC, bringing her into close contact with programmed performers in a more formal interaction. Through her involvement in sessions, her engagement with workshops, her volunteering, and her interaction with other festival-goers, organisers and performers, Rosie experiences folk festivals from a perspective of an insider, actively participating in the folk scene. Rosie's walk through the festival landscape is therefore that of a festival-goer comfortable within the festival landscape. I present Rosie and her walk as an archetype, representative of both my own experience and that of several attendees I followed over the course of multiple

festivals, in order to provide an account which demonstrates how places and folk events are interwoven in the festival landscape through walking.

As I will discuss, although Rosie consults the formal spatio-temporal festival blueprint of the festival map and the timetable of folk events of the programme prior to her walk, her pathway is broadly exploratory, meandering between events, her pedestrian path weaving festival spaces together (de Certeau, 1984: 97). Wandering (see Ingold, 2010a: S130) *unintentionally* to and through official venues and performance spaces, encountering different folk performances and sensory atmospheres, and actively participating in folk events, Rosie experiences a folk landscape, not “from a single vantage point, but rather by walking...” (Ingold, 2011: 45). Her journey is a unique series of encounters with folk events creating a festival landscape, events unfolding with her movement (see Gray, 1999), the experience of which informs her understanding of how an aesthetic of folk as inclusive, multivocal, authentic and fluid is performed and practiced within an Australian folk festival.

I explore how the ‘tangled mass of lines’ or meshwork (Ingold, 2011) of participant wandering affects and reflects the inherent dynamism in the event landscape of the folk festival, as connections between varying folk practices (and folk places as they belong to lived bodies – see Casey, 2009: 327) are continually forged and re-forged by moving participants. Paraphrasing Ingold (2004: 333), the folk landscape of the festival – and thereby the folk process – is continuously woven into life through walking.



Figure 4.1: Participants walking the 'festival streets', National Folk Festival, 2012

Meandering and Music: Rosie's Story

Rosie sits in the crowded concert marquee, only paying marginal attention to the band on stage playing a fusion of klezmer/gypsy folk music. She idly flips through the festival programme, first checking what acts are playing where over the next few hours, and then cross-referencing with their biographical blurbs, identifying concert events and workshops that interest her. Closing the programme, she turns her attention fully to the band, but the music led by violin, accordion and trumpet fails to engage her. After one more song she decides to leave the somewhat stifling warmth of the marquee. Stuffing her programme into her backpack, she shuffles past the other audience members and exits the marquee, feeling her lethargy dissipate as she emerges into the bright, late-morning sun.

Standing outside the marquee, the klezmer music still clearly audible, Rosie considers her options. Perhaps she'll embark on a round of the venues – having just checked the programme, there are no acts scheduled that particularly interest her at this moment, but experience tells her that sometimes it's the acts that are happened upon accidentally that really "make" a folk festival. She could go straight to the session bar – she could grab a cider and no doubt there would be people there she knows she could have a chat to. Or she could have a wander around the market stalls, maybe grab an early lunch from one of the food vans.

With no clear destination in mind, Rosie sets off, happy to simply stretch her legs. Having driven for the better part of two days to get to the festival, and then not being able to sleep due to the fairly raucous singing session that ran late into the night nearby her campsite, she still feels a bit stiff and tired, and movement is welcome to her tense muscles.

She leaves the bluesy-jazzy sound of klezmer behind her as she strolls through the bustling Instrument Makers display to a nearby venue – a small marquee set up as a café with a blackboard concert in progress. She stands and listens for a moment to an earnest young woman with a ukulele, then moves on.

Strolling across an open plaza towards one of the larger venues, Rosie's progress is impeded by a crowd. As she approaches, she hears the distinctive sound of morris dancers, their bell-pads tinkling and sticks clashing together in time with a tune played on fiddle and melodeon. Not recalling seeing it scheduled in the programme, Rosie guesses this is an impromptu performance and despite having seen a stage performance of morris earlier, she stops to watch a few of the energetic folk dances, soaking up the festive atmosphere.

Eventually leaving the dancers and their circle of spectators behind her, Rosie walks on, past market stalls, absorbing the atmosphere of the festival streets, the ebb and flow of other festival goers as they stroll between venues, pause to watch street performers, and socialise with acquaintances. She eventually exchanges the jaunty English folk tunes that accompanied the morris dancers for the banjo twang, dobro and deep double bass of American bluegrass, as she enters the darkened auditorium of the largest concert venue at the festival. Although she enjoys the performance (despite what she considers is an over-representation of Americana across festival programmes in the last year or two⁴⁸), the song currently being performed with energy and panache is the band's last; and rather than wait while the stage-hands and sound engineers prepare the stage for and soundcheck the next performer, Rosie exits the venue with the rest of the audience.

Still with no specific destination, Rosie walks past several venues, not attracted by the musical sound spilling from them, and passes food and market stalls with their colourful wares and appetising smells, simply enjoying the rhythm of the festival streets. She eventually reaches a dance-hall hosting a beginner's bush dance, and the rhythm of the festival outside is contrasted with the rhythm inside the venue, of bodies moving in time (more or less) with music specifically performed for dancing. A number of families are participating, with parents guiding children (with variable success) through the motions of the heel and toe polka in accordance with the instructions of the caller. The accompanying bush band includes a variety of instruments, ranging from guitars, accordions and fiddles to a bush-bass and a lagerphone. With no intention of joining the dance (she plans to attend a ceilidh later in the evening), Rosie pauses for a few minutes to watch from the sidelines, finding the efforts of the adults to manage children while simultaneously performing the dance movements amusing and also heart-warming. When the heel and toe polka finishes, participants are instructed to form up into sets of eight for the next dance. Spotting her sitting to the side, two members of the group forming nearest her gesture and wave, encouraging her to make the eighth in their set; despite her initial protestations, Rosie is dragged onto the dancefloor to participate in an energetic, if rather shambolic, Cumberland Reel.

Always a keen dancer, Rosie enjoys herself hugely despite numerous collisions with her inexperienced, though enthusiastic, fellow dancers. The movement of the dance has released the bodily tension and stiffness she has been trying to shake off through walking around the site. At the conclusion of the dance though, she rejects the other dancers' exhortations to remain in the set. She now has a clear goal in mind – the dancing has made her thirsty, and the session bar and a cold cider beckon.

Rosie now walks purposefully, striding past street circus performers with barely a glance, hardly noticing the different sounds of folk performance emanating from the venues she passes, barely acknowledging the presence of a busker reciting bush poetry. Her passage, although unhurried, now follows a direct route through the festival landscape; bypassing

⁴⁸ Folk festivals, like the broader folk movement in Australia, are subject to trends and fads in terms of the types of music and other folk practice that are popular at any one time. At various times, "Celtic" music has been pre-eminent in the Australian folk scene; at the time of this research, Americana and bluegrass was experiencing a particularly high level of popularity with many folk artists embracing elements of these genres/traditions.

the potential musical and other festival experiences which might otherwise interest her. Entering the bar, Rosie is greeted by a hubbub of noise; a lively session is in progress, and those engaged in conversation rather than music-making raise their voices above the Irish tune sets being played by the numerous fiddles, accordions, tin whistles, bodhrans and other instruments. Grabbing a cider, Rosie spots some acquaintances, people she has met at other festivals. Joining them, she abandons her aimless festival meandering for the moment, settling in to enjoy a few drinks among friends while absorbing the folky ambience. There are many paths to be explored at a folk festival. For Rosie, most of them eventually lead to the session bar.

(adapted from field notes, various festivals)

Movement and Connection: Travel Stories and the Festival

Michelle Duffy, in her discussion of the Top Half Folk Festival, suggests the “festival can be seen as a site of intensification, with links and connections within and beyond the locality in which it is held” (2000: 52). This chapter discusses the links and connections not so much to the festival locality or beyond, but within the landscape of the festival itself⁴⁹. This landscape is characterised by an aesthetic of Australian folk as inclusive and diverse with underlying and intersecting narratives of place and culture. Although it is impossible through this simple narrative of walking to fully encompass the impressions, atmospheres, sights, sounds and physical sensations that Rosie experiences (see Edensor, 2008: 136), it demonstrates the kaleidoscope of intermingling folk experiences that Rosie encounters in her meander through the festival landscape.

As I will explore in the following chapters, the logics of design of the festival, including the intentional arrangement of place and time expressed through programmes, maps and timetables designed to structure participants’ experience of folk, create an eventful landscape of folk with which participants engage with their whole bodies, and which presents organisers’ ideas of folk, and folk process, to attendees. Rosie’s experience demonstrates that the colocation of multiple events in the festival landscape, its essential eventfulness, can be experienced through the process of walking, and the decisions by participants as to what events to engage in, and what to miss, colours this folk experience. In walking the festival landscape, Rosie forges connections between disparate folk experiences and events, resulting in a festival landscape that is understood, by her, as authentic Australian folk. By being present, and active, in this folk landscape, Rosie

⁴⁹ Rosie’s ‘travel story’ reflects two main types of travel movement: firstly, the act of (purposeful) journeying or pilgrimage to reach the festival; and secondly, her meandering perambulation around the festival itself. Although the first partially informs the second (Rosie’s movement is in part motivated by the physical discomfort arising from her long drive to the festival), this chapter restricts its scope to travel and movement *within* the festival itself. It is worth noting that journeying or pilgrimage can be an important part of the folk experience, enabling participants like Rosie, who attend multiple festivals, to bridge both geographical and metaphorical distances to situate themselves within a broader folk cosmos.

contributes to, and is presented with, the notion of folk as a process of both oral and bodily communication, in which concerts and street performance present products of folk process, and the bush dance and session bar enable active folk participation, an embodiment of folk. Fundamentally, this chapter explores the idea that, paraphrasing de Certeau (1984: 97), pedestrian paths weave festival spaces – and events – together.

The Festival Landscape: A Geography of Folk Music Events

The folk festival may be considered as a landscape structured by folk events, a composition of performance places (see Chapter 5), characterised by unique atmospheres, both intentionally staged and co-produced by participants (see Chapter 6). These performance events, all of which are framed as ‘folk’ merely by their inclusion in the folk festival programme, include: concerts; musical workshops; lectures and seminars; poetry and other oral performances; ‘blackboard’ concerts; dance performances, workshops and participatory dances; ‘street’ performances including choirs, buskers and circus acts; parades and processions; and participatory music sessions. They are located in a range of venues, utilising established infrastructure such as buildings, especially halls and basketball gymnasiums, as well as temporary spaces such as marquees and outdoor stage areas with folk music concerts (as the key performance type) occupying the principal marquees or halls, forming the performative centre of the festival landscape. ‘In-between’ spaces, like streets and pathways, are inhabited by street performers, such as the morris dancers Rosie encounters, and provide a celebratory atmosphere (through their energetic dancing, acrobatics or other interaction with bystanders) which connects festival events and places in the festival landscape. The bar is usually located centrally (in terms of both geography and folk engagement), acting as a hub in which people gather to drink, socialise and play music together. If the main concert stage is the formal centre of folk presentation in the landscape, for many participants, the bar is the much less formal, participatory centre/heart of the festival. The performance of the folk activity or event combined with the porousness of the venue/event boundary and the engagement of actors within the space, create linked atmospheric zones of folk activity which together form the folk geography of a festival.

Festival site/spaces are physically mapped out and established through the provision of printed souvenir programmes as well as directional signage around the site. Maps provide a visual representation of the festival site: the location of performance venues are shown in relation to each other to enable festival participants to move efficiently from one to another

to another. While festival maps are tools of possibility, “the promise of a space to be explored” (Luckman, 2014: 191), they are also a visual representation of how festival organisers have not only physically arranged, but also hierarchically organised folk events around the site, ultimately creating a landscape of folk which requires the active negotiation by walking, mobile participants to bind disparate venue sites and their attendant internal experiences into a coherent festival whole.

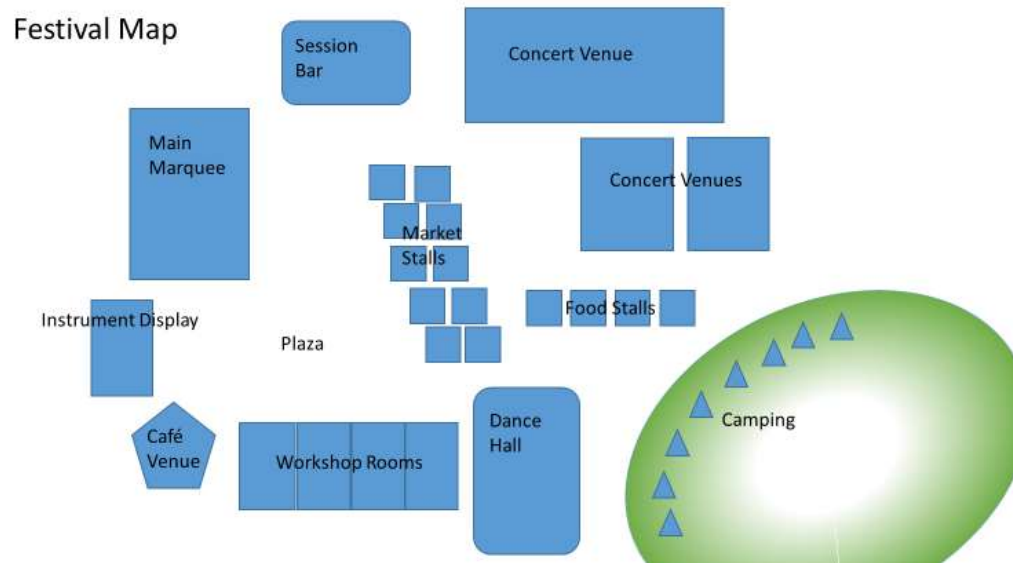


Figure 4.2: Archetypal Folk Festival Map

The logics of design of the festival also hierarchise events temporally, represented through the provision of event timetables which allocate specific times to festival events in order to best enable folk process – such as the scheduling of participatory workshops (oral and bodily transmission of folk) and other more interactive activities during the day, concurrent with non-‘drawcard’ concerts, to encourage active participation in the folk process by providing choices to participants. The temporal structure of the festival in which multiple events are scheduled concurrently, gives participants choice, but also limits their experience, as even moving bodies cannot be everywhere at once.

When a participant such as Rosie walks a festival site, they experience the landscape from the ground, but also as a single moment in time. Her journey around the site thus becomes a series of encounters with the folk events and attendant atmospheres that structure the experience of the festival landscape *within a particular moment*, and which informs her understanding of how folk is performed and practiced within an Australian folk festival.

Rosie also experiences the folk festival in terms of the place-origins and geography of the folk practices presented, and although this can be bound up in notions of folk process (especially continuity between past and present), how deeply this informs her understanding of folk practice in Australia is unclear. Because narratives of place and geography are inherent in folk performances themselves, narratives of which festival selection committees are generally aware, and which are often highlighted by the artist precis and material provided by the artists themselves, the festival landscape represents a map of folk musical geographies. Like world music⁵⁰, folk music can often falsely conflate homogenous culture and place, and in the folk scene, place and ‘roots’ can become fetishised as authentic representations of folk culture (see Connell & Gibson, 2004). However, this popular conflation, with the collocation of musical genres simultaneously around the festival site, means that a participant like Rosie can seemingly sample from a smorgasbord of folk music traditions – folk cultures – from around the world (see Connell & Gibson, 2008). Rosie’s depth of understanding of the geographical origins and the connection to place inherent in the various folk practices she encounters is predicated by what is expounded in the programme notes, performer explanation and ‘stage talk’ during performances (see Chapter 7), and her previous experience of the folk-world in Australia beyond this particular festival, but it reaffirms the notion of folk in Australia as being broadly inclusive and multicultural.

In walking between venues, Rosie does not simply physically traverse the few short steps between marquee and hall and tent, she seemingly travels around the world, making connections between the folk traditions she encounters. Each of the folk music events she engages with are subject to their own narratives of place and movement, resulting in a map of folk music geographies, some of which are evident to Rosie, but much of which is situated primarily in academic and theoretical discourses (which often inform performers themselves) of these folk music and dance practices. The depth of Rosie’s knowledge of these underlying narratives of place is limited; however, the knowledge that she *does* have guides her personal experience of the folk festival landscape irrespective of the underlying narratives and discourses. It is useful, however, to at least briefly delve into some of these discourses, to better understand how some of the underlying tropes of movement and travel

⁵⁰ World music and world music festivals have been the subject of much scholarly interest, for example, Bohlman, 2002; Feld, 2000; Frith, 2000; Haynes, 2005; Scott-Maxwell, 2008; and Stokes, 2004).

embedded in the performances Rosie encounters can create another level of folk geography within Rosie's own journey.

At the beginning of her journey, Rosie listens to contemporary klezmer/gypsy music, rooted in a fusion of Eastern European traditions. According to Silverman, this performance complex encapsulates a number of geographical themes: specifically, "Jewish/Romani connections via migration, persecution, cosmopolitanism, openness and innovation, and the amorphous region of Eastern Europe" (2015: 169). Thus, tropes of connection, distance and travel are present in the content of the klezmer/gypsy performance.



Figure 4.3: Morris street performance, Maldon Folk Festival, 2011

Rosie then pauses to watch morris dancers. As will be discussed in Chapter 8, morris dancing is a folk tradition that celebrates its perceived inherent Englishness, and nostalgia for 'traditional' village life. Its 'Englishness' is problematic in that it is considered part of English national and folk culture, but is also considered residual, and is often mocked by the English themselves (Spracklen & Henderson, 2013: 234-5; see also Winter & Keegan-Phipps, 2010). As a casual bystander, Rosie is unaware of this problematic relationship

between morris dancing, tradition and English nationalism, and instead enjoys the dancing as a form of entertainment which adds liveliness, colour, movement and music to her walk. For Rosie, morris dancing is equated with traditional Englishness, and is an established, and expected, part of the Australian folk landscape.

Journeying to rural Appalachia she samples bluegrass – a genre characterised by a “strong sense of place consciousness” (Carney, 1974: 35), and reliance on the Anglo-Scot-Irish ballad tradition of early migrants. As with the klezmer/gypsy music heard earlier, there are connections in the history of bluegrass to narratives of migration, as the popularity of the hillbilly music of the American south spread to urban factory centres (Rosenberg, 1967: 143). Like morris, bluegrass is primarily associated with rurality; in particular, the Appalachian region, and like many folk traditions, is clearly associated with the working class. Although broadly unaware of the specific origins of bluegrass, Rosie (like many of my informants) has a general understanding of folk as being music “of the people” and assumes that bluegrass reflects this. She also simply enjoys the music for its own sake, and accepts bluegrass as a legitimate form of folk because of its inclusion at this and many other folk festivals.

She is transformed from cultural bystander to active participant when she is pulled into a bush dance, driven by a bush band which – through the physical appearance of the band members themselves and the improvised instrumentation such as the washboard, lagerphone and bush bass – taps into a narrative of rural (the eponymous ‘bush’) or colonial Australia, with the influence of Irish and Scottish tunes on the repertoire pointing to the importance of migration in the development of an Australian folk culture (see Smith, 1994). Finally, propelled by thirst, she reaches the session bar and Ireland, the session tradition a result of Irish migratory movements of the twentieth century and intimately connected with the egalitarian space of the Irish pub (see Morton, 2005). The session bar provides space for communal interaction with friends, in an atmosphere that is distinctively folk.

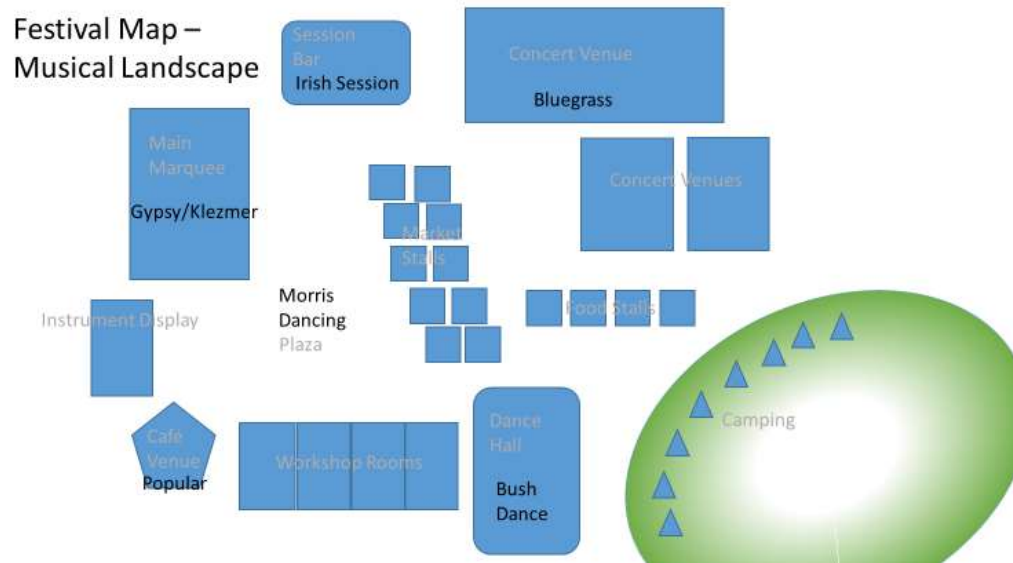


Figure 4.4: *Geographies of Folk Places visited by Rosie*

Each of the folk places Rosie visits represent way-stations, pauses in her journey, but they also represent single moments in time in the festival landscape, fleeting moments that are unreproducible as performers and sets change. Further, because the events occur more-or-less concurrently, Rosie experiences each of these folk events partially, leaving before the conclusion of the event, or reaching the event in time for the last song, and so misses much of the contextual information about the folk performance normally provided by performer stage talk. Her experience is, therefore, informed mostly by her previous folk knowledge, gleaned from other festival and folk experiences and earlier perusal of the festival programme. Her understanding of the complexities of the origins and development of these traditions is limited – the lack of contextual information means that her understanding of the folk traditions she experiences is based on the general ‘feel’, or atmosphere, of folk that they evoke, rather than an academic awareness of their historical development, or how they come to be products of folk process (reflective of continuity between past and present, individual creativity and community selection).

Borrowing from Ingold (2011: 45), Rosie does not perceive the festival “from a single vantage point, but rather by walking...”. Her journey is a series of encounters with the folk events that creates the festival landscape for her (as it did for the walkers of de Certeau’s city), events unfolding with her movement, the experience of which informs her understanding of how an aesthetic of folk as inclusive, multicultural and fluid is performed

and practiced within an Australian folk festival. In walking from venue to venue, Rosie is not merely passively experiencing the different sounds and atmospheres of each of the musical spaces she visits; rather her movement between the musical spaces of the festival connects the various events which comprise it, linking the different musical genres and creating a user-composed landscape in which the folk process is facilitated.

Pathways Through Folk: Lines and Intersections

Ingold states that human existence “unfolds not in places, but along paths” (2011: 148). In walking her way from venue to venue, and performance to performance, Rosie’s festival existence unfolds. Her physical movement between the musical spaces of the festival actively connects the various events which comprise it, unfolding and creating a meshwork of folk experiences that are located in both a temporal and spatial landscape.

Rosie’s pathway around the festival site is only marginally directed and is characterised by variations in purpose and intentionality, but the folk performances she encounters communicate (oral and bodily) understandings of folk, meaning that her wanderings are themselves part of folk process. During this particular journey, she eschews the festival map and timetable in the souvenir programme, preferring to meander from venue to venue and event to event, allowing for a more serendipitous exploration of the folk landscape, and thus a more intuitive, less structured, experience of the folk process. Festival maps (which view the site from a de Certeau-like vantage point) and event schedules facilitate navigation, but for many participants, the experience of *getting lost* – or wandering without purpose – allows for the exploration and discovery of the festival landscape and its constituent events, as the participant both learns and creates folk places by moving through them. When lost, the pathways taken by the walker are winding, uncertain. It is in the space of this uncertainty that many participants situate their most treasured moments and memories of a festival. Rosie’s unplanned wandering leads to unexpected participation in a bush dance (transforming her for a short time from a walker into a dancer), and the discovery of a bluegrass band that she enjoyed despite her preconceived notion of them being “just another example of over-represented Americana”. She is drawn from her (vaguely) intended path by (unanticipated and un-programmed) morris dancers, but this interruption provides her with an opportunity to experience the spectacle and atmosphere provided by folk dancing. She chooses her eventual destination of the festival bar because of the thirst she develops while bush dancing, and there is able to relax with friends

(demonstrating the importance of communal atmospheres) while enjoying the music of the tune session.



Figure 4.5: Family bush dance, Maldon Folk Festival, 2011

De Certeau notes that the walker “condemns certain places to inertia or disappearance” when choosing their path (1984: 98-99). Both Rosie’s meandering, unplanned movement around the venues, and her purposeful, intentional progress to the session bar also represent missed opportunities as a result of the temporally-fluid nature of the festival landscape – she misses most of the bluegrass band’s performance due to her decision to stop to watch the morris dancers, and her determined, direct route to the bar sees her bypass street performers and other folk performances which may have otherwise interested her. Rosie’s unique festival experience is determined by what she misses, as much as by what she encounters⁵¹.

⁵¹ The problem of ‘missing out’ was reflected in my approach to my own fieldwork. With many different locations, venues, experiences available in complex ethnographic sites such as festivals, the recognition that it was impossible to experience everything occurring at every festival meant that I eventually embraced an approach to my fieldwork that included following participants like Rosie rather than trying to be everywhere at once.

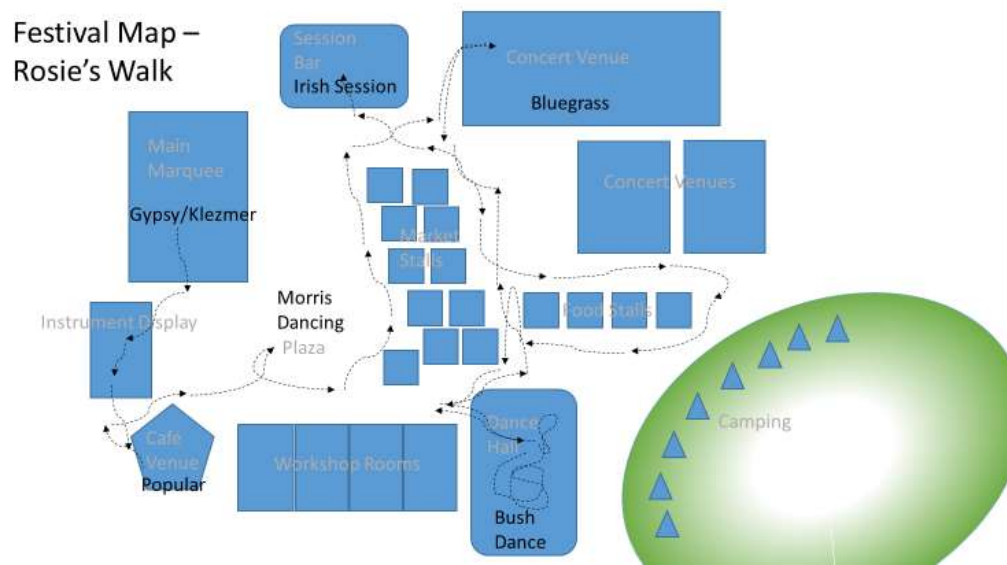


Figure 4.6: *Tangled Mass of Lines*

The festival map is an unchanging, temporally-fixed representation of the festival's topography. Rosie's path from the klezmer performance at the beginning of our narrative to her final destination of the Session Bar could be considered as what Ingold describes as a 'tangled mass of lines' connecting performance places, occupying the blank spaces and overcoming the arbitrary geographical separation of performance places through symbolic connection. Each of the stops along her walk represent way-stations, both potential destinations for her walk as well as pauses in the journey. These way-stations are constructed of folk performances which display *products* of folk process, accepted by Rosie as authentic representations of folk. But these way-stations are not fixed in time; each of the performances Rosie encounters are temporary, fleeting occurrences in a festival landscape. Rosie's walk cannot be reproduced; it belongs to a particular time. Rosie may be able to physically retrace her steps across the spatial landscape, but her journey cannot be replicated on the musical or temporal landscape. These fleeting interactions demonstrate an inherent dynamism, fluidity and ephemerality in the performance landscape of the folk festival, as connections between varying folk practices are continually forged and re-forged by the moving participant. Paraphrasing Ingold (2004: 333), the musical landscape of the festival is continuously woven into life through walking.

Conclusion: Folk Spaces of Possibility

Rosie's story began with her skimming her festival programme during a performance by a gypsy/klezmer band. This programme provided maps of the festival site, a timetable of performances and precis of festival performers, including some details of the place narratives embedded in the artists' performances and musical or dance styles. It contained, in short, the festival landscape as a space laid out by festival organisers, much like de Certeau's city. By broadly ignoring the programme and instead walking the festival in a meandering style that allowed for organic and serendipitous exploration and experience, Rosie wove her *own* festival into being, both unfolding and creating a landscape of folk in which varying performances of folk music and dance were connected by her movement. The content of the performances Rosie encounters – a klezmer/gypsy band, a ukulele-playing singer, English morris dancing, bluegrass music, an Australian bush dance band, and Irish session music – are simultaneously narratives of geographical place (and time) and movement such as migration, some of which narratives Rosie was familiar with, and some of which were unknown to her. These narratives are situated within the Australian folk landscape generally by their inclusion in the folk festival, and specifically, through the threads of folk experience that are woven between the different musical experiences by Rosie's walk through the space of the festival.

I have focused on Rosie's story, because stories, as de Certeau tells us, "traverse and organise places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories" (1984: 115). This snapshot of Rosie's festival experience – a mere hour or two of her time at the festival – demonstrates how the programmatic and topographical structures of the festival discussed in the following chapters provide possibilities for folk engagement that are realised through marginally-directed walking. Examining how participants move within the dynamic spatio-temporal festival landscape, weaving together multiple folk events which are themselves bound up in narratives of place and time, demonstrates some of the complexity of the relationship between folk and place within the festival context. Analysis of how participants perform folk and engage with folk events through movement, especially consideration of the embodied experience of the festival participant as they traverse the sensory landscape, demonstrates the role of the event organisation in structuring the multi-textural participant experience. Rosie's story provides merely one example of how folk festivals provide structured spaces of opportunity for unique participant experiences and engagement with folk performance in Australia.

Chapter 5: Structuring Festival Events – Place, Time & Movement

Introduction: Spatio-Temporal Event Landscapes

It's Saturday night, around midnight. I've just left the packed semi-outdoor Scrumpy Bar, where a lively performance had the audience enthusiastically dancing and singing. It's a clear, icy-cold night so I make my way to the warmth of the Session Bar, a large meandering room set aside for the use of musicians who wish to play in sessions together, or those, like me, who simply want somewhere warm and relaxed to chill out.

As I enter the Session Bar, I'm bombarded by a wall of sound: large groups of people chatting, calling to each other, instruments being played seemingly at random, the sounds of a busy bar. It feels cramped and packed – clearly many others are seeking refuge from the cold – but as I move into the room I begin to separate and negotiate the sounds and the bodies. The noise of chatter is overwhelming as many small groups have congregated here, and they speak loudly (possibly due to intoxication at this stage of the night) and exclaim as they meet random acquaintances. Gradually, I distinguish at least three large established music sessions being conducted in different parts of the room (alongside other groups of two or three musicians here and there).

I join the outskirts of a session group comprising around twenty people. It is an easy-going session, located at a table within easy reach of the bar, around which are seated half a dozen musicians playing guitars, fiddles, mandolins and banjos. All other participants, in a constantly moving crowd, stand around this central group, either playing instruments (there are a number of bush band instruments, such as a bush bass and a washboard) or merely singing along as they clutch pints of Guinness or cider. When I join the circle they are playing well-known English and Irish folk songs. This group is a little rowdier than the others – it is the first group that people pass as they enter the bar, and passers-by tend to stand and join in for one or two songs before moving on.

The central players take turns to begin playing tunes and songs, and within the first bar of music (certainly by the first chorus), almost everyone in the session has joined in. The members of the session, from the inner group to those merely pausing on their way past, are merry and enthusiastic, and as the evening/morning progresses, the recognisably 'pure' folk tunes and songs merge into renditions of commercially popular sixties folk-pop and rock and roll, but no one seems to mind as long as everyone can sing along and have a good time.

It seems that within this session, time, as per the slogan on the festival t-shirt, really has stood still, but eventually the enthusiasm of participants begins to wane. At nearly 4am the primary session players decide they can continue no longer and the session breaks up. As I move through the Session Bar, I notice that the noise has dropped considerably, as those that are left chat quietly while leaving or play their instruments quietly to themselves. The drinks bar has long since closed, and the detritus of plastic cups, empty food containers and other rubbish is wantonly scattered throughout the room. There are two or three participants who have fallen asleep and are lightly snoring, and they are left to sleep as those who are leaving creep around them on their way out. I leave the warmth and conviviality of the Session Bar and make my way alone back through the icy dawn to my campervan, planning to get up again in two and a half hours' time for a workshop.

(adapted from field notes, National Folk Festival, 8 April 2012)

The anecdote above describes a music session that I observed and participated in at the National Folk Festival, and it is representative of folk music sessions held at folk festivals throughout Australia. As an event, the folk music session is an important constituent part

of the overall folk festival, with its own peculiar structural components, and thus it is possible to view the session model as a metaphor for the entire festival. Although the session is seemingly informally structured, ad hoc and spontaneous, formal structure is provided to the overall session event through the provision and specific allocation of time and place by festival organisers. Inspired by Handelman, in this chapter I examine the bureaucratic infrastructure of the festival that provided the *potential* for Rosie's exploration of the festival landscape in Chapter 4, and through analysis of festival programmes and maps, look at the ways in which space, place and time are experienced within and frame the festival landscape, and explore how the constituent events of the festival, such as the session described above, provide a framework for the festival as a public event.

To achieve this, I will first provide an overview of Handelman's theory of a technology of events and an introduction to ideas of space, place and time in relation to eventmental landscapes. Secondly, I examine the role of individual events and activities and their relationship to each other and to the overall festival⁵². I then explore in detail the significance of place and time in structuring a folk festival landscape and creating folk places. Finally, I will discuss how festival organisation structures the pathways and movement of participants as they negotiate and traverse festival space, place and time. To paraphrase de Certeau (1984: 97), I will demonstrate that it is the intertwined paths of festival pedestrians that weaves festival places together.

Models, Mirrors? A Technology of Events

Don Handelman, in his *Models and Mirrors: towards an anthropology of public events* (1998) argues for the analysis of social phenomena through the lens of 'public events'. Rather than employing (ill-defined) terms such as 'ritual', 'public ritual' and 'political ritual' for public occasions that "have little or nothing in common with one another, apart from being classed as belonging together" (Handelman, 2004: 4), Handelman instead employs the term 'public events' to encompass "sites of performance whose designs are intended in relatively coherent ways to convey participants into versions of social order" (Handelman, 2004: 4). Specifically,

Public events are indigenous phenomena that exist in the life-worlds of their participants, and are graspable as such by external observers. The mandate of public events is to engage

⁵² This chapter, along with Chapter 6, will draw upon data from multiple festival field sites rather than in-depth case studies of specific events. Chapters 7, 8, and 9 will focus on specific events within the festival landscape.

in the ordering of feelings, ideas and people through certain kinds of practice. The logics of design of public events, of how these events are put together, are crucial to how these events work and to what they can accomplish. (Handelman, 2004: 4)

Handelman proposes a tripartite analysis of ‘public events’ in which events are classified as events-that-model, events-that-present (or mirror) and events-that-represent. The first, events-that-model, fall into the theoretical space of ritual, whereby the event doesn’t just reflect or mirror the world, but through its enactment, changes or transforms the world, or the participants. Events-that-present and events-that-represent, on the other hand, either mirror social realities reflecting and expressing the social realities of the lived-in world considered desirable by their creators, or provide propositions and counter-propositions about the nature of the lived-in world, opening up spaces of opportunity for the alternative ordering of social realities. Handelman proposes that understanding how public events fulfil these criteria of modelling or mirroring can be achieved through analysis of their internal logics of design, in other words, by looking at the organisational basis of their function, characterised by replicability and sequential organisation (1998: 12).

Handelman’s usage of ‘public events’ provides a useful method by which to examine folk festivals. As domains of social activity, contemporary Australian folk festivals do not comfortably sit within the ordinary framework of ‘ritual’, and their general mundanity (their liminoidality) seems to prohibit the more inversive (and liminal) ‘carnival’ or ‘carnavalesque’ (except for specific occasions within the event)⁵³. Unlike everyday life, folk festivals are discrete occasions, out of the ordinary flow-of-life but which do not overtly challenge or subvert social order in the way of ritual, yet are events “put together to communicate relatively well-honed messages” (Handelman, 2004: 4). In this way, Australian folk festivals could best be understood broadly as ‘events-that-mirror’ (or present) but which incorporate some elements and events of modelling which transform folk and participants; and, if we accept Handelman’s proposition that “a particular form of public event is shaped from the possibilities of some meta-design in order to do something (and not to do other things), then what that event does (and does not) is a function of its form” (Handelman 1998: xiii), then by exploring the internal organisational design of the festival, we can explore how folk festivals present an understanding of folk practice in Australia which influences participants’ intersubjective experiences of folk and overall folk process. It therefore follows that an analysis of the *logics of design*, or organisational

⁵³ See, for example, Lewis and Dowsey-Magog’s (1993) analysis of the Maleny ‘fire event’.

aspects of the festival, especially how the constituent elements of the festival event are situated in time and space, can provide this understanding.

Space, Place and Time

Festivals are locations in which considerations of space, place and time are particularly relevant and therefore germane to an exploration of the festival's logics of design as a public event. I follow de Certeau (1984: 117) who suggests that "space is a practiced place" and Casey (2009) who employs a phenomenological approach to place and temporality, and suggests that "place is irreducible to space and that in relation to time it is, if anything, a first among equals" (Casey, 2009: xxii). Place is given meaning by beings-in-the-world, or in other words, "lived bodies serve both to animate and connect places" (Casey, 2009: 73). This human-centric approach to the study of place is echoed by Gray (2000), who, drawing on Heidegger, employs the notion of 'dwelling', or that the embodied actions of human being creates 'locations', which "is experienced as an inherent part of their being; it produces a sense of place where humans feel they can carry out their lives in an understandable way" (Gray, 2000: 83). These 'locations' "form a coherent surrounding world" (Gray, 2000: 83). Folk festival participants, from organisers to casual attendees, create, animate and give meaning to their festival experience through their bodily connection to festival places; further, festival places are imbued with meaning as places of 'folk' through the significance and emotional attachment (see Gray, 1999: 443) of folk festival participants.

Festival places are formally structured by organisers by the provision of venues as sites of folk practice and become meaningful as folk places through the situating and positioning of folk events in space and time. The festival souvenir programme provides a guide for participants as to how they can engage with folk within these temporal and spatial parameters, and is *itself* an important aspect of the festival logics of design, whilst also *reflecting* the organisational logic of the festival. The practice of folk by participants, guided by the design logic of the festival maps and programmes, gives meaning to festival places, and these places are both structured by, and become, events – that is, "a happening not only in space but in time and history as well" (Casey, 2009: xxv). Thus, the festival, itself an event in space and time, is simultaneously a landscape of folk events, temporal and spatial locations in which folk is presented and practiced, a place of folk given meaning through the dwelling and emotional attachment of festival participants.

Eventmental Landscapes

Casey argues that a landscape “contains everything, including discrete places, in its environing embrace” (2009: 25). The festival landscape encompasses all the physical places in which folk occurs – such as buildings and marquees, as well as open-air plazas and footpaths – as well as the spatio-temporal, often ephemeral and fluid, folk events scheduled and included in the festival programme, as well as those events that are unscheduled and impromptu. This landscape takes on the qualities of its occupants “reflecting these qualities in its own constitution and description and expressing them in its occurrence as an event: places not only are, they happen” (Casey, 2009: 331). Places are therefore, in Casey’s terminology, ‘eventmental’. Further, because people give meaning to places, and places are intrinsically eventmental, the festival landscape could be considered an eventmental landscape of folk. Folk festivals ‘gather in’ folk places, or folk events, and are given meaning by the character and qualities of participants – whether organisers, artists, audiences, musicians, poets, dancers, or anyone else complicit in the production and continuation of folk. Ingold writes that “through living in it, the landscape becomes a part of us, just as we are a part of it” (1993: 154); folk and folk process are both experienced and co-created by the lived experience of bodies in the festival landscape, their ‘doing’ of landscape (see Olwig, 2008: 81-82).

The folk landscape of the festival is therefore an eventmental gathering of folk events. Exploring the nature and operation of these spatio-temporal events, and their structural relationship with the broader festival landscape, festival geography and with one another, can give insight into the internal logics of design of the festival.

Events and Activities: The Constituent Tasks of the Folk Festival

The folk festival can be characterised as an ‘event-scape’ – a landscape and chronoscape structured according to the logic of a sequence of spatio-temporal events (see Handelman 2005: 23). This event-scape is constituted of discrete bounded events and activities which may be either planned or spontaneous, formal or informal, participatory or non-participatory, or may not clearly conform to any of these dyads. Rather than attempting to identify the characteristics of every act of festival engagement, I instead consider the event-scape of the festival as analogous to Ingold’s (1993) ‘taskscape’. Ingold states that “it is to the entire ensemble of tasks, in their mutual interlocking, that I refer by the concept of taskscape. Just as the landscape is an array of related features, so – by analogy – the taskscape is an array of related activities” (1993: 158). The events – or sub-events, or

activities – of the folk festival can be considered the building-blocks or constituent ‘tasks’ of folk festival engagement, and it is their interlocking that provides the structural integrity of the public event. Moreover, the concurrent scheduling of various events which are temporally limited induces a sense of ephemerality within the taskscape (clearly demonstrated by the ‘moment in time’ account of the non-replicability of concurrent events evident in Rosie’s walk through the festival landscape). A brief discussion of the main events and activities, or participatory ‘tasks’ common to most festivals, is warranted to better understand how the infrastructure of the festival informs and enables folk participation.



Figure 5.1: Concert at Yackandandah Folk Festival, 2012

Concerts

Concerts structure the festival in a form that is common and recognisable across the majority of contemporary music festivals, in that multiple musical acts are scheduled into mini-concerts of thirty minutes to an hour (sometimes longer in the case of special acts/presentations), with performers often playing multiple gigs throughout the festival period. Concerts vary in prominence within the festival, with those featuring well-known ‘drawcard’ performers preferentially treated by organisers when structuring programmes and allocating performance spaces.

Concerts at festivals can range in form from the individual singer/songwriter to large bands and may on occasion present as plays or lecture-type presentations. The relative fame of

the performer, the style or type of performance, and the genre of music are all considered by organisers when organising schedules. Hierarchically, folk festival concerts rank as the number one festival activity, both in terms of participant engagement, volume of events and organisational priority, and this ranking is reflected by the scheduling and location of the events, and in the overall promotion of and by the festival.

Folk Music Sessions

Music sessions involve a collective sharing and playing of folk songs and tunes in which all attendees are welcome to participate, and are of a form common to and arising from the international folk revivals, with a similarity of structure that facilitates active participation, especially among members of the folk scene familiar with the format. Sessions provide an opportunity for the transmission of folk music in a social, participatory, and relatively casual setting and are significant for the transmission of folk via the folk process.



Figure 5.2: Campsite session, Uranquinty Folk Festival, 2011

Sessions may be either formally organised and scheduled, or ad hoc, impromptu and informal, and aside from street performance, are perhaps one of the most ephemeral aspects of the taskscape. Most festivals aim to accommodate both scheduled and informal sessions as opportunities for communal session playing is perceived (by the folk community) as fundamental to the exercise of folk practice (and participation) within a festival. The session can, however, create a tension within an overall structure between

festival organisation and participants' agency, and between highly organised and imposed events built into a programme versus independently arising or spontaneous activities in which participants create their own meaningful events carved out of festival space and time. Organisers often resolve the tension by providing opportunities for structured session events within the programme but also providing spatial and temporal opportunities (bar space, special marquees, or rooms) which participants can inhabit as session places. Spontaneous sessions often still arise in places and times not designated by organisers, generally in out of the way spaces, such as campsites, and are also often held late at night, after the conclusion of the concert programme.

Festival Workshops

Workshops range from introductory inclusive instrumental or singing events suitable for beginners to masterclasses for experienced musicians, to lectures or demonstrations, or dance workshops. Workshops are particularly significant as structuring events within the festival because they facilitate audience/performer interaction whilst providing an opportunity for participants to develop skills which enable them to more actively participate in the folk process⁵⁴. Usually presented by a booked/programmed concert performer, the workshop is a much more formalised event than the session, and gives festival attendees (general public and other booked performers) the opportunity to learn new skills or better develop existing competencies from an acknowledged (legitimised by appearing in the programme/being curated by the festival organisers) expert or proponent. Structurally, there is significant interaction between the teaching performer and the workshop participants, providing opportunities for more person-to-person sharing of folk.

Workshops are often located in out-of-the-way venues and also often require participants to bring their own instruments, preventing casual festival-goers, especially those with limited previous folk exposure, from engaging in workshops as part of their festival experience. Workshops are rarely suitable for casual audiences as an audience is often perceived as being detrimental or a barrier to the full participation of attendees, who may be unwilling or feel embarrassed to 'perform' in front of casual observers/spectators⁵⁵.

⁵⁴ See Chapter 10 for an ethnographic exploration of how participants develop skills through participatory workshops.

⁵⁵ Dance workshops tend to be more accessible and inclusive than instrumental workshops as there is rarely an expectation of prior knowledge, and participants are more comfortable entering and leaving the workshop space as required, perhaps due to the movement of bodies within the workshop space.

Dancing

There are two main forms of dance at festivals, each performing a different function.

Firstly, there is audience-initiated free-form dancing at concert events. This occurs within the concert event as a response to the performance on stage, and while space in front of the stage is sometimes provided by organisers for this purpose, the dancing itself is reliant on audience agency. This form of dancing, despite – or perhaps, because of – its spontaneity, performs an important role in developing atmosphere, and creating a connection or bond between performers and audiences which overcomes the performer-audience distancing that is a result of the stage-audience spatial differentiation.



Figure 5.3: Ceilidh dance event, National Folk Festival, 2012

The second type of dance at a festival is formally organised or pre-planned dance. This includes: spectator-oriented dance, such as display dances on designated stages by folk dance groups, in which there is generally a clear demarcation between performers and audience; participatory dances, such as ceilidhs and casual bush dances, which are broadly inclusive, and more formal colonial balls, which are inclusive but often require prior knowledge of the forms and dance protocols; and instructive dance workshops. Sometimes these forms of organised dance intersect and overlap: a bush dance, for example, as a participatory dance, contains aspects of instruction in terms of direction by the dance-

caller; a spectator-oriented dance, such as morris dance performed as part of a street performance, may become participatory and even instructive through inclusion of other dance groups and by-standers; while a participatory dance, such as a colonial ball, may become a spectator-oriented dance through the wearing of historical dress by participants.

Though generally not as prominent on the festival programme as concerts, organised dance is seen by organisers and the folk community generally as a significant aspect of the festival, by continuing, displaying, sharing and evolving traditional forms of folk dance. While audience-initiated free-form dancing at concerts is important (creating a fun, energetic atmosphere and providing festival-goers an opportunity to physically express their response to folk music), the inclusion of organised dance events is fundamental to the folk process. Formally organised dance events which are provided dedicated space and time allow festivals to demonstrate that dance is an important folk activity worth preserving and sustaining, and facilitate body-to-body transmission of folk.

Spoken Word Events

Spoken word events at folk festivals can encompass poetry slams, lectures, and stand-up comedy, although the most prominent of these events and common across nearly every folk festival is the Poet's Breakfast. The Poet's Breakfast is a participatory event in which attendees take turns to read or recite a poem to the group, and as a general rule, heavily features traditional or modern Australian bush poetry.

Poet's Breakfasts are seen by both organisers and experienced folk festival attendees as an important aspect of folk practice at the festival and therefore worthy of a place in the festival landscape. With regard to festival participation, Poet's Breakfasts could be considered relatively peripheral events with few attendees, scheduled at times not conducive to large attendances, and often rating only a passing mention in festival souvenir programmes. Their importance, however, as a traditional activity at Australian folk festivals, their performance content (especially bush poetry and poetry reflecting both the physical and social landscape of Australia), and their emphasis on participation, mark them out as highly significant to the folk ethos of the festival.

Street Performance

Most folk festivals feature some level of street performance – either officially sanctioned by organisers and carefully scheduled, or unofficial and seemingly spontaneous – which

helps to create a festive atmosphere (characterised by a sense of celebration and fun) within the festival landscape. Street performance can work to establish the festival as a space beyond the mundane everyday experience of participants, by providing sights and sounds of folk activity which ‘fills the gaps’ or spaces of experience open to festival participants outside of the organised programme of folk occurring in formal venues and festival places.

Street performances blur the lines between performance space and spaces intended for pedestrian traversal, connecting venues and providing folk performance cohesion to the festival site. Street performances can include folk dancers, circus performers, roving bands, clowns, parades/processions, as well as buskers, ‘soapbox’ orators and poets. Many of these performances help to physically and theoretically construct a festival site. Parades and processions can imbue a disjointed festival site with coherence and establish and define festival boundaries. Street performance may act as a barrier to pedestrian movement or act to redirect the movements of festival participants by creating often unforeseen impediments in those pathways and areas of the festival landscape depicted by festival maps as open and accessible to free movement around a site. Street performance can thus create feelings of uncertainty – or a sense of the unexpected – in the landscape which helps establish the festival site as a place of possibility. In addition, street performance, by directing pedestrian movement, ensures sometimes uninterested passers-by observe, hear or even become actively engaged in folk activity.

Blackboard Concerts

Some form of blackboard concert (or ‘open mic’) event occurred at nearly every festival I attended⁵⁶. Open to all, blackboard concerts encourage festival participants to become performers. The egalitarian ethos of the blackboard concert, that anyone who puts their name down gets the opportunity to perform, leads to a wide variety of acts featured in the concert.

Blackboard concerts are events that are peculiarly governed by time. A blackboard (or whiteboard, sheet of paper etc) is provided on which timed increments are marked out. Potential performers add the name of their act next to a time increment to reserve their performance slot on a first-come first-served basis. As the blackboard fills, a concert

⁵⁶ Port Fairy Folk Festival was the only exception, suggesting a focus on professional, programmed performers rather than more participatory and blurred performer/audience/participant festival events.

schedule emerges. Because the timetable of acts in a blackboard concert venue is determined during the course of a day (or over the entire festival), potential audiences must examine the blackboard in person instead of referring to the official festival programme, meaning that audience attendance is often more serendipitous than planned. There is an inherent fluidity to the blackboard concert structure in that it develops *during* the festival, instead of being formally organised prior. Festival organisers provide the space and time for the blackboard concert, but the content depends upon and is created by festival participants.



Figure 5.4: Blackboard concert programme, National Folk Festival, 2014

Children's Festival

The Children's Festival often includes its own performance stage, as well as beginner music workshops in which children can learn basic songs and tunes on simple instruments. Some festivals also feature blackboard concerts for child performers and performance competitions. A common activity at Children's Festivals is maypole dancing, a folk practice with roots in the English countryside idyll of the English folk revivals. Other common activities include the making of folk instruments and broadly unstructured art activities such as plaster painting or mural making.

The Children's Festival provides an opportunity for families to engage in folk activities together, and is an important part of the folk process, by including and educating children

in the folk ideal, and demonstrates that participation and performance in music making, folk arts and dancing is desirable in the folk scene, even by children. The sharing and teaching of these folk skills to children is an important aspect of the folk process, and specifically emphasises the ethic of participation promoted at folk festivals.

Other Activities

Arts and crafts activities, yoga, competitions and games, along with hands-on demonstrations such as learning how to make damper, are sometimes included in festival programmes to encourage participation and promote engagement with the festival. These activities provide opportunities for all festival-goers to physically participate in – and in some cases, help create – the festival in a manner that is not always reliant on skill with an instrument (or other accepted ‘folk’-related skill).

Arts and crafts can encompass activities as diverse as ‘yarn-bombing’ the festival site⁵⁷, contributing art to large collaborative murals and posters, and learning how to make folk instruments, such as lagerphones. Acts such as yarn-bombing and mural-making add to the visual amenity of the festival by adding colour and artistic flourishes to the landscape, while also encouraging a sense of co-creation (between festival-goers and organisers) of the festival, which can lead to a sense of ownership and belonging, and thus satisfying the participation aspect of the folk ideal.

Competitions and games can include serious musical or dance competitions designed to demonstrate the skill of the competitors, as well as semi-serious or fun competitions. The latter are usually designed either purely for audience amusement and entertainment or to foster festival involvement (through competitions such as the Mixed Grill at Frances Folk Gathering, in which volunteer names are drawn from a hat to form bands and create original songs during the course of the festival). Folk games can include such activities as the ‘gum boot toss’ (sometimes named a ‘welly toss’ or ‘welly wanging’), a game traditionally played at folk events such as English village fetes⁵⁸. Competitions and games are important aspects of the folk festival landscape because they variously promote, demonstrate and celebrate excellence in folk music and dance, and they encourage

⁵⁷ Yarn-bombing is a kind of street art employing brightly coloured knitted or crocheted yarn to decorate public spaces.

⁵⁸ For further discussion on folk games, see Georges (1972).

participants to create a folk experience, or engage in a traditional folk game, in a spirit of playfulness and fun (cf. Handelman, 1974: 67; and Handelman, 2015: 214).



Figure 5.5: Lagerphone making workshop, National Folk Festival, 2012

Displays (Instrument Makers, Bush Heritage)

Folk festivals often feature bush heritage displays (demonstrating activities such as blacksmithing, damper making and other activities relating to colonial life in Australia), art displays including art submitted as competition entries by local artists (as a method of engaging local residents with the festival), and festival history displays in which posters, merchandise and even artistic renditions of performers and patrons from previous festivals are presented. Instrument Makers displays are undoubtedly the most typical type of display featured at folk festivals, and also the most participatory (especially as a type of economic exchange activity) for festival attendees. Instrument Makers displays allow instrument makers to generate economic and social (folk) capital, through both the immediate sale of instruments and the demonstration of their products' qualities.

Instrument Makers displays primarily feature specialised or artisanal makers, with instruments on display and for sale generally highly crafted instruments common to folk music, such as fiddles, accordions, acoustic guitars, mandolins, banjos, ukuleles, harps, along with smaller instruments like ocarinas, kalimbas and tin whistles. Instrument Makers displays allow musicians and interested browsers to engage with instrument makers, ask questions about the qualities and characteristics of their instruments, and seek advice about repairs and instrument care. The Instrument Makers display facilitates the exchange of both social and economic capital, whilst providing a tangible opportunity for festival-goers to engage with, see, touch, feel and hear, and purchase the tools which enable folk music participation.

Economic Transactions and Consumption Practices

Economic transactions and practices of consumption, while unscheduled, are important activities within the festival landscape. Primarily, these activities are centred around eating, drinking, and shopping, and like the Instrument Makers display, are exercises in both social and economic exchange. Eating and drinking is mainly serviced by festival bars (often a Guinness Bar or Cider Tent) and food and drink vendors (including hot food concession stalls, coffee vans and dedicated venue spaces such as a Chai Tent), whereas opportunities for shopping revolve around festival merchandise and cd sales through both the dedicated festival shop and directly from festival artists, and stallholders selling clothing and other goods.

These places of consumption must be provided for by festival organisers when creating a festival site. Festival bars and food and drink vendors are essential in providing sustenance for festival-goers and are important spaces for both folk performance and sociality. Bars are often settings for both scheduled and impromptu music sessions, while spaces such as the Chai Tent can provide relaxed areas for blackboard concerts, open mics or spoken word events. In addition, festival food and drink places are fundamental to participant sociality, as it is in these areas that festival-goers meet friends, eat and drink together, and converse.

Shopping can emerge from folk performance and engagement with the folk aspects of the festival, or it can provide a measure of relief from concerts and workshops. Most festivals have a 'festival shop' where patrons can purchase souvenir t-shirts, mugs, badges and other items, along with cds and merchandise from performing artists. Cds are also often

available for purchase directly from performers after concerts. The festival shop allows festival-goers to browse and consider their purchases at a distance from the performers, whereas purchasing direct from the artist is often a direct result of enjoying a concert, whilst facilitating interaction between the performer and audience member. The purchase of festival merchandise provides tangible items that patrons can take home as reminders of the festival experience.

Shopping at festival stalls allows participants to take time out from the structured activities of the festival. Much of the merchandise featured, such as colourful hats, ‘hippy’ clothes, jewellery and eco-friendly products, is only available at festivals and similar special events, so purchasing from these stalls offers festival-goers the opportunity to acquire items linked to their festival experience, but not necessarily directly linked to the folk activities of the festival. Market stalls can, however, without being particularly ‘folk’, contribute to the ‘folkiness’ of the festival, by creating a kind of market square gathering place akin to that found in the idealised rural settings romanticised by folk revivals.

Structuring the Folk Festival: Creating a Folk Festival Landscape

As we have seen, the taskscape that structures the festival landscape features multiple events and activities in which festival-goers can participate, through which understandings of folk are communicated. These events though, like the festival itself, must be placed – and it is in this placing that festival organisers and participants also establish meanings of folk. In this section I look at how the situating of individual festivals within a broader landscape of folk creates meaning, how the built environment of a festival illustrates the hierarchical arrangement of events within the festival landscape, and how events are situated in relation to one another to reflect the hierarchical experience of folk for all participants. I then look at how considerations of time play out through the provision of printed programmes and timetables and how these structure the experience of the festival for participants.

Place

Locating Festivals in Folk Landscapes (situating a festival)

Folk festivals are significant, pre-eminent (in terms of general visibility and community awareness) events within an overall annual folk calendar which includes weekly and monthly folk music sessions, dance events, concerts and other smaller events in which folk activities occur. Within this broader context – or landscape – of folk, folk festivals are

specially situated as annual events which cater for participants who often travel from surrounding regions as well as interstate, and even occasionally overseas. They act to centralise and focus folk activity by ‘gathering in’ folk events and creating a discrete, time and place bounded landscape for the purpose of promoting folk process. They take activities and events that are geographically, and participatorily, scattered and random, and draw them together to create a united and relatively coherent spatio-temporarily bounded event landscape in which values related to understandings of folk praxis in Australia are communicated. Where this ‘gathering in’ occurs geographically and topographically is particularly relevant in understanding how location relates to folk process.

One of the pre-eminent folk ideals relates to the rural idyll. How festivals are located geographically and topographically can both reflect and communicate these ideals. Each of the festivals I attended within my fieldwork period was located in a rural or regional town or village, except the National Folk Festival, which was situated in Exhibition Park in Canberra – a site used at other times of the year for various exhibitions and shows including the Royal Canberra (agricultural) Show and which provides facilities for camping – and which could be considered as a logical location (as the Australia’s capital) to situate a national folk festival⁵⁹. The folk festivals I attended during my fieldwork period were, in respect to their locations as rural/regional towns and villages, broadly representative of folk festival locations in Australia, and included:

Uranquinty Folk Festival – a small farming town of around 900 people approximately 15km from the regional city of Wagga Wagga in the Riverina region of NSW.

Fleurieu Folk Festival – in the township of Willunga in South Australia, which, although now on the outskirts of metropolitan Adelaide, prides itself on being an historic township near the McLaren Vale wine region.

Cygnnet Folk Festival – a scenic township of around 1500 people in the Huon Region of Tasmania, known for attracting musicians, artists, craftspeople and other artistic and creative people.

Frances Folk Gathering – a tiny farming town of less than 100 people on the Limestone Coast of South Australia, on the border with Victoria, known for its grain silos.

Music at the Creek – held in the historic gold mining town of Majors Creek, home to around 250 residents about 16km south of Braidwood in the New South Wales Southern Tablelands region.

⁵⁹ While the National Folk Festival is located in an urban setting, it could be argued that it is still one of the most ‘rural feeling’ sites available, providing a sense of rurality and distance through onsite camping with limited facilities in a venue which prides itself on the “ambient natural vegetation” which provides a “striking background” for the agricultural, equestrian and animal events regularly held there (Exhibition Park in Canberra Official Website, 2015).

Spring Folk and Blues Festival at Daylesford – originally a goldmining town about 100km out of Melbourne in the foothills of the Great Dividing Range, now a notable tourist location with many spas and bed and breakfast types of accommodation, with a population of around 2500 people.

Maldon Folk Festival – a key historic township in the Victorian gold-rush era, situated at the base of Mt Tarrangower around 40km out of Bendigo, with a population of around 1200 people.

National Folk Festival – held in Exhibition Park in Canberra, Australia’s capital city.

Palm Creek Folk Festival – held in Mountain View Eco Park in Giru, Queensland, a town of around 350 people located on the Haughten River around 50km south of Townsville in sugarcane country.

Port Fairy Folk Festival – a scenic coastal town in south-western Victoria known for tourism and fishing, and home to approximately 3300 people.

St Albans Folk Festival – a small, historic village on the Macdonald River, just over 90km northwest of Sydney, New South Wales, with a population of approximately 150 residents.

Tamar Valley Folk Festival – held in George Town, Tasmania. Slightly unusual in that it could be considered more of a regional municipality than a small town, with a population of 4300 people, it is located on an scenic area of the Tasmanian north-east, on the Tamar River, and is known as a popular seaside destination and home to a vibrant arts community.

Yackandandah Folk Festival – a former gold mining centre now an historic tourist town near the town of Beechworth in Victoria, home to approximately 1800 people⁶⁰.

The appeal of the rural is particularly aesthetic – a natural ‘unspoilt’ environment as opposed to the built environment of cities, or the dullness and non-picturesque landscape of the suburbs. Here rural can encompass either the ‘natural’ (untamed) or ‘cultivated’ (farmed) but in both cases equates to an ‘earthiness’, what Goodwin-Hawkins (2016: 310) in her discussion of the British village, refers to as “a shared imagining of soil and soul”, inherent in the folk ideal. This preference for the natural environment has its roots both in the ‘Merry England’ ideal of the English folk revivals, and the romanticisation of the rugged bush and country associated with the Australian folk revivals (related to the idea, inherent in Australian folk songs and poetry, of Australians as essentially ‘rural’ people, despite Australia being a broadly urbanised society [Ramm, 1989]). Relph notes that “events and actions are significant only in the context of certain places, and are coloured and influenced by the character of those places even as they contribute to that character” (2008 [1976]: 42). This rural idyll of folk revivals and contemporary folk practice in Australia today both colours the decisions of those choosing where to situate the festival,

⁶⁰ Population figures in the preceding section derive from the 2016 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census (www.abs.gov.au, accessed 05/06/2020), so may have had more or less residents during the fieldwork period.

and influences the understanding of folk that participants take from festivals in particular locations.

In addition to the appeal of the picturesque rural in folk revivals, hosting folk festivals in such locations also speaks to the importance of community within the folk movement. The economic and financial benefit of a successful festival can invigorate a local economy with an influx of visitors for the event, and organisers and participants form reciprocal relationships with host communities (see Derrett, 2003)⁶¹. Cities and suburbs are perceived as anomic and impersonal with scattered communities whereas tight-knit rural communities are not only more easily engaged with, but represent the twin folk movement ideals of rurality and community. Community can also be fostered by the necessity of visitor camping in localities where there is limited other accommodation, as well as in the billeting of artists and performers in local homes. With festivals and participants stressing the importance of the festival community – which is primarily but not exclusively a folk community – having this sense of community mirrored in the broader host location reinforces a feeling of togetherness.

Building Folk Festival Event Landscapes (festival architecture)

The natural features of rural locations provide the scenic backdrop to a festival site, whilst also being full of meaning with regard to understandings of folk and folk process. The built physical landscape and use of space within the declared boundaries of the folk festival is also meaningful through the “placing, arranging and naming the spatial ordering of materials and the system of difference that they perform” (Hetherington, 1998: 184). The structure of this built landscape is determined by multiple factors, including how best to utilise existing built infrastructure, where and what temporary infrastructure needs to be erected, and how to best utilise roadways, paths, and green spaces. The deliberate and opportunistic positioning of the temporary physical structures in relation to the existing structures within the festival boundaries can give insight into a festival’s organisational imperatives with regard to their use of place – that is, how meaning is established and creates folk places through the built environment of the festival.

⁶¹ An analysis of the economic and social impacts of festival tourism on rural communities is beyond the scope of this thesis. For a discussion of the socio-economic impacts of music festivals in non-metropolitan places in Australia see Gibson (2007); see also Gibson (2002), Connell and Gibson (2004), and Gibson and Connell (2011).

Many festivals, even if they spread into township venues such as cafes and museums, will structure their main entertainment spaces around sporting ovals – ovals provide space for the festival to erect marquees, position food and drink concessions and provide open air entertainment areas, as well as often being co-located with existing sporting clubrooms, large gymnasiums and community halls which can be utilised by the festival as additional venues. Within festival towns, the existing building infrastructure is repurposed from everyday activities such as sport, eating or religious worship, for folk – small cafes become intimate acoustic music venues, community halls become places of organised participatory folk dance, sporting clubrooms and local churches become concert venues, pubs become home to folk music sessions. Across all the festivals I attended during my fieldwork, one of the best examples of the repurposing of non-folk places into meaningful places of folk, was Tamar Valley Folk Festival. Tamar Valley Folk Festival was situated in George Town, Tasmania, and was notable for *only* using existing building infrastructure. This meant that not only pubs, community halls, senior citizen's clubs, tea rooms and RSL (Returned and Services League) clubs became venues, but creative use was made of both the local Yacht Club – which hosted themed concerts including a workshop about Ewan McColl and his contribution to the British folk revival of the 1950s and 1960s – and the Bass and Flinders Centre, a museum housing the replica sloop *Norfolk*, along with several other vessels, berthed at a 'dock' that provided access for museum visitors to explore the vessels. This was one of the most 'atmospheric' venues I attended, and several other festival attendees I spoke to commented favourably on their experience there. Watching themed concerts in which well-respected folk performers (well known for their wide repertoires of traditional and revival folk songs) such as Margaret Walters and Danny Spooner, alongside other regular festival performers, sang traditional working songs and narrated tales of myth and legend in the shadow of the replica sloop on the dock in the lee of an historical sea vessel, I was struck by the juxtaposition of the history of exploration, and the history reflected in the folk music. In addition, my festival ticket provided me with full access to the museum, so after the performance, I was able to walk and move around the maritime display, physically exploring the history of not only the ships themselves, but also their connection to George Town and Tasmania more generally. The museum thus seemed to me to become 'alive' with the performance of folk, and the museum became meaningful as a place of folk.

At most folk festivals though, in addition to this repurposing of existing infrastructure, organisers often erect temporary marquees, stages and tents to create additional concert,

dance, blackboard, and workshop spaces to provide places of folk practice that cannot be provided for within the existing infrastructure of a small town (see figures 5.1 and 7.1 for examples of marquee venues). Most festivals utilise a mixture of pre-existing repurposed building infrastructure, and made for purpose temporary infrastructure, all of which became meaningful places of folk process as participants engage with folk within and around them.



Figure 5.6: Ryebuck Sheilas concert, Bass & Flinders Centre, Tamar Valley Folk Festival, 2012.

In addition to the built – purposed or repurposed – infrastructure, is the utilisation of ovals, roads, parks and other open spaces (see figure 3.2 for an example of open space becoming a folk space through a shanty-singalong event). Such open spaces also become places of folk, either through the deliberate allocation of space to folk activities within the festival programme – such as dancing, street performance, or folk games – or simply through the use of these areas as thoroughfares for folk participants, as camping locations, and informal places for unscheduled music sessions (as I discuss later in this chapter with regard to Uranquinty Folk Festival). Green spaces such as parks and ovals reinforce the ‘village green’ idyll of the English folk revivals, while the use of bushland parks and reserves for camping emphasises the Australian-ness of the folk festival landscape. Open

spaces can be marked out as purposeful festival places through the strategic use of bright flags, murals and other low-cost or participant-created site decoration.

Events in Place: Venues and Framing Hierarchies (situating festival events in the landscape)

The positioning and utilisation of physical infrastructure in the festival site in many ways reflects the hierarchies of the festival taskscape. Organisers determine in what manner venues are used according to a set of criteria which frames their notions of folk, and situates and hierarchises festival events or tasks within both the physical landscape and the folk event landscape.

Whereas in the previous section I discussed how physical infrastructure determines how festival places are constructed and used, here I am interested in how the event taskscape creates a folk landscape. This landscape is hierarchised depending upon the festival participant: for a casual, non-folk member of the public, the value of particular events would be considerably different to that of a festival-goer who regularly participates in the folk or folk festival scene. Participants (who are not involved in the organising process) are presented with a festival landscape in which the value of specific event tasks is prioritised and hierarchised by organisers as part of their efforts to create a festival that is simultaneously economically viable and celebratory of folk activity (which is not generally considered economically lucrative). In attempting to resolve the potential conflict, organisers may sometimes prioritise popular events/acts/activities over traditional folk activities, but by doing so, may be able to promote the folk process by engaging participants in folk activities they would otherwise have not encountered. In my experience on an organising committee, through discussions with festival organisers and participants and my own observations of the festivals I attended and how they promoted themselves, I gained a sense of how festival task or event-scapes are prioritised and valued according to both an economic rationale and a rationale of celebrating, continuing and promoting folk activity.

When employing an economic rationale, the key central event for organisers is the headline concert, followed closely by other concerts. Well-known, *popular* acts tend to be valued higher than well-known folk acts. The concert programme, however, when considered as an event encompassing multiple concert events, provides the central organising feature of the festival. The principal audience drawcard from an economic perspective is the number and range of concerts available at a single festival.

The other task events prioritised in this model are those events that create ‘atmosphere’, or a sense of festivity. These events include street performance, bars and food and drink, market stalls and sessions and workshops. Dance events, both those display events on designated stages and participatory dances are much more niche events, more popular with those already engaged with folk.

The economic rationale also hierarchises events through festival infrastructure. When prioritising expenditure on marquees or allocating good quality venues such as large halls or those with good acoustic properties, since these can cater to larger crowds as well as providing better listening experiences, priority is given to headline or well-known concert acts. Participatory dance is often relegated to smaller or more peripheral halls, while small rooms and small marquees are reserved for workshops and sessions, reflecting not only their lesser importance in terms of economic impact on the festival, but the likelihood of smaller, more intimate audiences and participants. A significant part of the hierarchising of popular events over niche folk events in the organisation of venues is ensuring that there is enough capacity for the crowds attending specifically for headline events. As a volunteer working on the door of the main concert venue at Cygnet Folk Festival, I experienced the displeasure of festival attendees who were unable to enter the venue for a major drawcard artist due to limited venue capacity. Some of these festival attendees asserted that this particular act was the reason for their purchase of a festival ticket, and that they would be complaining and seeking a refund from festival organisers over their inability to experience this event (despite there being a number of other concurrent events they could have attended in lieu). Ensuring capacity is imperative to ensuring participant goodwill and also limiting economic risk for the festival.

Employing a rationale that hierarchises events based on folk significance, also prioritises concerts, however, there is a little less emphasis on the popular headline acts and a rebalancing of the importance of secondary musical acts, which are often included in the programme on the basis of their folk credentials rather than their popular appeal. Dance activities are given more prominence through the provision of dedicated, more centrally located stages and larger dance venues as well as increased visibility in official programmes, as are workshops, bars (which provide opportunities for folk engagement through sessions), competitions and games (mainly because competitions demonstrate folk skills) and spoken word events. The emphasis here is on *participatory* folk activity,

particularly involving face-to-face communication of folk. Prioritising active participation through the bodily engagement of attendees (through dance, the playing of music, the engagement with competitions and games), as well as the intimacy of smaller concerts in which folk music is shared within smaller groups rather than large concerts which highlight the separation between performer and audience through staging and lighting, demonstrates the preference for the participatory over the spectacular within the folk ethos.

Within the geography of the festival, the economic or folk imperatives of festival organisers must be balanced against the limitations of the layout of the host town, how marquees may be situated based on the exigencies of site infrastructure (such as underground cables or irrigation systems) as well as power requirements for both venues and market or food vendors, which prevent the folk places of the festival from clearly reflecting the hierarchies of the festival events. A centre-periphery representation of a festival site might display a large marquee or hall at the geographic centre of a festival site (which would demonstrate the organisational centrality of the popular/headline concert), with smaller venues radiating out from this centre to show the relative importance of events in either an economic or folk capacity. However, festival organisers must contend with infrastructural, topographical and numerous other imperatives when positioning venues and events within a festival site. Despite such organisational realities, it is useful to look at examples of festival maps, which can still illustrate the relative (folk or economic) importance of particular venues and events for organisers within their festival site.

On the map for the 2012 St Albans Folk Festival (figure 5.7), the locus of activity was the ‘Main Venue’, which was also within a short distance from the majority of the camp sites. Other venues were repurposed township buildings, such as the Fire Station, School of Arts Hall, Gallery and Church, all of which required significant expenditure of effort in terms of walking between venues. The Settler’s Arms, the main pub in the village, was situated relatively near the Main Venue. The Main Venue housed the large concert marquee, the Children’s Festival, as well as multiple food and market stalls. This venue hosted the high-profile acts, although a number of these performers also performed at the smaller venues around the village. If an attendee wanted to only experience the main concerts, shopping, and street performance, along with festival food and coffee, they wouldn’t have to leave the Main Venue. To engage in workshops, however, they needed to walk or drive to locations such as the Tennis Club or Workshop Cabin, whereas to attend a bush dance, they would have to cross the river to the School of Arts Hall. As a small village, most

venues were within easy walking distance, but even still, the Main Venue remained the locus of folk activity in the festival. In some respects, because there was very little to designate festival activity on the roads between venues, the distance while walking (especially with hilly terrain), could sometimes seem significant⁶². For me, walking between festival venues, which included getting lost (possible despite the small size of the town because smaller venues such as the Workshop Cabin were sometimes not clearly identified as festival venues through decoration or signage), meant that initially, I experienced individual venues as disparate places of folk, and the town (with the exception of the Main Venue area) didn't seem like a coherent festival site. Over the course of the festival, I gradually learnt where all the venues were and was able to better negotiate the roads and pathways, and as I became more accustomed to the distances and learnt the topography of the town through my feet, began to equate my experience (both within the venues and between them) as an overall folk experience, where folk was connected to the entire landscape of St Albans and not just individual venues.

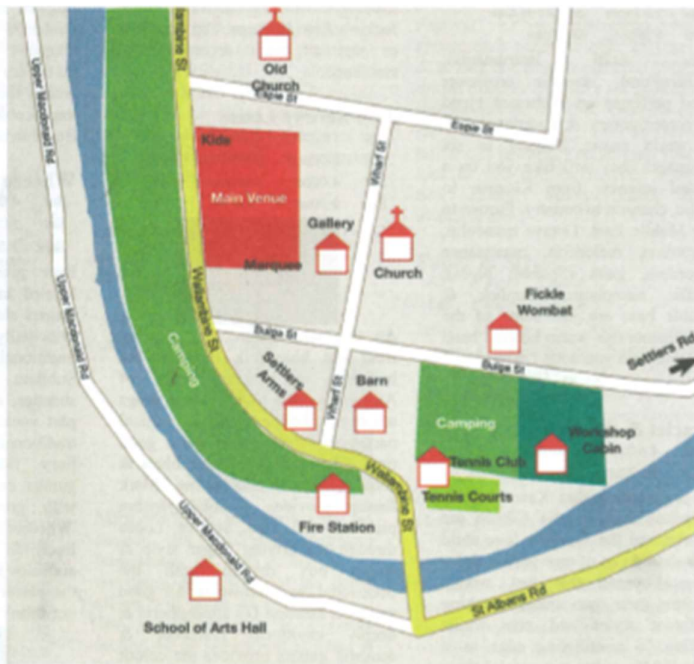


Figure 5.7: St Albans Folk Festival Map 2012 (St Albans Folk Festival Program, 2012: 16)

The small size of the festival overall, with multiple venues of similar sizes (which house varying participatory events such as workshops, dances and blackboard events) operating concurrently with the Main Stage (which in itself is not significantly larger than most other venues), despite the broad geographical spread of venues, argued for a festival which adopted a folk rationale (more participatory) over an economic one (more spectacular).



Figure 5.8: Port Fairy Folk Festival Map 2012 (Dunn, Brady & McKew, 2012: 39)

In 2012, the Port Fairy Folk Festival, though on a much larger scale, was arranged very similarly to St Albans. The map (figure 5.8) highlights the main Festival Arena (an enclosed area surrounded by fencing and only accessible via wristband) with other venues dotted around the town. The Festival Arena comprised multiple marquees of varying sizes (including huge marquees that required video screens to provide audiences with a view of the stage – see figure 10.1), and hosted most of the concert and display activity, as well as food and drink stalls, the main festival bar and scheduled street performance. The other venues around the township were repurposed facilities, such as churches, school halls and surf clubs, and housed the spoken word events, workshops, and other participatory events such as choirs, lectures, as well as smaller scale concerts (see figure 2.1 for an example of a concert held in the more intimate setting of a school hall). There was also a free stage area called Fiddler’s Green which hosted a full programme of music over the Saturday and Sunday, accessible by the entire Port Fairy community, rather than just festival ticket holders. Because the Port Fairy Folk Festival is so significant to the Port Fairy township in terms of economic, tourism and community impacts, the entire town seemed to engage in some way with the festival (even if only through decorations welcoming visitors to the “Folkie” and shops selling fold-up festival chairs for use in the main Festival Arena), which gave the town a celebratory feel.

Most of the concert activity including all of the high-profile international popular or world music acts⁶³ though was located within the enclosed Festival Arena, and many participants considered this to be the festival proper, and focused their festival activity around these concert events. Although there was a free shuttle bus provided, the effort to attend more outlying events was generally only undertaken by committed folk participants who wished to actively engage with workshops, open-mics, lectures and singalong-type events, as opposed to concert audiences. However, in my experience walking the streets of Port Fairy in search of these more participatory venues, I was always highly aware that I was part of a festival due to the ‘buzz’ in the atmosphere, with many other visitors to Port Fairy also walking the streets, visiting cafes and the markets between breaks in performances, recognisable as other festival-goers by carrying fold-up chairs or wearing various vintage folk festival t-shirts and so even when having to traverse great distances to attend more peripheral venues, I always felt part of the festival. Furthermore, although most concert activity was situated in the main Festival Arena, like Tamar Valley Folk Festival, creative

⁶³ Port Fairy Folk Festival is held on the same weekend as the WOMADelaide Festival, and many international headline acts play at both festivals.

use was made of existing facilities and landmarks in the town – such as the area surrounding the Wharf, which hosted a community shanty singalong event (see figure 3.2) – connecting a folk event focused on sea songs with a place connected with sailing, creating a place of folk. In demonstration perhaps though of the preference (necessary due to its scale) of this festival for scheduled concert acts with existing profiles, the venue allocated for sessions and jams was the most geographically peripheral venue of the Surf Club. The significant focus by organisers and festival-goers on the Festival Arena, with most festival activity centred around the concert precinct with its massive stages argued for a more (spectacular) economic rationale to the festival, with (participatory) folk experiences needing to be actively sought by participants beyond the Festival Arena, demonstrating that a more economic model was at play in Port Fairy.

Although it has changed in recent years, when I visited in 2011, Maldon Folk Festival had a similar layout – one main festival arena as well as venues dotted about the surrounding town – but had a much different feel⁶⁴. Like the other festivals, it utilised both pre-existing (repurposed) and temporary (purposed) infrastructure, but the festival overall felt very disjointed. The festival map inside the official programme (figure 5.8), shows a clear demarcation between Venues 1, 2, 3, and 4, and all the other venues. Venues 1, 2, 3, and 4 were all based at Mount Tarrangower Reserve and consisted of temporary marquees and stages, adjacent to the main festival camping area. The Mount Tarrangower Reserve precinct of the festival is described in the festival programme as “The Heart of the Festival” and featured the big concert (marquee and stage) spaces, as well as a wine bar and Guinness tent, session spaces and Children’s Festival spaces (in the daytime), all within close proximity to the majority of festival campers, who also held impromptu sessions at their campsites. However, this “Heart of the Festival” was located geographically at considerable distance from the township venues (much further than St Albans or Port Fairy), which housed most of the workshops, the Instrument Makers’ display, the participatory dance spaces for bush dances and ceilidhs, as well as more acoustic concert spaces in cafes, and blackboard concerts and scheduled concerts in the pub. Due to the distance and steep terrain, most participants who wished to travel between the two precincts needed to use the free festival shuttle bus provided, resulting in an overall feeling was that there were two separate festivals operating – the Maldon township festival

⁶⁴ In the years following my visit to Maldon Folk Festival in 2011, the festival has shifted its focus and has restricted its festival to the township venues. Consequently, the discussion here only refers to my experience in 2011, and does not reflect on the organisation of Maldon folk festivals post-2011. Future fieldwork comparing the current arrangements with the 2011 landscape would be fruitful.

(more intimate and participatory) and the Mount Tarrangower festival (which housed the more broadly popular concert performances and party bands). Although, like St Albans and Port Fairy there was a main festival precinct created from temporary for purpose infrastructure, the distance from the repurposed existing town infrastructure made the festival feel disjointed, with participants tending to favour one part of the festival over the other – the township concert venues were patronised by more sedate, passive audiences while families and older festival-goers attended the township dances, whereas Mount Tarrangower (at least at night) attracted more youthful party-goers from surrounding towns who attended for the high-energy concerts.

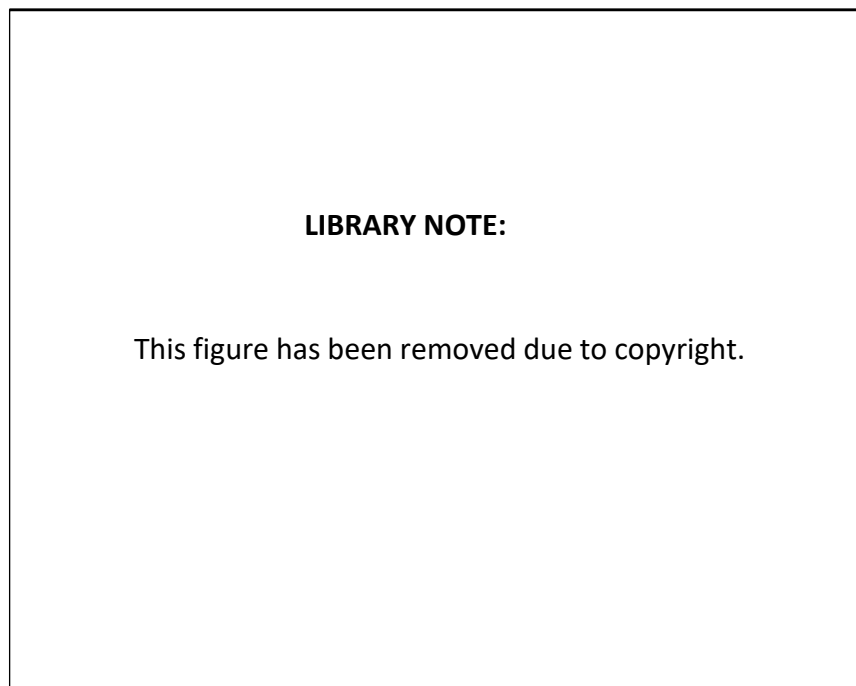


Figure 5.9: Maldon Folk Festival Map 2011 (Maldon Folk Festival Programme, 2011: 25)

These three festival examples all shared similarities of a main temporary festival precinct forming the centre of activity – primarily concert activity – with peripheral venues hosting workshops and other participatory activities operating out of existing buildings within the host township. These temporary festival centres – on otherwise unused green space in St Albans, on Southcombe Park in Port Fairy, and at Mount Tarrangower in Maldon – all featured concert stages as well as food and drink facilities, and some participatory events (blackboard concerts and childrens’ festival at St Albans main arena and sessions, spoken word and childrens’ activities at Mount Tarrangower, as well as spontaneous dance at

concerts). The majority of the more participatory activities of the festival taskscape – that is, the workshops, participatory dances, blackboard concerts, choirs, competitions and spoken word events – were situated away from the main festival arena, and utilised pre-existing infrastructure that was repurposed for the festival. Both the central and peripheral – or for purpose temporary arena and the repurposed town infrastructure – became places of folk during the festival, but the type of folk activity in these areas differed; and depending upon how a participant navigated these places, determined the kind of folk experience – more passive or more participatory – a festival-goer might have had. All three examples also show how organisers prioritise the concert aspect of the festival, with the temporary infrastructure created to showcase folk concerts, whereas other activities are made to fit into pre-existing buildings. However, while the heavy focus on headline concert venues in the infrastructural landscape of Port Fairy in 2012 demonstrated an economic (more spectacular) model of festival organisation (necessary perhaps due to the large scale of the festival and its significant economic impact on the host town), St Albans' mixture of similarly sized venues and one main stage argued for a more folk (more participatory) rationale, Maldon's somewhat disjointed festival landscape in 2011 reflected a mixture of both economic and a folk imperatives employed differentially depending upon precinct and time.

Creating central festival precincts through temporary infrastructure built for the purpose of concerts demonstrates the significance that organisers and participants place on concerts as the central organising event of the festival, hierarchising folk *music* as the priority of the folk festival. For folk performers, being scheduled to play in the main arena, on the main stage, speaks to their importance in the hierarchy of folk performance. Other festival events in the taskscape are made to 'fit in' to existing buildings in the periphery, or in the case of spontaneous participant originating folk music sessions, to open air campsites and corners of pubs. However, by situating workshops, dances and other participatory elements of a folk festival in pre-existing, often historic buildings within a township, festival organisers and participants create folk places that are based on community (through community buildings, such as School Halls [figure 2.1], local wharves [figure 3.2], Memorial Halls [figure 9.1], and museums [figure 5.6]) and active engagement, perhaps a more solid foundation of folk meaning than the transience of folk concerts in temporary marquees.

Time

Thus far I have focused on the taskscape of the festival in terms of how festival infrastructure is used to create places of folk, and how the organisation of such reflects the hierarchical arrangement of folk events within the festival. However, the taskscape of the festival is eventmental, a landscape of events that co-locate space and *time* through gathering (Casey 2009: 339). It is necessary, therefore, to investigate the role that time plays in organising the festival event-scape. Exploring the organisational imperatives which structure time within a folk festival can demonstrate the ways in which folk events in the folk festival landscape reflect (mirror) the values of organisers and participants. As festival places demonstrate organisational hierarchies which prioritise either economic or folk rationales, so too does the temporal organisation of the festival.

Falassi suggests that festival is “‘time out of time,’ a special temporal dimension devoted to special activities” (Falassi, 1987a: 4). As an event which gathers in multiple smaller events to create an eventmental taskscape, the folk festival is governed by time. As an annual event, a folk festival is itself temporally recurrent. *Within* the folk festival though, time is managed and organised to provide the rich landscape of events expected by attendees. This organisation is illustrated by the provision of festival timetables or schedules within souvenir festival programmes or online prior to the festival. These schedules provide festival participants with clear information as to how time is organised within each venue, enabling participants to plan their folk experience. These timetables also indicate the hierarchical and strategic organisation of events within the landscape, prioritising particular types of event to either coincide with likely high or targeted attendances (capitalising economically), or to draw crowds at particular times during a day.

Festival Time: Rhythms and Event Hierarchies

There are some basic conventions for scheduling events across both the whole weekend and over each day common to most festivals. These basic conventions have emerged from the collective experience of many festivals over many years, and attempt to balance the economic rationale of ensuring high attendances, whilst providing a range of events which enable and encourage different modes and levels of folk participation over the course of a festival day, and the festival overall. These include arrangements such as the clustering of high-profile and headliner acts on Friday and Saturday nights, organising Poet’s Breakfast and yoga events in the early morning, and operating Children’s Festival events and craft and display activities throughout daylight and ‘family-friendly’ hours. Sessions are

generally scheduled during the day, but as they are often the result of impromptu, opportunistic and spontaneous organisation by participants rather than organisers, can occur at any time of the day or night, and frequently take place long after the last concert of the evening and into the early morning. Concerts occur throughout the day in competition with other participatory events, but evenings are wholly given over to concerts and occasionally dances and session playing. Broadly, accepted conventions for temporally organising the event taskscape of a folk festival would see an archetypal folk festival running from Friday night to Sunday afternoon organised thus:

Friday night/Saturday night, Sunday afternoon – headline acts, high-energy concerts

Saturday and Sunday late morning – more laid-back concerts especially acoustic acts, workshops, children's activities, blackboard concerts, folk games, spoken word, arts and crafts activities

Saturday and Sunday late afternoon – general concerts including some high-profile acts to ensure high attendances, specialist folk concerts, workshops, children's activities, blackboard concerts, competitions and awards, art and craft activities, sessions

Late night Friday and Saturday – sessions and drinking

Late afternoon to evening Saturday – participatory dances, less high-profile concerts

Early morning Saturday and Sunday – poetry, yoga and children's activities

Late night Friday, all day Saturday/Sunday – food and drink vendors

Saturday and Sunday daytime – market stalls, Instrument Maker displays, merchandise sales

Saturday and Sunday daytime – street performance, busking

Mid-late afternoon/evening Saturday or Sunday – parades and processions

These conventions provide a commonality to folk festival events that ensures participants can expect a certain rhythm of festival engagement that is familiar to the regular festival-goer, and in some sense, identifies the event to a seasoned folk festival attendee, as a folk festival. Rosie's movement through the festival (discussed in Chapter 4), for those few hours in the late morning/early afternoon, reflected some of these norms. She visited several concerts across various venues – klezmer, bluegrass and a blackboard performance – programmed more-or-less synchronously, along with ad hoc (unscheduled but occurring during the early afternoon as might be expected) street performance and a family bush dance (scheduled at the family-friendly time of early afternoon). A lively Irish music session was held concurrently with these other events, and was an expected part of the festival timetable – Rosie knew that she would be able to find the music session in progress

when she finished dancing at the bush dance, without consulting a programme. The events Rosie encountered as she navigated the festival reflected the conventional programming of a three-day folk festival around midday on a Saturday, where a multitude of folk events, including varying types of concerts scheduled concurrently with blackboard events and participatory dances, and synchronous with unscheduled street performance and music sessions, created a folk chrono-scape unfolding with participant movement. The rhythm of the festival as it unfolds over a day (and weekend) is intentionally structured by organisers, and broadly reproduced across many festivals, but the movement of participants between folk events occurring synchronously (the taskscape) represents the lived experience and coproduction of folk festival rhythms by participants⁶⁵. These intrinsic rhythms of the festival are created through the “interrelationships between the multiple rhythms of which the taskscape is itself constituted” (Ingold, 1993: 160)⁶⁶.

Programming: Representing Temporal Events and Managing Time

Most printed festival programmes provide schedules in which concert, workshop, dance and other events are arranged in timetable form for each venue. This timetabling is a fundamental aspect of festival temporality. It formally structures the taskscape, providing a tool for participants to navigate festival space and time and ensuring the effective operation of the festival. Many festival attendees circle or mark this printed timetable in advance of events as a visual reminder for acts they wish to see or workshops they want to take part in, and sometimes following events, particularly those they particularly enjoyed, as a record of what they have seen (see Gray, 2000: 159). Recognising that many participants mark their programmes in this manner, Fleurieu Folk Festival and the National Folk Festival capitalised on the habit over several years by selling souvenir highlighter markers specifically for this purpose (figure 5.10). One participant I spoke to, when I noticed her marking their timetable in this way, showed me her programme and explained her system of marking. She had asterisks marked in pen next to concerts, workshops and other events throughout the day. My informant explained that earlier that morning, prior to

⁶⁵ A deeper analysis that can be provided here (due to considerations of length) on the relationship between folk, festivals and rhythms is warranted. Future analysis drawing on Lefebvre’s (2004) notion of rhythmanalysis could investigate how the lived bodies of festival participants experience and create rhythm in the context of the folk festival, which draws together the rhythms of music, dance and poetry (in themselves and as events) that form the basis of a festival of folk. Duffy et al’s (2011) analysis of the rhythmic relationship between bodies and sound in the context of community festivals provides an example of this kind of approach.

⁶⁶ There is also an inherent rhythm of the festival in itself over the course of the event, what could be considered in Relph’s terms as “rhythms of creation, change and decay” (Relph, 2004: 113), exhibited in the setting up of the site by organisers and volunteers, the events and activities of the festival period proper, and the dismantling of the site at the festival’s conclusion.

leaving her campsite, she had read the performer notes in the programme and marked all those events/concerts that interested her with an asterisk. Some of these events were scheduled simultaneously in different venues, so they represented the *potential* of her festival experience, rather than a rigid plan⁶⁷. As she attended events, she would mark the concert or workshop entry with a highlighter pen, to remind her of what she actually ended up doing at the festival. Because she attended many folk (and other similar) festivals, she enjoyed having a record of what she had seen and done at a particular festival. This timetable then, through her systematic marking (using a combination of asterisks and highlighter pen), became both a (fluid and unfixed) plan of her anticipated engagement with the festival, and a souvenir reminder. In addition, by referring to the festival in future prior to other events, she could plan her experience at subsequent festivals informed by her programme notes. The printed timetable can thus act as both a temporal guide to the festival, and a souvenir – or memory of a past festival – beyond the event.



Figure 5.10: Souvenir Highlighter Markers

⁶⁷ See Chapter 10 for further ethnographic exploration of timetables and schedules representing potential engagement with festival events.

Program - Monday 21 April								
TIME	Budawang	Marquee	Trocadero	Flute 'n' Fiddle	Scrumpy	Majestic	Carnival Stage	TIME
8:30				Poet's Breakfast hosted by Laurie McDonald & The Rhymer from Ryde 8:30 - 10:30	Percussion Jam 9:00 - 9:30		National Uka Muster Ukelele Republic of Canberra Morning Strum & Uke Blackboard 8:30 - 10:00	8:30
9:00								9:00
9:30								9:30
10:00	Valanga Khoza South African Jive 10:00 - 10:50	Tom Lewis 10:00 - 10:50	A Sailor's Life Tingley Turner 10:00 - 11:00		Sikweed 10:00 - 10:40	Leah Flanagan 10:00 - 10:50		10:00
10:30							Street Chaos - Zap Circus 10:30 - 11:10	10:30
11:00	Tift Merritt 10:50 - 11:40	The Crooked Fiddle Band 11:00 - 11:50		Darcy Welsh 10:50 - 11:30	Howard 10:50 - 11:30	The Barleysakes 11:00 - 11:50		11:00
11:30	Riley Lee & Jeff Peterson 11:40 - 12:30		Alaska Odyssey Alaska String Band 11:30 - 12:30	Damien Thomer and the Orphans 11:40 - 12:20	Cameron Mather 11:40 - 12:20		Great Big Story Book 11:30 - 12:10	11:30
12:00PM		Woody Mann 12:00 - 12:50		Kent Daniel & Bill Weeman 12:30 - 1:10	Sarah Humphreys 12:30 - 1:10	Kate Fagan 12:00 - 12:50		12:00PM
12:30							Ladybug Performers 12:30 - 1:10	12:30
1:00	Infinite Elvis Final 12:50 - 2:30	The Recycled String Band 1:00 - 1:50	The Roots of Rumba Karavana Plamenca 1:00 - 2:00	Mike Martin & Lindsay Martin 1:20 - 2:00	Christopher Cady 1:20 - 2:00	Circus Death Match 1:00 - 1:50		1:00
1:30							Folktales and Furrytalls 1:30 - 2:10	1:30
2:00		John Bennett 2:00 - 2:50	Margaret Walters CD Launch 2:10 - 2:50	Ukes of Today 2:10 - 2:50	Martin Pearson & the Po'tree 2:10 - 2:50	Little Stevies 2:00 - 2:50		2:00
2:30							Gobsmecked! 2:30 - 3:10	2:30
3:00	Himmerland 3:00 - 3:50	Ange Takets Band 3:00 - 3:50	Siobhan Owen 3:00 - 3:40	Squeezebox Trio 3:00 - 3:40	Sanja Tarantia 3:00 - 3:50	Grimick 3:00 - 3:50		3:00
3:30							Songdance Johnny Huckle 3:30 - 4:10	3:30
4:00	Chris Duncan and Catherine Strutt 3:50 - 4:40	Tolka 4:00 - 4:50	Chice & Jason Roweth 3:50 - 4:30	3 Sheets to the Wind 3:50 - 4:30	Richard Perso 4:00 - 4:50	Circus by Request Finale Poncho Circus 4:00 - 4:50		4:00
4:30	Davidson Brothers 4:40 - 5:30		Mick Flanagan 4:40 - 5:20	Robert Zielinski and Clodhna Ni Ruairc 4:40 - 5:20				4:30
5:00		Jordie Lane 5:00 - 5:50			Tangalo 5:00 - 5:50	Dubmarine 5:00 - 5:50		5:00
5:30			Festival Bush Orchestra 5:30 - 6:00	Sparrow Folk 5:30 - 6:10				5:30
6:00		Karen Lynne Bluegrass Circle 6:00 - 6:50			Rory Faithfield 6:00 - 6:50	Goodnight from the Majestic Moochers Inc 6:00 - 7:00		6:00
6:30	Festival Fiddle Rally & Festival Choir			No Hausfrau 6:20 - 7:00				6:30
7:00				Guy Lillayman 7:10 - 7:50	Pocket Fox 7:00 - 7:50			7:00
7:30	The Farewell Concert 7:00 - 9:10							7:30
8:00					The Ellis Collective 8:00 - 8:50			8:00
8:30								8:30
9:00					The Rusty Spring Syncopators 8:00 - 9:45			9:00
9:30								9:30

Figure 5.11: Example of timetable marking with highlighter, National Folk Festival 2014
(www.folkfestival.org.au, accessed March 2014)

Timetables are often arranged by columns representing venues, with time increments marked out and the names of acts or activities allocated times. This is a common format, designed to easily present information about venues, times and performances within a limited space, such as a single page.

The Saturday timetable of the Cygnet Folk Festival (figure 5.12) is a clear example of this kind of timetable. Venues are arranged in columns, with hourly time increments marked. The main concert venue of the Town Hall makes up the first column reading from left to right, with other mainly concert venues marked out on the left page, and outdoor, pub, kids festival and workshops arranged together on the right. Reading from left to right then the hierarchical arrangement of events is evident, with concerts grouped together and making

4.4	SATURDAY TOWN HALL	SUPPER ROOM	CARAMEL HALL	HUON CHRISTIAN LIFE CHURCH	ST JAMES CHURCH	DRILL HALL	ST MARKS HALL	SCOUT HALL	SATURDAY LONGGANG PARK	THE LAIR @ MIDDLE PUB	KIDS FESTIVAL FREE	MISCELLANEOUS	WORKSHOP ROOM 1	WORKSHOP ROOM 2	WORKSHOP ROOM 3	WORKSHOP ROOM 4	
9.00am																	
9.30		UNUSING HERODES MC Eric Collins	Cajun Dance Workshop: La Blanc Bros with Steve & Jane Day	MERRY MELODIES MC Janet Hamilton, Dave McWhorter	THE FESTIVAL OF VOICES CONCERT MC Bob Nicholls								Old Time Appalachian Fiddle: Cindy Harris	Beginner Badminton: Jeremy Sibson	Dejerdine: Nick Osborne	Log Slide Guitar: Andrew Winton	
10.00	FROM NEAR AND FAR MC Kate Rowe	Unusing Heroes of Australian History Part 1	STORIES Dean Stevenson & The Arcs Set	Red Adams & Judy Farrer featuring Robert Louis Stevenson	Songs of Ceremony, Ritual & Magic: Michael Almond	Festival Choir Rehearsal	Community Music Forum	MC David O'Connor	Morris Dancers workshop	Poet's Breakfast		ST JAMES CATHOLIC COLLEGE	3 finger Old Time 5-string banjo: Marnie Macneil	Planning first on stage: Accordion: Marnie Macneil	Musicians that shaped our state: Marnie Macneil	Prizes, Queens & Commemorative Rousing Girls	
10.30	Halfway to Earth	Unusing Heroes of Australian History Part 2	THE SANDS OF TIME	Eric Kristensen	Helen Thomson	GYPSY GOT THE BLUES MC CLOSE UP ELECTRIC		Joy Fraser	Melanie Gott	INTRODUCING THE LAIR	Teatro Maria	CLASSROOM: 10am - 4pm Instrument Display	Flamenco Guitar: Andrew Veivers	Scottish Fiddle: Kevin Hughes	Scottish Fiddle: Kevin Hughes	Georgian Singing: Joseph (Gordon & Geroni)	
11.00																	
11.30	Twice Bitten		Tabasco Tent & Doc White	Chris Kristensen		Junior Bowles	Riverson	Ken Paulin & John Benfield	Traverses	Tom Swain	Family Song Circle	BLACKBOARD SESSIONS: Schoolhouse	Songs of the Blues: La Blanc Bros Cajun Band	Yodelling: Harmon Horal	Latin Rumble: Alma De Vida		
12.00pm																	
1.00	Homo Stern	Letters from a Distant Heart	Benny Walker	Ethereal		Penny Linkins & Carl Panazzio	The Hobart Smiths	Woodwind Mead	Thelma & Huan	John Hughes	Keith Rowe & Ryan Morrison	Cafe Top Pub RSL Club	Harmony Singing: Claire Patti	Gregorian Choral Basics: Helen Thomson			
1.30																	
2.00	LADIES AND GENTLEMEN MC Chris Muller	Ceo Draichit	DIVERSE AUSTRALIA MC Chris Muller	Rousing Girls		Shakshuka	Hot Cub Ramen	John Francis Carrall	Dominic Francis	Melanie Galt	Brett Campbell	SESSIONS: Middle Pub: Advanced	Intermediate/Advanced: Ukelele: Tom Fleming	Scottish Fiddle: John Adams	Scottish Fiddle: John Adams		
2.30																	
3.00	Evlyn's Secret	Evyn & Michie	Tasmanian Heritage Fiddle Ensemble	Aloka		THE REPUBLICAN BAR CONCERT	Gorani & Breathing Space	FROM DISTANT ISLES	John Paulin & John Benfield	Andrew Marshall	Mr Bagg's Magic: Marybeth & Mirth	Session with Celia: Pottery: Top Pub: American with Superior	Improve Media: Penny Linkins & Carl Panazzio	Fiddling: Woodwind Mead			
3.30																	
4.00	Kate Rowe & Ryan Morrison	THE SOUTHERN SWAN CONCERT	Half Tasmanian (Half Australian) Bruce Watson	SWEET SOUNDS MC Wendy Ealey	Alma De Vida	Blue Cow	Adam Cousins Band	The Story So Far	Grassroots Union Choir	THE MULL OF THE PUB	Helen Seale	BLACKBOARD SESSIONS: Schoolhouse	Scottish Gaelic: Celtic Music: Eric Kristensen	Exploring Comedy: Darryl Podd		PORT CYGNET SAILING CLUB Slipway Shanty and Sea-Song Session	
4.30																	
5.00	My Friend the Chocolate Cake	The Hazelen Brothers	SSI & The Sanics	Melinda		The Old Lyric Theatre	Hemlock	Tom & Nick Fleming's Hawaiian Duo	Sluggo O'Toole								
5.30																	
6.00	WORLDLY WONDERERS MC John Hickey	Simon Bradley Trio	CARMEL CLASSICS MC Evan Davies	Dale Miller		THE OCCASIONAL CALLISTO	EXOTIC AND ENIGMATIC	MC Kevin Murphy	Chickadee	Uisce Beatha							
6.30																	
7.00	Shonachie	THIRTEENLESS GIGS MC Penny Linkins	Cindy Harris	AMIGOS AGAIN		Scottish Callith: Taliska/David Wainman	EXOTIC AND ENIGMATIC	Sitar Boss Jump									
7.30																	
8.00	Superloaf	Andrew Winton	Sweet Jean	Neil Gardener & Friends		SATURDAY STOMP		Harlequin									
8.30																	
9.00	Miles to Go Trio	Andrew Veivers	Andy Bayler's Pizzazz: The Pumpkins	John Flanagan & The Anglo Agנים		Papa Change	MC Mahots	The String Chickens									
9.30																	
10.00	My Friend the Chocolate Cake	Fred Smith & Liz Frencham	Kym Pittman & Band	Aloka		The Loughlins	Tom Swain										
10.30																	
11.00	Madre Monte	Bahamian Nights	Ethos in Transit	Shakshuka		Crooked Fiddle Band	Peter Miller										
11.30																	
12.00																	

Note: white blocks indicate performance times, grey blocks are concert titles.

Note: white blocks indicate performance times, grey blocks are concert titles.

The timetable is a reference only, with band and special event names listed but very little other information. Participants must refer to the programme notes which arrange acts in alphabetical order (figure 5.13). This allows cross-referencing between act, venue, and time. Beneath the notes on specific acts are their performance times and the venues. Many participants read the performer notes, then mark their timetable by circling or highlighting the acts they wish to see, allowing them to plan their day. They also cross-reference the

venue names with the map, enabling them to plan their journeys between concerts, workshops and other activities, allowing time to move between venues.

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all its own".
Friday 11pm Supper Room
Sat 9pm Cygnet Town Hall
Sun 6.30pm Supper Room

Morris Dancers

The Jolly Hatters will be dancing up a storm in traditional, colourful outfits. Implements such as sticks, swords, handkerchiefs and bells may also be wielded by the dancers.
Sat 10am Loongana Park

Mr Beeps - Magic, Music, Mayhem & Mirth

Daryl Peebles (aka Mr Beep) - playwright, poet, comedian, magician, ventriloquist, speaker and MC - regularly appears at events, festivals, conferences and conventions engaging audiences of all ages with his silly songs, stories and banter. Check out Dazza's 'adult' offerings at the Poets' Breakfast and the annual Poetry Debate.
Sat 2.50pm Kids' Activities area
Sat 4pm Workshop Room 2
Sun 3.30pm Kids' Activities area

Musical Instrument Maker's Display

There are some very talented makers of musical instruments in Australia, and many of these live in Tasmania. Their instruments include guitars, harps, the violin family, accordions, concertinas, hurdy gurdys, amazing mediaeval stringed instruments and others. At the Cygnet Folk Festival we traditionally bring together a dozen or so makers who will display and demonstrate their wonderful craft.
Sat 10am - 4pm St James College Classroom

My Friend the Chocolate Cake

Their name alone should have ensured a quiet life for My Friend the Chocolate Cake. No one dreamed of ARIA awards, two years of sold-out Edinburgh Festival



dates or the kind of ageless and eternally devoted audience most bands with cooler names would kill for. Somewhere within the unlikely union of kitchen sink piano tales, vivid chamber orchestration and hell-raising instrumental shenanigans, the Melbourne band has carved out a 21 year, seven album history that culminates...so far in "Fiasco." My Friend the Chocolate Cake travel between atmospheric and ambient through to full scale romps and ballads, offering a unique and unsurpassed combination of moods. "That's why Chocolate Cake is such a joy to be in" says singer/songwriter/pianist David Bridle. "Everyone in the band believes in all those diverse elements really strongly. While it's entertaining, it stands for something. It's a unique band in my experience. You'd bottle it if you knew what it was."
Sat 5pm Cygnet Town Hall
Sat 10pm Cygnet Town Hall
Sun 5.30pm Carmel Hall

Nadia Sunde

www.nadiasunde.com

Nadia Sunde is being hailed as "a breath of fresh air" in the emerging Australian indie scene. Early Childhood Music Educator, Internationally-awarded children's songwriter, Professional entertainer/musician, Published Author, ABC Radio Broadcaster,

Mother of Two and Casual Tooth Fairy... Nadia plays real music that celebrates the magical space that exists between grownups and kids. Her joyful compositions resonate with wonderful storytelling and inspire moments of heartfelt connection between people of all ages.
Sat 3.30pm Kids' Activities area
Sun 12 noon Kids' Activities area

Nano Stern

Nano is a virtuoso from Chile. A composer, multi-instrumentalist, performer and producer, he is a fresh and powerful new voice in folk and world music; a leader of the new generation of Latin American songwriters, an ambassador of Latin American music and a student of the traditional music of the world. Since he began playing violin at 3 at the feet of his sister, he has travelled in his hometown of Santiago, across Latin America and around the globe, filling old bottles with new wine. Nano has attracted a legion of fanatical followers, drawn to their feet, thundering for more. His third solo album, *Los Espejos* was Rolling Stone Chile's #3 album in their top 100 albums of 2009. His second album won the Chilean Journalist Choice Award for best album in 2008. Across the world, he has been the Pied Piper of world and folk music festivals such as Woodford and Port Fairy in Australia, Viljandi in Estonia and Umea in Sweden. Since 2006 he has cooperated with acclaimed musicians all over the world.
Sat 1pm Cygnet Town Hall
Sun 12 noon Workshop Room 2

Neil Adam & Judy Turner

www.melbournescottishfiddlers.com/tusitala After playing the folk circuit as a duo and in bands (the last 15 years with The Melbourne Scottish Fiddle Club) husband and wife team Neil and Judy have mined their decade long interest in Robert Louis Stevenson's poetic

writing, and have put together a show based on the fascinating life and work of one of Scotland's greatest writers. They sing, play and recite the humorous and affectionate work of RLS and read from his diaries and the letters of his indomitable wife Fanny Van de Grift Osborne.
Sat 10.30am Huon Christian Life Church
Sat 2pm Workshop Room 2
Sun 11am Workshop Room 1
Sun 3pm Huon Christian Life Church

Neil Gardner & Friends - a 40 year retrospective

The first Tasmanian artist to record and release an album of his own compositions, Neil Gardner has been writing songs for the last 44 years. Now based in Hobart, Neil began writing on the North West coast of Tasmania where he was part of the Brumida network of young artists and writers. His music contains a variety of styles and genres ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous. 2011 marked the 40th anniversary of the release of Neil's first vinyl album 'Anthem for Wednesday'. To celebrate that anniversary, Neil will be joined by a group of mainland and Tasmanian friends in presenting a retrospective of his work. The concert will be a celebration of the songs, the shared experiences and the lasting friendships that have evolved in the last forty years.
Sat 8pm Huon Christian Life Church

New Holland Honey Eaters

Using tunes, songs, slides, short readings and snippets of old recordings the band will show how the radio helped change traditional rural music into a commercial product. They will then take you back to 1938, as four staff members of mythical small Southern radio station WYOY. The station is delivering its first national broadcast of its successful barn dance radio show. But money is so short that our four

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PERFORMER PROFILES

Figure 5.13: Cygnet Folk Festival Programme Notes 2012 (Collins, Gilhooly & McNamara, 2012: 28-29)

The best programming allows for breaks between performances to enable smooth transitions between performers/acts. During the early years of Fleurieu Folk Festival, acts were scheduled one after another with no breaks and consistently ran over time, leading to timetabling blowouts, meaning performance sets would diverge further and further from the printed programme. Audiences found it difficult to navigate between venues and performances when the concert event varied so significantly from their printed information.

Following feedback to festival organisers, the Fleurieu Folk Festival programme has since included breaks of fifteen to twenty minutes between acts, ensuring that scheduling has been effectively maintained. The Saturday programme of the 2011 Fleurieu Folk Festival (figure 5.14), shows clearly the scheduled times for acts with breaks either side. Since the scheduled time breaks were introduced, performers and audiences have been much happier as all participants can more effectively temporally organise their festival experience.

SATURDAY 22nd OCTOBER 2011 - Day/Night					SATURDAY 22nd OCTOBER 2011 - Day/Night					
TIME	COOPERS FESTIVAL HALL	AUSIE CIDER VILLAGE MARQUEE	FOOTY CLUB	YOUNG PERFORMERS	TIME	CAPE ACUSTICA (Acoustic)	RSL Workshops	CWA Workshops	SHOW HALL Theme Concerts & Dances	OUTDOOR ARENA (Dance)
10.00	MORNING FESTIVAL HALL Compere: Howard James Peter Anderson (VIC) (10m)	MORNING VILLAGE Compere: Jane Bower Bum & Raspberry (VIC) (10m)	BREKKY CLUB CONCERT Compere: Steve Johnson Kevin McCarthy (NT) (10m)	12 HOURSHOPS Introduction to Didgeridoo With Richard Paros (11m)	10.00			Learning to Play Traditional Music by Ear With Kit Joyce (Squeezb) VIC (1.30)	Pining for the Florida Sourdough sing, tunes & dances (SA) (10m)	
10.30			BasikAus Trio (SA) (10m)		10.30					Adelaide Morris Men (SA) (10m)
10.45	Cat Dog Bird (VIC) (10m)			Pop Gets Folk'd Workshop (Concert 11pm) (1.45)	10.45					
11.00		Fortuna (SA) (10m)			11.00		World Harp Music Listen to tunes from around the world on the Celtic Harp with Christine Morphet (SA) (1.15)	Rebel Songwriting Forum Write a song & perform it at a concert later With Kevin McCarthy (NT) (1.30)	Three's A Trio With The Ballpoint Penguins Learn to sing three part harmonies (WA) (1.15-1.30)	
11.15	Mal Webb (VIC) (10.45)		Borderline (SA) (10m)		11.15					Cinnabar Red Dance Collective (SA) (10m)
11.30	LUNCH BREAK	LUNCH BREAK	LUNCH BREAK		11.30					
11.45	AFTERNOON FESTIVAL HALL Compere: Peter Titchener State of Origin Fiddler's Project (All States) (45m)	AFTERNOON VILLAGE Compere: Yvonne Young Bill 'Swampy' Marsh & David Hanford (SA) (45m)	DELTA IN CONCERT Compere: Marie MacLoughlin John Francis (SA) (45m)	Percussive & Experimental Guitar With Daniel Champagne (VIC) (1.15)	11.45					
1.15		Cool Change (SA) (10m)	Don Bruce (SA) (10m)	OPEN HIKK	12.00	Concert Acustica Compere: Jacquelyn Cleary Marcus Walsh (SA) (1.15)	Making Instruments out of Gourds Penelope Swales Totally Gourdeous (VIC) (1.30)	Irish Flute With Evan Davies (Squeezb) VIC (1.30)	Bygone Error Songs & humour from the Music Halls of England (SA) (1.30)	Adelaide Morris Men (SA) (10m)
1.30	Bruce Watson (VIC) (10m)		Talisha (VIC) (10m)	3 x 20m spots	12.30					Cinnabar Red Dance Collective (SA) (10m)
1.45		Thom Jackson (VIC) (10m)			12.45	'Old'n Grey' Street Musician Peter Hendry (SA) (1.45)	Finding Your Voice With Julie Francis (SA) (1.45)	Songwriting: Useful Tips & Tricks of the Trade With Allan Johnston (SCOT) (1.45)	Danny Spooner Presents Hamish Henderson Scottish Collector, Poet & Singer (1.45-1.55)	Galilee School Choir Shawnee Williams (10m)
2.00	Rickety Bridge (VIC) (10m)		Dean Bird (SA) (10m)		1.00	Ryebuck Shillies (SA) (10m)				
2.15	Jackie Smith (SA) (10m)	Squeezb (VIC) (10m)	FRESH FOLK CONCERT Compere: Christian Reynolds Telenor Tri (SA) (10m)	Thom Jackson (VIC) (10m)	1.15			18 Years Away from Oz With Songwriter Linda Bick (VIC) (1.15-1.30)	Performing: It's Not as Scary as you Think Songs & Stories of her travels around the world (1.15-1.30)	Adelaide Morris Men (SA) (10m)
2.30			Allan Johnston (SCOT) (10m)	Self Preservation Society (SA) (10m)	1.30	Donald McDonald (SA) (10m)			Maureen Morris & The Standing Stones Modern Australian Dances (SA) (1.30-1.45)	Instant Harmony Singing with Polar Bear Fandango (SA) (10m)
2.45	Jeri Foreman & Paddy Montgomery (SA) (10m)	TEA BREAK	Goldstein (SA) (10m)	Anthony d'Antonio (SA) (10m)	1.45		Rebel Songwriting Concert With Kevin McCarthy (NT) (1.45)	Ukulele Learn to Play in one lesson - With Mike & Thom Jackson (VIC) (1.45)	Accordian Tuning & Repairs With Peter Anderson (VIC) (1.45)	
3.00	TEA BREAK		Ruby Moon (SA) (10m)	Sarah McGuire (SA) (10m)	1.55					SESSION
3.15	Danny Spooner (VIC) (10m)	COUNTRY/BLUESGRASS VILLAGE Compere: Eric Ford Squeezb (VIC) (10m)	TEA BREAK		2.00	'Old'n Grey' Street Musician Peter Hendry (SA) (2.00)	Singerly (VIC) (2.00)	Writing Life Stories Hints on writing short stories about yourself, others and life (Bring pen & paper) With Author Bill 'Swampy' Marsh & David Hanford (VIC) (2.00)	I'm Hobbit & Lancashire Mon Jill & Peter Dool (1.30)	
3.30		Tombsone String Band (SA) (10m)	BLUES VILLAGE Compere: Ian Barnes Anthony d'Antonio (SA) (10m)	Robert Bean (SA) (10m)	2.15	BLACKBOARD Acustica Hosted by: Ian Main 6 x 20 minute spots		Cape Breton Fiddle With Jack Wilson (Squeezb) VIC (2.15)	Bappies Fancy playing? Learn how with Geoff Jones (VIC) (2.15)	BUSH DANCE With Lasseter's Gold
3.45	Chris Finnen (SA) (10m)		Jackie Smith (SA) (10m)	Lucy Wise (VIC) (10m)	2.30					
4.00	Ballpoint Penguins (WA) (10m)		Richard Perso (VIC) (10m)	Pop Gets Folk'd Concert (45m)	2.45					
4.15	Martin Pearson (VIC) (10m)		Compere: Dean Bird Maggie Rutjens (SA) (10m)		3.00			NO SESSION PLEASE		
4.30		Blackheart (UK) (10m)	Tush (SA) (10m)	SESSION	3.15					
4.45		Daniel Champagne (VIC) (10m)			3.30					
5.00	Totally Gourdeous (VIC) (1.30)	Chris Finnen (SA) (10m)	Junior (SA) (10m)		3.45					

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Figure 5.14: Fleurieu Folk Festival Saturday Timetable 2011 (Thornton, 2011:12-13)

As the above timetables demonstrate, most festivals, due to the exigencies of managing multiple performers and events over multiple days, maintain a rigid adherence to scheduling, allocating blocks of thirty minutes to an hour (sometimes longer) to each event, with most performers playing at least two of these ‘spots’ over the course of a weekend. Maintaining this strict time regime across multiple venues simultaneously (through the utilisation of skilled MCs and the oversight of the programme director – see Chapter 10) ensures that participants are always offered a choice of potential experiences – as shown by Rosie’s experience of ‘zapping’ (Ronstrom, Malm & Lindberg, 2001: 60) in between events in Chapter 4. The taskscape of events therefore is also a chrono-scape, with time structuring the experience of the participant as fully as the places in which events are scheduled. The eventual landscape of the festival is thus represented within the entire souvenir programme of most festivals, in which notes and event/performer precis are cross-referenced with venues on a provided map and event times laid out in a timetable. There are times, however, that due to participant movement, are not accounted for by festival organisers, such as when participants move throughout the festival landscape, either moving from one event to another, taking time out from scheduled events to eat, drink, meet friends, shop, or wander the festival site with no clear objective. Some

festivals, particularly larger festivals, take advantage of this time outside schedules to further promote folk activity to attendees who are currently disengaged from formal events, by providing street performance and sometimes artworks and other visual amenities to maintain interest in the festival. This is easily achieved at festivals such as the National Folk Festival where all activity, even camping, is condensed on a single site. Where events are spread out, with considerable walking required between a main venue and more peripheral venues, this is time that remains unused by the festival, wherein participants are for short periods disengaged from folk activity⁶⁸. The densely organised time-scape of the festival at these times becomes moot in terms of folk engagement.

The temporality of a folk festival is characterised by participants' active acceptance or rejection of time structures imposed by organisers. The level of choice available to participants varies according to their role. Audiences, for example, may choose to rigidly adhere to schedules or casually negotiate their way through or participate in festival events with little or no consideration of time. Rosie, as described in Chapter 4, consults her timetable, but then broadly ignores it, as she wanders between concurrently scheduled events. My informant who carefully marked her programme, generally adhered to a basic timetable, but one which allowed a certain level of fluidity and flexibility, reflected in Rosie's experience illustrated in Chapter 10. Booked performers, on the other hand, are obliged to present themselves at agreed times and places, but choose how they use their time outside these obligations. The lead singer of a folk-rock band explained to me:

I generally just chill out and sit in concerts before I have to go to the green room [before performing]. I don't like to get too involved in workshops or anything like that – I find I get a bit nervous before performing, so I like to chill out mainly – and I certainly don't spend too much time in the bar. It's best if you're programmed on the Friday night or sometime during Saturday afternoon or evening – that way you can get the gig done Friday night and then play sessions all night if you want – as long as you have a chance to recover before the next gig. It's never a good look forgetting lyrics because you're hungover. Once the gigs are done though, I can just relax and enjoy the festival.

⁶⁸ Queuing, especially at larger festivals, can also result in 'wasted time' and can negatively impact participants' enjoyment. During a casual conversation, an informant with extensive experience of both Canadian and Australian folk festivals highlighted Port Fairy Folk Festival as a festival which, despite an abundance of quality musical acts, was marred by large crowds that couldn't be accommodated within the festival infrastructure. He explained that as an audience member, he was required to arrive at venues at least thirty minutes early (or even longer) since venues would quickly fill, making it impossible to move between performances quickly. The excessive time required to queue and wait for performances led to him missing multiple acts he had planned to see. He noted that he was probably "spoilt" by his experience with more intimate festivals such as Fleurieu Folk Festival in which patrons can move quickly and easily between performance venues with no queues or waiting periods, but what he perceived as "wasted time" due to overcrowding was a definitive factor in his disinclination to attend Port Fairy in future.

Technical staff, volunteers and organisers all have differing constraints on their time. For all participants, however, the movement between structured time and non-structured time establishes the festival as a space in which time is experienced as both rigid and fluid.

Finally, although organisers arrange time so precisely in creating the event-scape of the festival, some participants choose to eschew this organisation, and participate in folk events that are not carefully orchestrated. These are the events such as impromptu attendee-organised sessions which occur away from built venues, such as in participant-arranged places like campsites, that are often not even within the strict boundaries of the festival (or are in out-of-the way unused spaces of the festival, as described in Chapter 10). These are people who have come for the festival, engage in some aspects of the festival, but choose to participate in non-structured, non-scheduled folk practice. Some of these attendees refer only casually to the printed programme, and are not captured by the micro-management of time displayed within.

Pathways and Lines: Structuring Participant Movement in the Event Landscape

Even on mundane journeys, places are areas of possible immersion. Far from being superficial “positions” – which, having no dimensionality, can offer no room for immersion – they are loci of and for involvement. But such multilocular involvement requires motion on my part: motion in/between places. I effect the motion of a journey by linking places in significant propinquity to each other in a more or less coherent (if not always definite) path. At any given moment, my motion also immerses me in the where of the place I am in. Paradoxically, it is precisely from (and in) such immersion, such motionless motion in place, that I am able to move to the other way stations of the journey, and eventually to my destination. Movement is therefore intrinsic to place – thus to what is often taken to be the very paradigm of the last in the unmoving in human experience. (Casey, 2009: 280)

Casey refers here to places as “areas of possible immersion” in which movement is intrinsic (see also de Certeau, 1984). In this chapter, we have been referring to the festival as an eventmental landscape or taskscape, in which multiple places/events are gathered together. I have identified the mechanisms of architecture and programming by which events are related to one another, but here I consider how these events are joined together to create a somewhat coherent folk landscape. This coherency is accomplished through the movement and involvement of bodies within the festival landscape.

Mapping

Journeying is an important aspect of folk festival participation. Bodies move from place to place, immersing themselves within the eventful landscape of the folk festival, and

constructing an understanding of folk especially through perambulatory movement, or walking. As we have seen in the example of Rosie's walk, participants construct their own festival experience through their movement (through their feet) in the festival landscape (see de Certeau, 1984). These festival inhabitants could be considered in Ingold's terms as "wayfarers", who "move through the world rather than across its outer surface" and whose knowledge "is not built up, but grows along the paths they take" (Ingold, 2010a, S134).

This process of wayfaring is facilitated by festival organisers through the provision of festival maps within programme books as well as directional signage throughout the site.

Hetherington (1998: 189) states:

places are assembled through immutable mobiles too: maps, photographs, paintings, televised images, textual descriptions, poems and so on. These representations assemble and transform the similitude of the materiality of space into the ordered arrangement of place. They arrange, order, include and exclude, they make knowable a space to everyone who might choose to look at these representations and also make it possible to compare it with another space.

Festival maps such as the 2011 Maldon Folk Festival map (figure 5.9) show the ordering of festival places in relation to one another by taking note only of the venues of the festival – other buildings in the town are considered irrelevant to the festival, and so are not identified. This map provides information only about how to travel between festival places – venues – and excludes non-festival places.

Festival maps are also tools of possibility, "the promise of a space to be explored" (Luckman, 2014: 191), and ultimately it is the active negotiation by mobile participants of these spaces in-between that binds disparate venue sites and their attendant internal experiences into a coherent festival whole. Festival maps are essentially designed and provided to prevent participants from 'losing their way', enabling participants to orient themselves in the festival landscape. However, particularly at larger festivals, for many participants getting lost at a festival is not a negative experience. Rather, getting lost allows for the exploration and discovery of the festival site and its constituent events as the participant learns the space by moving through it, thereby enlarging their potential festival experience. Many attendees have told me that the best acts they saw at a festival were those they stumbled upon by accident, and some of their best festival experiences were unplanned. When lost, the pathways taken by the walker are winding, maybe uncertain. It is in the space of this uncertainty that many participants situate their most treasured moments and memories of a festival, as they accidentally happen upon events, spectacles and activities which may change their understanding of what folk is or can be.



Figure 5.15: National Folk Festival Map 2014 (National Folk Festival Souvenir Program, 2014: 73)

As a tool of possibility, the official 2014 National Folk Festival map (figure 5.15) provides an alternative to the standard utilitarian aerial ‘bird’s-eye view’ festival site map. This more unusual hand-drawn three-dimensional visual representation of the festival site draws the map reader into the festival landscape. The venues, bars and market stalls are landmarks in a festival landscape designed for exploration. This map, with its different perspective, seems to imply that the festival is not merely a collection of venue names and numbers (such as in figure 5.8 and figure 5.9) marked on a grid, merely providing orientation and bearing to the reader, but that the festival venues, the folk places, are worthy in themselves, and can be explored without the need for careful planning and cross-referencing. In addition, the venues are identified by specific names (rather than simply identified as “Main Stage”, “Bar”, or “Venue 1”, “Venue 2” and so on, common on many festival maps) which themselves are evocative: the Coorong and the Budawang, for example, are designated by their official Exhibition Park in Canberra (EPIC) names, yet through the use of words of indigenous origin (also the names of Australian national parks) they highlight the ‘Australian-ness’ of the site, and therefore of the festival. The “Quokka” venue likewise emphasises this connection to the Australian landscape and fauna. The

“Flute’n’Fiddle” is clearly a reference to traditional folk instrumentation, while the “Bohemia Bar” seems to invite participants into a space which may be more artistic or unconventional. The different perspective of this map gives a far better sense of the festival as a space of exploration, a folk place that can be woven together (see Ingold, 2004: 331) by a participant’s wandering.

Festival Landscapes

While maps can provide a visual representation of a festival site, the landscape can only be known by participants moving through and within it, inhabiting it, dwelling in it. Venues are not just names on a map, they are imbued with meaning by festival participants who engage with them as places of folk. With participant movement, the situation of venues in relation to one another, the construction of venues (pre-existing buildings versus temporary marquees), the surrounding infrastructure of the host town, parks, pathways and roads, natural landmarks, obstacles and topographical elements, all come together to provide an experiential way of knowing the festival landscape.

We have seen that festival organisers arrange festival venues and sites in ways that are hierarchical as well as advantageous, making use of (repurposing) existing facilities where possible and constructing (for purpose) stages and marquees as appropriate (within the bounds of festival economic and site constraints). We have also seen that many festivals arrange their festivals around a central hub, or main venue area, with more peripheral venues scattered throughout the host town. I argue here that it is the movement of participants between, in and around these venues that connects the festival and makes it a folk festival landscape. To quote Ingold (1993: 156), “the landscape is the world as it is known to those who dwell therein, who inhabit its places and journey along the paths connecting them”. In short, it is through the action of inhabitants, who by dwelling invest festival places with meaning as places of folk, that creates a folk festival landscape, rather than simply the demarcation of space by organisers.

Olwig (2008: 84) states:

the landscape is shaped in large measure through doing, and apprehended through the use of two eyes. Nowhere is this mode of apprehension more evident than in the practice of walking. [...] The touched, smelled and heard proximate material is thereby woven into the walker’s sensory field, leading him or her to experience the landscape as a topological realm of contiguous places.

Most folk festivals require participants to travel between venues either on foot, or occasionally on festival shuttle buses. In my fieldwork, I only explored festival places on foot, meaning that events were linked by my walking, in Ingold's terms, wayfaring rather than transport (Ingold, 2011: 162). Thus, in the process of travelling from A to B, from one venue/event to another, I came to know the topography or between-places of a festival landscape in an intimate and – sensorially and socially – rich way. This was particularly evident in my experience at Uranquinty Folk Festival, which provides an example of the way in which the movements and pathways of participants create a coherent festival event.

Although the “Quinty” Folk Festival was situated primarily on an oval, as one of the smaller folk festivals in Australia, there were no large outdoor music marquees. This was a festival with only five performance venues, one of which was the Uranquinty Hotel (on Friday night, Saturday afternoon and Saturday night). Three venues (the Uranquinty Bakery, Jack's Hut which was primarily a workshop venue, and Quoz, a small marquee set up for children's activities) only operated during daylight hours, with all programmed activities concluded by about 5pm. The festival geographically was, like many festivals, essentially split between the central hub and the township venues, with the main concert venue Le Palais De Joie (located in sporting clubrooms), Jack's Hut and Quoz located on the oval periphery along with participants' campsites, and around 800 meters away by foot, the Uranquinty Hotel and Bakery in the town's main street (see figure 7.3). Even though the pub, which is often the hub of sociality within a festival landscape, was located in the township, the oval precinct was clearly defined as the main festival place due to the concentration of camping (with attendant participant-generated sessions), concerts, workshops, and spoken word events, as well as communal food offerings such as breakfast barbecues and volunteer-cooked dinners. The Uranquinty Folk Festival programme, unlike other festivals', did not include a map. As a very small town only a few streets separated the oval and the main street/town venues. However, with no bunting, colourful flags or other assorted markers such as directional signage to designate the route, the discrete festival places were discoverable entirely by walking, and where unsure, following the footsteps of experienced Uranquinty attendees.

The paths and roads between the central festival area of the oval and the main street venues were paved, clearly spaces for travel. Around the oval site, however, the (short) journeying between venues and campsites was more sensual. This meant the movement of participants through and around the oval at Uranquinty was a choice informed by

conditions of weather and environment, intentionality, and sociability. Walkers very quickly discovered through uncomfortable experience that the ground, with its soft grassy surface full of icy frost and dew, would almost immediately soak the shoes of the traveller determined to reach Point B (the main venue of Le Palais De Joie) from Point A (a campsite on the other side of the oval in my case) by the most direct route possible. Traversing the periphery of the oval from campsite to venue, despite requiring additional concentrated negotiation around obstacles such as sticks, leaves and stones, thus became the preferred path of those who preferred to keep their feet dry and warm, or for those whose shoes were inadequate for the task, as the grass there was generally shorter and sparser. The choice to travel (see de Certeau, 1984: 98) around the outer rim of the oval though indicated an impetus to sociability, as the walker had to pass close to every other campsite, conversing with other festival attendees en route to their destination. Progress toward the goal destination would then be slowed, potentially leading to the walker missing an intended concert or workshop. However, while (as a walker) attempting to keep my feet dry, I may have missed a programmed event, or arrived at an event late due to unintended pauses as a result of sociability, such pauses allowed me to experience the social and community aspect of folk so prized by the folk community, and opened up these campsites as places of folk, as much as the dedicated venues. It was during these pauses that I met other folkies, and was invited to gatherings (singing and instrumental sessions, as well as an unofficial poetry event) that were not part of the scheduled programme, and which were held in these ‘unofficial’ folk places (see figure 5.2 as an example of a campsite session at Uranquinty). It was here that I became part of the festival community – a ‘true’ participant in the festival, not merely an onlooker. Hence I, as every other attendee of the festival when walking about the main Uranquinty festival site, had to choose my path on the basis of my need: to be sociable (folk) or aloof (non-folk), to traverse the space efficiently or casually, to keep my feet wet or dry, and such choices determined my experience of folk. Thus the landscape of the festival became known through the feet of the participants’ bodies as they physically engaged with the festival, both scheduled events and spontaneous participant-driven events such as campsite sessions, learning and knowing the festival through their movement.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the logics of design of folk festivals to gain an understanding of how the technology of folk festival events work together to create coherent events-that-mirror, presenting ideas about folk and providing opportunities for the

prolongation of the folk process. I have described the taskscape of the festival, with all of the main events and activities that make up the eventful landscape of the festival, and then explored how folk festival organisers structure places through the locating of festivals in idyllic locations which reinforce the romance of the rural in the folk movement, and the deliberate use of temporary and existing infrastructure which demonstrate the inherent hierarchical approaches to event types within the festival setting. An analysis of how time is micro-managed and presented to festival attendees also demonstrated the hierarchical organisation of events and demonstrated how participants use timetable information to structure their own festival experience. Finally, I explored how participant movement within the festival landscape shaped participants' experiences of the folk event-scape through dwelling.

Using Handelman's approach to exploring the inherent design of the festival event-that-presents, especially as to how place and time are organised and experienced within the festival landscape, demonstrates how the festival functions to present an event in which participants shape their unique and intersubjective experiences of folk through movement.

Chapter 6: Embodying the Folk Process – Festival Atmospheres & Sensory Landscapes

Introduction: Sense, Atmosphere, Emotion

Carrying my lagerphone – two criss-crossed sticks covered in hundreds of bottle-caps diligently hammered on during the lagerphone-making workshop I had attended that day – I approached the oval where a large group of festival-goers gathered in the fading sunlight, keen to attempt to break the world record of the most lagerphones playing the same song at the same time.

Present were participants of all ages, with both simple lagerphones clearly created, like mine, during the festival workshops, and others that were obviously well-loved and well-played ‘proper’ instruments. People milled around, laughing and chatting in a fairly relaxed atmosphere. There was a sense that we were all there for a common purpose, and there was a feeling of festivity. When I joined the crowd, there were maybe a hundred participants milling around. After a warm day, it had grown cold, and people hugged themselves and shivered whilst holding their instruments ready. As I waited amongst these early arrivals, and as dusk settled, gradually more and more lagerphone players arrived, along with musicians playing accordions and fiddles and street performers. Standing on the darkening oval, lagerphone in hand, my senses were overpowered by the ever-shifting crowd of people, and the sounds of accordions, fiddles, but most of all hundreds of lagerphones being banged against the ground, or struck with sticks, a cacophony over which participants had to shout to be heard.

Gradually the gathering formalised into a procession, the chatter died down and only the rattling of the lagerphones and the sounds of the other instruments could be heard. There was a general sense of expectation and excitement as the sun dropped lower in the sky, and then the procession moved off, with participants making as much noise as possible.

The crowd of several hundred, very noisy people wound its way from the middle of the oval through the festival site to gather in the outdoor amphitheatre in the centre of the festival. As the group moved through the streets of the festival, it encompassed all festival attendees, as bystanders watched and cheered, and the streets were transformed by a throng of lagerphone-wielding men, women and children. Finally, after the tail-end of the procession gradually arrived at the destination and all participants had crowded in, the leader/organiser of the world record challenge attempt addressed the crowd to much cheering. He explained four basic ways of playing the lagerphone, then, accompanied by one of the bush band musicians on accordion, led the crowd in singing “Waltzing Matilda”. It was easily the noisiest, least musically-pleasing rendition of Waltzing Matilda I have ever heard, but there was a common sense of purpose and communality that we were all in it together, to have fun, to set a record and to enjoy ourselves and the company of other festival-goers.

(adapted from field notes, National Folk Festival 2012)

In the previous chapter I explored how the organisation of folk festivals as public events that present is governed by spatial and temporal considerations which create eventmental landscapes of folk, and that these logics of design help create a foundation for festival-goers to experience, create and recreate folk as a process. As the preceding passage from my field notes demonstrates, however, event design also affects the moods and emotions of festival-goers as individuals and groups by facilitating communal experiences of sensory

engagement and atmosphere, which shape participants' experience of folk. In my field notes, I refer to abstract notions such as the "relaxed atmosphere" of the gathering crowd, the "festive mood" of the lagerphone procession, a "sense of communality" and "excitement", and a shared feeling of "fun" and enjoyment, associated with my participation in the moving, sensually dense, lagerphone parade. I also note the changing light as dusk fell, the cold of the early evening, and the overall noise, which added to the general 'feel' of the event. This short extract demonstrates the importance of bodily engagement, emotion and communal mood in establishing folk atmospheres, and facilitating body-to-body communication of folk. The folk festival environment provides "sensory stimulation unlike that experienced through everyday activities" (Cummings & Herborn, 2015, 110), and the eventmental landscape of festivals provides a broader variety of sensory stimulation than stand-alone folk events. This chapter discusses how the logics of design of the folk festival and the bodily and emotional engagement of participants co-creates folk atmospheres specific to festivals which facilitate processes and experiences of folk.

Although words "can but feebly allude to sensations and the selective content of an account can refer to no more than a tiny proportion of what is experienced" (Edensor, 2008: 138), this chapter will discuss the embodied experience of the participant in the sensory landscape of the festival (see Howes, 2005: 7-8) and will utilise my personal experience in the field as a sentient, feeling subject⁶⁹, as well as my experience working with a folk festival organising committee, to explore how festival design (or 'stage setting' [Böhme, 2017]) impacts and influences bodily engagement and the emotions and moods of festival participants, in order to determine how intersubjective folk atmospheres enabling engagement with the folk process are facilitated. Hemer and Dundon (2016: 6) note that "a reflexive analysis of emotional and sensory experiences in the field engages the anthropologist in the spatial, sensual and emotional landscapes of those they study and elucidate". By drawing on my personal experiences in the field, as well as conversations with informants, this chapter will demonstrate that the folk festival is a whole-of-body

⁶⁹ Böhme (2017: 128) argues that "we only ever sense an atmosphere in our own perception, but on the other hand we sense it as something which radiates from another person, from things, or from the surroundings. To that extent, it is something subjective which can be shared with others and about which an understanding can be reached."

experience for the participant, which frames and structures their understanding of folk and folk festival worlds⁷⁰.

The Senses and Festival Space

Negotiating the spatial and temporal landscape of the folk festival is an embodied experience in which all the senses are engaged and “act in concert” (Howes, 1991: 186; see also Smith, 1994: 232; and Crouch, 2001: 62). Festivals are visually kaleidoscopic, auditorily stimulating and challenging, often mouth-wateringly aromatic or even disgustingly odoriferous, sometimes exotically tasting, and exceptionally tactile and haptically engaging. The multidimensional, whole-of-body experience of the festival attendee is influenced by the logics of design of the festival that shape the festival landscape and structure folk and folk process as an integrated, bodily experience.

Exploring the ways in which folk participants ‘sense the festival world’⁷¹ will assist in understanding how attendees connect to a folk ethos or culture, and by doing so, participate in the folk process. This folk culture is embodied by participants who inhabit and shape the festival place through their lived, intentional body (Casey, 1997). Furthermore, because “space is practised and signified in relation to an expressive and sensuous embodied practice” (Crouch, 2001: 70), festival infrastructure – both physical and temporal – and the logics of organisation of the festival create a sensually navigable landscape which presents folk in specific ways, and creates closed phenomenal worlds (Handelman, 1998: 15-16).

Emotional Geographies

Spaces are shaped and composed not only by senses, however, but also by emotions (Hemer & Dundon, 2016: 11). An exclusive focus on bodily sensation in the festival experience can downplay the significance of the emotional aspect of festival engagement. Recent work in anthropology on the importance of emotions and space (Hemer & Dundon,

⁷⁰ Like Chapter 5, this chapter does not focus on a single ethnographic example in depth, but rather draws upon experiences over a range of festivals to explore issues of bodily engagement, sensory experience and atmosphere.

⁷¹ Since the 1980s, when a number of anthropologists questioned the primacy of the visual in ethnography, arguing that the sensory perception of the world was culturally-constructed, and that the visual orientation of Western academic epistemologies often led to a misunderstanding or misrepresentation of other ways of being and perceiving, the senses have gained prominence in anthropological theory (for example, see Howes, 1991; Howes, 2005; Jackson, 1983; Stoller, 1989; Stoller, 1997; Classen, 1993; Mascia-Lees, 2011). Rather than texts or symbols to be deciphered, Howes (1991: 8) argued that anthropologists should conceptualise cultures as “ways of sensing the world”.

2016), emotional geographies (Davidson & Milligan, 2004; and Bondi, Davidson & Smith, 2005), topophilias (Tuan, 1990b: 4), and emotional topographies (Hastrup, 2010), demonstrates that there is a clear and important relationship between the emotions and place; therefore emotional engagement with folk festivals, and the emotion generated by engagement with the event landscape of the festival, is just as important as physical sensation in the embodying of folk process.

Davidson and Milligan argue that “emotions might be seen as a form of connective tissue that links experiential geographies of the human psyche and physique with(in) broader social geographies of place” (Davidson & Milligan, 2005: 524; see also Dennis [2007] on emotions and music in policing). The festival landscape evokes our emotions whilst also stimulating our physical senses. While individual emotion and sensory engagement may seem intensely *personal*, festival events evoke shared emotional responses, and it is at this level that we can look at shared emotional engagement with folk in terms of folk *atmospheres*.

Folk Atmospheres

Anderson (2009: 78) notes:

as a term in everyday speech, atmosphere traverses distinctions between peoples, things, and spaces. It is possible to talk of: a morning atmosphere, the atmosphere of a room before a meeting, the atmosphere of a city, an atmosphere between two or more people, the atmosphere of a street, the atmosphere of an epoch, an atmosphere in a place of worship, and the atmosphere that surrounds a person, amongst much else.

Furthermore, within an atmosphere, Edensor argues, “we are immersed within a flow of experience in which affects, emotions, sensations and meanings are inextricably mingled” (2015a: 334). The atmosphere of a folk festival is a significant part of its appeal.

Participants I spoke to referred to the “inclusive atmosphere” or “folky atmosphere” – the terms ‘inclusive’ and ‘folky’ often used interchangeably – and one participant commented that an event had “an air of positivity”. But what do participants mean when they refer to atmospheres? Atmosphere, Anderson explains, can be “used interchangeably with mood, feeling, ambience, tone and other ways of naming collective affects” (2009: 78), whereas Böhme refers to atmospheres as “tuned spaces”, or spaces with a certain mood that are always both spatial and emotional (2017: 2). The individual participants I spoke with had an ambiguous – after all, what does “folky atmosphere” actually mean? – and indeterminate affective ‘sense’ of the festival, but one which was replicated and

experienced by other festival-goers; in other words, the atmosphere or “air” referred to by participants was experienced intersubjectively.

Atmospheres, according to Böhme (2017: 25), concern “a spatial sense of ambience” and are characterised by their intersubjectivity:

Atmospheres are something between subject and object: they can be defined as more or less objective sentiments indeterminately projected into the environment. In the same way, however, they have to be defined as subjective insofar as they are predicated on a subject experiencing them. Yet it is precisely in this intermediacy that its great value lies, for through it is united what traditionally has been separate: as an aesthetics of production on the one hand and an aesthetics of reception on the other. To be sure, atmospheres can be created and there are elaborate arts that deal specifically with the creation of atmospheres.[...] On the other hand, atmospheres are experienced in a state of affective resonance and we can only tell what their nature is by exposing ourselves to them by being there physically, in order to perceive them in our particular frame of mind. This is the classical aspect of the aesthetics of reception. (Böhme, 2017: 168)

Atmospheres exist somewhere between the substantial and the insubstantial, the subjective and objective, determinate and indeterminate, collective and personal (Anderson, 2009: 80). Inasmuch as atmospheres are felt to ‘surround’ or ‘envelop’ subjects, not only occupying but permeating spaces, as well as being created ‘between’ people, atmospheres are also spatial (Anderson, 2009; see also Böhme, 2017). The spatiality of atmospheres is particularly relevant in a discussion of folk festivals as atmospheric landscapes in and through which participants move and in so doing, co-create. Atmosphere, according to Edensor (2015a: 333) “flows as a sequence of events and sensations” and is “produced by a host of constituents: the weather, sounds, the time of day, other people, architectural forms, incidents, representations, sensations and interactions”. The notion that atmosphere “flows” is seconded by Anderson, who notes that atmospheres are always “unfinished”, that they are “perpetually forming and deforming, appearing and disappearing, as bodies enter into relation with one another. They are never finished, static or at rest” (Anderson, 2009: 79). Further, Edensor suggests that “cultural attitudes ... may feed into the production of atmospheres” (Edensor, 2015a: 334), suggesting that folk participants both co-produce folk atmosphere at a festival, and are immersed in ambient folk landscapes that can be created and facilitated through a process described by Böhme (2017) as ‘stage setting’.

Handelman suggests that his preoccupation with the logics of design of public occasions overlooks how “public events structure, coordinate, and play with the mood-states, the emotions and sentiments, of participants and onlookers” (Handelman, 1998: 61). The sensory landscape of a festival, combined with the emotional engagement of participants,

helps create specific festival atmospheres that enable the folk process, and connect participants to ideas of folk as communal and participatory. Böhme's concept of 'stage setting' allows us to consider how the logics of design of the festival event structure sensual landscapes, emotional arousal and atmosphere particular to the experience of a folk festival.

Stage Setting: Creating a Sensory Event Landscape

Böhme uses the term 'stage setting' to describe how atmospheres may be intentionally manufactured, referencing the deliberate use of set pieces, lighting and other theatrical elements to induce an emotional response from audiences in the theatre; specifically, the "general aim of stage design is to create an atmosphere with the help of lights, music, sound, spatial constellations, and the use of characteristic objects" (Böhme, 2017: 129). Beyond the theatre, the art of stage setting has many applications, with the possibility of applying the concept to more large-scale events:

Here, a stage art has now been developed which is no longer confined to the design and furnishing of the stage space but, on the one hand, causes the action on the stage to appear in a particular light and, on the other, creates an acoustic space which tunes the whole performance. At the same time, this has made it possible for the art of the stage to leave the stage itself and spill over into the auditorium, or even into space itself. The spaces generated by light and sound are no longer something perceived at a distance, but something within which one is enclosed. This has also enabled the art of the stage set to expand into the general art of staging, which has applications, for example, in the décor of discotheques and the design of large-scale events such as open-air festivals, opening ceremonies of sports events, etc. (Böhme, 2017: 32)

Böhme's suggestion that atmospheres can be generated has implications for how festival organisers can deliberately manipulate both the physical and temporal landscape of the festival in order to produce 'thick' atmospheres⁷². Organisers attempt to utilise structural components (through logics of design) to stage atmospheres which enable participants to relate to the festival spaces in such a way that their own engagement with themselves, other festival-goers and festival spaces generates atmospheres specific to the practice of folk (particularly a feeling of communality), and prompt an embodied experience of the folk process.

⁷² Regarding the 'thickness' of atmospheres, I draw here on Casey's (2001) notion of 'thick' and 'thin' places, "where the former are suffused with a sense of sensual, emotional, and affective belonging that is embedded over time through repetitive practice, embodied engagement" (Edensor, 2012: 1106; see further De Backer and Pavoni, 2018). I employ the term 'thick' in regard to atmosphere throughout this chapter to refer to those affective atmospheres characterised as especially vibrant and intense – which elicit an emotional and sensual response from festival participants.

The Physical Landscape (Place)

Physical space and how it is used influences the sensory experience of the festival goer, creating distinctive sensorial zones or landscapes which impact on participants' movement through and engagement with the space. Smells from and access to food vans, pubs and bars, soundspill from marquees, the impact of art and street performances that add colour and movement, not to mention how the festival infrastructure copes with issues of weather, all impact on the way festival space is used and how it impacts on the embodied experience of folk festivals. Howes and Classen (1991: 276) note that "the built environment can ... be analysed as a projection of a given culture's sensory profile". The ways in which organisers build a festival site through their use of existing buildings and infrastructure, and positioning of temporary marquees, stages and stalls, food vans, portable toilet facilities, artificial lighting, seating and fixed artworks speak to the ways in which the physical landscape may influence the sensory perception of participants as well as facilitate the co-production of atmosphere, and result in a kind of sensibility of the folk 'culture' of the festival.

My experience on a folk festival committee provided insight into the deliberate use of space to create atmospheres. Although rarely discussed, the committee appeared to me to be highly aware of the effect they wanted to produce at the festival site (namely an immersive folk experience), utilising a tacit knowledge based on prior experience at both this and other festivals as to how a kind of 'folky' atmosphere (characterised by a general feeling of community and multi-sensorial experience of folk sights, sounds and so on) might be achieved (see Böhme, 2017: 3). This intention had to be balanced against the limitations and physical restrictions posed by the existing site infrastructure, such as the positioning of existing buildings, utilities requirements such as access to electricity, and the space available to erect temporary marquees. Although the festival was unable to provide space for as many food vendors as desired, these were deliberately placed in the centre of the site to ensure that appetising and varying food smells, popularly associated with festivity or the carnivalesque (such as food vans selling hot chips, Indian and Asian takeaway foods, baked potatoes etc) permeated the main thoroughfares of the site. There were concerns that the necessary positioning of venues at significant distances from one another might lead to a possible 'thinning' of atmosphere. Organisers attempted to overcome this problem by providing points of visual interest, such as vibrant flags, crafty decoration such as pompoms, quirky signage and even a colourful scarecrow directing participants to the children's venue, in addition to the visual interest provided by the varied

goods available from clothing and merchandise vendors operating out of nearby smaller, open-sided marquees, ensuring there was colour and movement at the festival site beyond and between venue spaces. Within venue spaces themselves, marquee and hall walls were decorated with coloured streamers and cardboard cut-outs of traditional folk instruments, as well as festival banners and sponsors' signs. Venue spaces created their own atmospheres through the music, lighting and activities operating within them, and the type of atmosphere produced was determined primarily through the quality and type of performance and the engagement or otherwise of audiences, but the layout and decoration of the venue interiors was a deliberate attempt by organisers to facilitate atmospheres of fun and enjoyment through visual interest.



Figure 6.1: Festival night streetscape, National Folk Festival, 2012

Illumination is a key aspect of this stage setting. The visual landscape of the festival is determined by light: whether the bright light of morning or afternoon sunlight, the artificial stage lighting systems and overhead ambient lights of a venue's interior, or the darkness of late night punctuated by bright lights illuminating buildings and performance stages, with lanterns and fire twirlers in the distance. Böhme (2017: 207) contends that the presence of light allows a person to topographically situate themselves in space, and also allows for

free movement in space not just bodily, but allowing an individual to “rove around a clear space” merely with one’s eyes, to experience a sense of distance. Clear vision in a space creates different kinds of spatial atmospheres to those of darkness, which may seem close and oppressive. Edensor echoes Böhme’s suggestion that light enables visual spatiality, suggesting “the qualities of light, for instance, continually facilitate and restrict vision, from which we may infer that we see not just in, but with, the space that surrounds us” (Edensor, 2008: 134-5). Light facilitates and encourages physical movement around festival sites, as brightly lit stages and venues in the distance in the evening entice participants to cross squares and plazas which during the day and in sunlight, were spaces of performance, activity and visual interest, but are, when cloaked by night, often dimly lit seemingly empty spaces to be traversed but not lingered in.

During concerts, stage lighting is one of the main methods available to festivals of using artificial light to stage atmospheres. Stage lights are often calibrated to the performance: a reflective singer/songwriter may be bathed in soft, gently-coloured lights, whereas a party band will command more pulsing, multi-coloured light changing with and punctuating the lively music. Light not only helps to establish atmosphere, but indicates to the audience how they should behave – strobing, pulsing lights and energetic music gives permission for standing, moving around and dancing, whereas a soft, gentle wash of colour over stage indicates that polite, seated listening, is more appropriate⁷³. This action – or non-action – on the part of audiences in response to lighting cues helps co-create the atmosphere within the concert space⁷⁴.

In addition to the visual decoration of the festival site, and the deliberate use of lighting to stage atmospheres in venues, the general soundscape of the festival was an important consideration. Speaking about urban planning in particular, Böhme notes that “what

⁷³ Rodger (2016) suggests hip hop audiences prize the visibility of the artist, and lighting (and video-screens) facilitates this. For folkies, for whom person-to-person communication is a key aspect of folk process, this visual connection to a performer at a folk festival is not only expected at festivals, but necessary, and illuminating a performer adequately ensures this connection. Conversely, concert lighting also impacts on the level of separation between performer and audience: the natural light of daytime stages keeps the performer in the same relational participatory space as their audience, a measure of equality important to the folk ethos, whereas artificial lighting may ‘spotlight’ the performer, making them a focal point on a stage entirely separate – and distant – from the audience. Such ‘spotlighting’ can change the experience of folk at a concert from a shared ‘conversation’ to a mere lecture or recital.

⁷⁴ Edensor (2015a) explores the role of light (and darkness) in facilitating the co-production of atmospheres between audience and performance at concerts, suggesting that during a concert held in darkness “the absence of the usual audience rituals and the sense of shared occasion that usually shapes the atmospheric qualities of live music performance was somewhat disconcerting” (Edensor, 2015a: 345-6).

constitutes a landscape can no longer be reduced to things visible and that urban planning, for instance can no longer merely devote itself to reducing or protecting against noise, but rather has to attend to the particular character of the acoustic atmospheres of squares, pedestrian zones, and entire cities” (2017: 171). Therefore, although sound-spill is a recognised problem across many festival sites in which venues are clustered together, the festival committee I worked with turned the potential negative of distantly situated venues into a positive by deliberately directing marquee openings so that sound emanating from venues acted as enticements for festival-goers to approach.

Edensor (2015b: 82) analyses the football stadium in his discussion of mood management and atmospheres at English soccer matches:

The football stadium serves as an enclosed theatre in which the sporting drama of the match unfolds, and it tends to house a particularly responsive audience who are themselves part of the drama and can potentially influence what happens on the pitch. The stadium possesses architectonic qualities that promote and contain levels of noise, and organise the distances between fans, and the closeness of the fans to the pitch and players. These spatial contexts contribute to atmospheres of varying intensity that continually emerge during a match.

Edensor’s football stadium could stand as a metaphor for Australian folk festivals. The structural architecture of the festival promotes or produces different atmospheric effects depending upon how it organises the concentration and movement of festival attendees and how it successfully or unsuccessfully manages the sensory environment (such as containing sound within venues or allowing it to ‘spill’ over the festival site etc). The proximity of audiences to performers varies across formal and informal venues, or inside and outside venues.

The location of the Majestic venue at the National Folk Festival (NFF) provides a case study of how the built structure and layout of a festival can impact both specific event atmospheres and the overall festival atmosphere. The venue is an enclosed circus tent, and tends to stage many more peripheral folk music performances and acts, such as circus or acrobatic performances and competition events such as Morris versus Circus, poetry slams and youth performer award competitions. When I first attended the NFF in 2012, the Majestic was situated on the periphery of the festival, located in the centre of the oval, quite distinct and separate from other festival venues gathered around the established buildings and asphalted pathways of the showgrounds (figure 6.2). Within the enclosed space of the ‘big-top’ marquee, the atmosphere seemed ‘thick’ and dense, as the venue was always crowded with the audience ‘in the round’, circling and rising above the

performance space, much like Edensor's stadium. During the Morris versus Circus competition, a regular feature of the festival for several years and which I observed on both occasions that I attended the NFF, individual circus acts and morris dancers would perform one team feat each over several 'rounds', culminating in a final spectacle in which the competitors would adopt the performance styles of one another. The 'winners' of each round were determined by audience appreciation expressed as clapping and cheering, and therefore the audience was expected to actively participate. Much of the audience consisted of morris or circus performers and their supporters who would share in collective modes of emotional expression including mock despair or disappointment, fervent appreciation or delight. Loud participation in the action and the active influencing of the outcomes of competitions through thunderous applause, stamping and yelling (the combination of sound and bodily movement), in partnership with a sense of anticipation that has built up over several years of playful competition between the two street performer 'factions', effectively led to a co-production by both audiences and performers of a 'thick' atmosphere (see Casey, 2001).

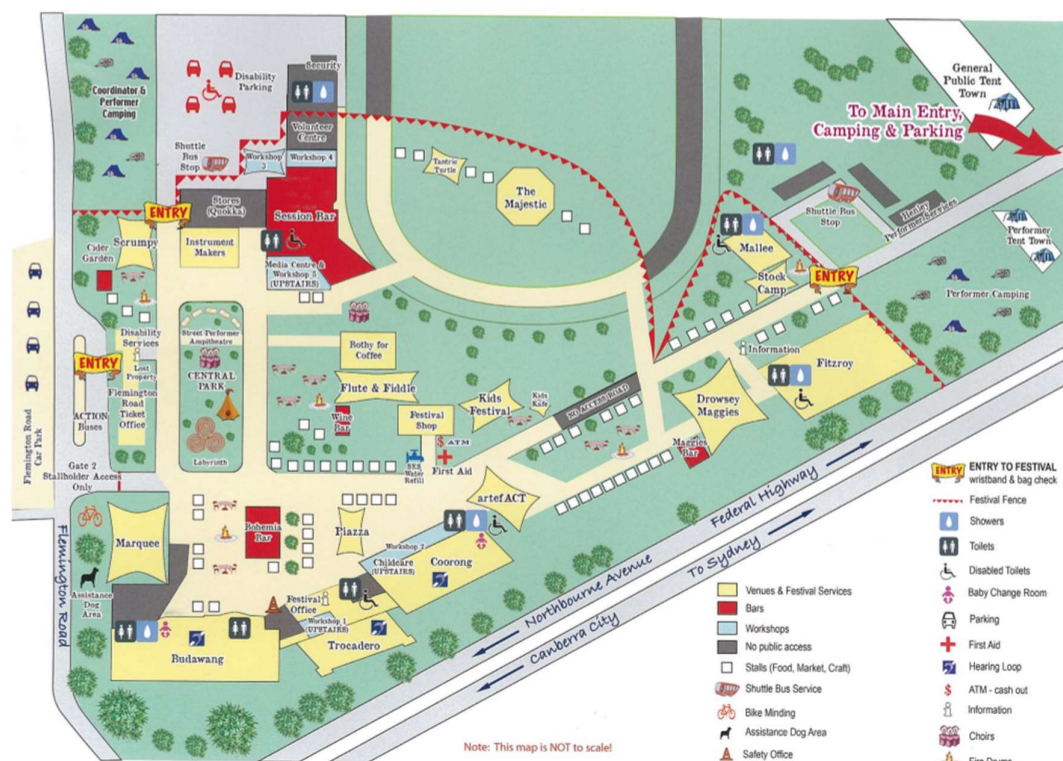


Figure 6.2: National Folk Festival Map 2012 (National Folk Festival Program, 2012: 73)

Located alone on the oval, there was a distinct separation between the atmosphere outside, especially at night, where few people gathered and limited lights interrupted the black expanse between the venue and the rest of the festival, and the thickness of the atmosphere

within. The dark expanse of the oval separating the Majestic from the rest of the festival meant that there was no “flow” of atmosphere with participant movement in and out of multiple venues, giving it a distinct atmosphere that made it seem a completely separate event.

When I returned to the NFF in 2014 the Majestic had been removed from the oval, and situated within a more condensed festival site (see figure 5.15), surrounded by other venues and accessible by passing foot traffic (rather than a destination that had to be sought). This change was a result of various organisational pressures as the festival had endured a period of financial instability, but the effect of bringing the Majestic into the main festival site had unexpected results for the overall atmosphere of the festival, leading to a “more vibrant space” (NFF 2013-2014 Annual Report). While the enclosed structure still contained the same raucous atmosphere, situating the Majestic more centrally resulted in the thick atmosphere generated within the tent spilling or flowing out, rhythmically pulsing into the surrounding spaces as tides of participants entered and exited the structure⁷⁵. While the specific event (the Morris versus Circus competition or the football match), and its location (stadium or Majestic marquee) provided the focus for and concentration of a shared atmosphere, the use of space in the nearby vicinity helped channel and perpetuate collective moods – much like Edensor’s football fans as they made their way to and from the stadium, winding and moving through the surrounding streets with their game-day animation and sensual array of noise (chanting of fans, radios, conversation), the sight of banners and team colours, and smells from smoke and food vendors and collective moods of anticipation, celebration or disappointment – highlighting the diffuse and temporal nature of atmospheres.

Sensing Place: Atmosphere and the Management of Nature

The sensory landscape of a folk festival combines both the existing natural environment and the built environment, and effective utilisation or management of both can assist organisers to establish atmospheres of folk.

⁷⁵ Again, further analysis drawing upon Lefebvre’s (2004) notion of rhythmanalysis may be useful in future.



Figure 6.3: Scenic Location of St Albans Folk Festival, 2012

Here, the natural scenery of a festival's location can be key to creating a particular experience for a festival-goer. A festival situated in picturesque 'natural' surroundings is often perceived as more worthwhile; rural views are almost always preferred to urban ones, and though all the senses are engaged at these locations (the air may smell 'fresher' or 'cleaner', sounds of wildlife and birds, the trickle of a stream, will be more prominent and so forth), it is the picturesque which was most often cited as the significant feature of enjoyment of a rurally-based folk festival. I was informed by various participants across multiple festivals that I should attend Numeralla Folk Festival, as "it's a really lovely, pretty festival". Kangaroo Valley was also described as being characterised by "gorgeous scenery", as were Majors Creek and St Albans. Themes of prettiness, historic-ness, lushness were repeated in many conversations with informants, with these qualities of landscape being indicators of the fundamental worth and potential enjoyment of a festival, regardless of performer line-ups and other constituent elements of a folk festival. Idyllic, 'natural' festival locations echo and in part reinforce the traditional pastoral bias of the folk revivals⁷⁶. While most participants referenced the scenic aspects of festival locations, for others, the rurality of festival sites also related to a sense of community (see Chapter 5), a

⁷⁶ See Goodwin-Hawkins (2016) on British rurality, especially notions of the village and its associations with terrain.

connection which informed notions of togetherness many participants connected to the festival experience. The “sense of community” many festival-goers experience and reference, the sense of belonging, participation and safety, is often directly related to a belief in the connectedness of the host community to the natural landscape of the festival location (see Derrett, 2003).

This preference for the ‘natural’ has implications for the management of participant comfort. Böhme (2017: 5) refers to the architecture of the city as a major influence on the types of atmospheres produced. I have already touched on how physical infrastructure at the festival and the natural environment helps shape atmospheres of folk. Böhme’s example of city planning as a way of framing spaces has many parallels with festival site management and the use of buildings and pathways by participants, who are both visitors and dwellers in the festival landscape. One way in which festival (or city) infrastructure shapes the sensory experience of those within the landscape is how weather is managed.

Weather is an important component of atmosphere. The impact of rain and wind can detrimentally affect outdoor atmospheres, and a cold, wet day could either dampen enthusiasm within venues (by negatively impacting the comfort of participants) or help create atmospheres of cosiness (through the close gathering of participants). There is a significant spatial relationship between inside and outside within a folk festival, but the demarcation between open/closed, inside/outside does not entail a concomitant divide between weather/non-weather, natural/manufactured⁷⁷. Rather, the walls/boundaries between inside and outside are porous. Though a participant may inhabit the inside space of a marquee, they are still affected by cold temperatures and winds, as chilly temperatures may require the assistance of artificial heating to ensure the space is habitable, and the marquee roof and sides will flap and bang with each gust of wind. Feet can get wet from the grassy or muddy ‘floor’ of the venue. Similarly, while the marquee might shade inhabitants from the glare of hot, summer sunshine, the heat can become trapped within the marquee, and resultant humidity will entail sweaty discomfort for those inside. To provide relief, the marquee may need to be ‘opened-up’, the sides removed or rolled up to better allow for cooling breezes to enter the marquee – thus an inside space may transform into a mostly-open one. Where weather conditions such as these significantly impact the comfort

⁷⁷ Most folk festivals enclose their primary performance spaces in marquees and buildings, so generally inside places are defined by their use as structured places of performance, whereby outside non-enclosed spaces are places to be traversed, with more unstructured performance. This is a key difference between most Australian folk festivals and other contemporary outdoor music festivals.

of patrons, there can be a resultant impact on the type of atmosphere co-produced by infrastructure and participant engagement, as participants may either compensate by drinking and dancing more (creating ‘thicker’ atmospheres) or remaining insulated and refusing to engage with performances (leading to ‘thinner’ atmospheres).

Tuan (1977:116) argues that:

Architectural space continues to articulate the social order [...] Architecture continues to exert a direct impact on the senses and feeling. The body responds, as it has always done, to such basic features of design as enclosure and exposure, verticality and horizontality, mass, volume, interior spaciousness, and light.

The festival goer is exposed to the elements or enclosed in temperature-controlled interiors, at the same time as they are exposed to folk music, folk dance and other folk activities.

The architecture of the festival shapes the sensory and atmospheric experience of the festival attendee, where the porous ‘city’ of festival infrastructure helps to establish a link between the physical festival place and the experience of folk as a process. The senses may be stimulated or deadened by architectural features (such as the acoustic resonance or absorbancy of particular surfaces) in the festival landscape (see Rodaway, 1994: 21). As participants move throughout the festival landscape, they are exposed to, and by being there, contribute to, atmospheres of varying intensity and character. Given that the purpose of the festival architecture is to present folk, the character and flavour of these atmospheric zones is shaped by the type of folk event, its peculiar sensory characteristics, and the participation and interaction of participant bodies.

The Programmed Landscape (Time)

If festival atmospheres are inherently spatial, investing places with emotional and connective meaning whilst remaining porous, changeable and insubstantial, so too are they inherently multi-temporal. A folk festival atmosphere may be simultaneously: a singular event; sequential; retrospective; prospective; intensifying and abating (Edensor, 2012: 2015). Within this multi-temporal overall atmospheric meshwork of festivity, participants encounter and coproduce multiple temporally-complex atmospheric events through the process of moving through the sensory and emotional festival landscape (Sørensen, 2015: 66), a transitional and therefore temporally-dynamic process in itself (see Casey, 1997: 23).

Festival atmospheres are dynamic. Much like a festival-goer walking through the festival landscape encounters and contributes to constantly changing and pulsing sensory-worlds – the varying volume and clarity of music performances, the fluctuating intensity of mouth-watering aromas or unsavoury odours and so forth – affective atmospheres ebb and flow with the rhythm of the festival and its constituent events, activities and places. The collective moods of audiences and groups of festival-goers can be unpredictable, with distractions, conversation, weather conditions, ambient noise, participant fatigue and many other factors potentially depressing an event's atmosphere; whilst communal singing, applause and positive engagement with performances may lift it. While the organisation of the events themselves and audience reactions (singing along, clapping, dancing) tend to shape and direct the flow of atmospheres in expected ways (for example, the deliberate programming of folk-rock bands late at night to induce a 'party' feel), the intensity of the atmospheres produced is inconstant and varying, always ebbing and flowing with the participation and engagement levels of attendees. During one late night concert, I noted:

The marquee is buzzing. Everyone was up and dancing during the last band (which was very loud), and now the audience seems hyped up. People are laughing and chatting loudly while the band sets up. It's basically a rock band featuring drums, accordion, guitar, fiddle etc.

The audience gradually hushes when the MC appears, but upon announcing the band, the audience members whistle, shout and clap (obviously some fans in the audience). The band begins playing a fast-paced tune set, and many members of the audience jump up and start dancing. The soundie has set the lighting up to transition quickly between colour washes in time with the beat. There is a real sense of energy in both the music and the marquee.

People clap along at the insistence of the drummer, and cheer when the tune finishes. Then the lead fiddle player segues into a slow tune, and the audience quiets down, with many of the dancing audience members taking seats. The marquee is hushed now, but still there is a kind of attentiveness. I get the feeling though that everyone is just waiting for the next fast tune or song, so they can be up and dancing again.

(from field notes, Yackandandah Folk Festival, 2012)

At this concert, I sensed at first a residual party atmosphere from the previous performance, which gave way to a feeling of shared expectation (an anticipation that the band would play with energy and generate it). As the performance began, there was a distinct 'party' mood which intensified when the drummer indicated that the audience should clap along, however this communal 'energy' moderated significantly upon the playing of a slow tune. During concerts, the energy or the atmosphere will ebb and change in such ways throughout the performance.

In addition, atmospheres at a festival tend to be contagious, flowing from event to event, and venue to venue. The energy of the previous act, which had been particularly lively and encouraged dancing, left people ‘hyped up’ and this energy flowed into the following band’s performance. This atmosphere was a co-production of the folk performance, the sound mix (amplified) and pulsating lighting, and importantly, the engagement of the audience. The importance of bodies in co-creating atmospheres means that as festival-goers move through the festival, they take their experience of atmosphere with them, thus contributing to the energy pervading their next activity or place.

The temporality of atmospheres is also deliberately staged by programme directors. One programme director I spoke to explained how she deliberately scheduled events to not only follow what was generally recognised folk festival scheduling, but with consideration to how the spaces felt from one act to another:

I always have a mind to what act follows what. You can’t always get it exactly right – performers are often parts of lots of groups, you have to make sure they’re not double booked, but generally I want to make sure that a programme makes sense, so I’ll try and schedule acts of a certain genre, like blues, into a time bracket, a broader concert, then everyone there kind of knows what’s going on, what to feel. The audience knows what to expect. You wouldn’t put a folk-rock band on and get everyone gee’d up and then put a poetry reading on and then another rock band – people wouldn’t know whether they were coming or going. It would feel wrong. If you want to put those kinds of different things on at the same time you have to put them in different venues. People can deliberately move from one to another if they like, but the feel of the venue has to make sense. If you put a sentimental blues-y singer/songwriter on after an energetic act, like a ceilidh band, everyone would be brought down, and if you do that you can destroy the mood in a venue, and that can affect the rest of the festival, like if people go from being happy to depressed, that can filter through to the rest of the festival. You can’t always control it, you never know for sure how the audience will react to things, but you do your best. (Festival Programme Director, 2014)

As she explained, scheduling acts according to their likely impact on the feel of a venue (or the mood of the audience) is very inexact; as much as a programme director may attempt to manage the mood of an audience through their scheduling, they can’t control the music a performer chooses to play (which may vary substantially from the material provided in their application) or how a performance may be received. At Port Fairy Folk Festival, I had the experience of being in the audience throughout several lively acts, interspersed by one band which chose to play the slower songs in their repertoire. There was a palpable feeling of confusion amongst the audience initially, as people had been primed by the act immediately preceding for dancing. People gradually sat down or left the venue, but the overall vibe seemed to me to flow from anticipatory and lively to depressed, and even uninterested. This feeling continued until partway through the next act, which was again a

lively rock band, as audiences filtered back into the venue and started to get up and dance again. There was a clear ebb and flow of atmosphere in the venue as acts came and went.

Scheduling can impact atmospheres not only within venues, but the entire festival's tone can be set by how acts and activities are scheduled over whole days and weekends.

Festival committees and programme directors determine how they want a festival to flow, considering whether they want the first night to be a laid-back event or whether they want a party atmosphere to celebrate the beginning of a festival. Most of the bigger festivals I attended used the second approach, whereas smaller festivals opted for more relaxed meet-and-greet type events and easy-listening singer/songwriters or relaxed sessions which emphasised a sense of community. Frances Folk Gathering, for example, began with a communal barbecue (explicitly articulated in the festival programme as a "Welcome Barbecue") followed by sessions which provided a foundation for an atmosphere of friendliness and community through the whole festival.

During a Saturday, most festivals programme events and performances in similar ways. Starting in the morning, less-lively activities such as spoken word events and even activities like yoga will be offered, and as a morning progresses, the Children's Festival will begin while workshops and relaxed performances are offered to adults, and as morning turns into afternoon, street performers become more active, scheduled performances become more lively, and into evening, children's events will wind up, most of the street performances will cease, the music offered will become relaxed over the dinner period, before things ramp up again as participatory dances like ceilidhs are programmed and bands get progressively more energetic. The day is deliberately (though in my experience on a festival committee, tacitly) scheduled so that the atmosphere of the festival site gradually builds up from languorous, to carnivalistic, inclusive and fun, ebbs back to relaxed, before flowing into an evening of active and vibrant participation. The scheduled event landscape therefore influences the way mood and atmosphere ebb and flow temporally during the festival.

Atmospheres and Time: Anticipation and Memory

Atmospheres do not merely exist as simultaneity of human beings and material culture, but also as a temporal dimension: atmospheres change. [...] Not only does this testify to the historicity of atmospheres, but, more importantly, to the fact that atmospheres emerge as multi-temporal tensions: they are at the same time a product of the past and future. *Anticipation and recollection* of atmospheres are at the extremes of these temporalities in the staging of atmospheres. (Bille, Bjerregaard & Sørensen, 2015: 34)

An overall positive festival atmosphere may emerge from a mixture of anticipation of pleasure and celebration (Cummings & Herborn, 2015: 111), nostalgia, memory and recollection, seasonality and cyclical recurrence (Edensor, 2012; Bille, Bejerregaard & Sørensen, 2015; and Holyfield et al, 2013) embodied in both participants and the event itself.

Anticipation

When patrons attend the festival, they anticipate enjoyment. Some of those participants who were regular attendees at folk events informed me that they deliberately built anticipation during their travel to the festival by playing cds of some of the performers they were keen to see at the festival. On a very basic level, as a leisure event, patrons expect to be entertained during the festival, so their entry through the gates into the festival site is marked by their entry into and coproduction of an atmosphere of positive anticipation which has built during the preceding months (through seeing social media posts, pre-purchasing tickets, filling in and submitting volunteering forms and planning travel) and during their journey to the festival. Patrons, performers, and volunteers who arrive at the festival in advance of the official opening of the event will often traverse the empty venues and streets, where the lack of people and empty venues generates in some areas of the festival site a hushed expectancy, and I spoke to a number of early arrivals who enjoyed the relaxed process of what they called “getting ready for the festival” by exploring the spatial landscape of the festival before the music and entertainment got underway. Meanwhile, many of the organisers and volunteers I spoke with who were attempting to ready the site in time for the opening of the gates felt both a sense of focused energy and expressed the idea that time was contracting or running short, that there was *not enough time*. One of the site crew volunteers explained:

We’re all working together to get this thing [festival] up. You never think you’re going to do it. Every year it [the last minute rush to get ready] happens. There never seems to be enough time to get the marquees up and stages built, and then of course there are all the banners and other bibs and bobs you have to do. It never seems like we’ll do it. But then everyone works hard and together it somehow comes together. Some years it’s a close-run thing – once I was still building a stage while they were sound checking and the punters were coming in. But we still got it together by the official start time. It seems crazy to put myself through it every year, I’m not exactly getting any younger, but I kind of look forward to knowing that I’m helping put this show on. (John, site crew volunteer)

The immediate period before the start of the festival was characterised for this volunteer by frenetic activity which was anticipatory, but of a different type of anticipation than that

experienced by the casual attendee wanting to get a relaxed feel for the festival prior to its official opening.

The atmosphere of eager anticipation at a festival increases as the site is ‘built’ by volunteers and organisers, heightens as campers and other patrons begin to arrive and the site becomes busier, and peaks generally sometime about a third of the way into the festival, as activities and events are in full flow and general participation levels approach their zenith (usually during the busiest day – generally a Saturday). In my own experience and from discussions with fellow attendees, general levels of positive anticipation then proceed to drop significantly until the last event of the festival (usually the final concert), developing into a general palpable sadness (or negative anticipation) that it is all coming to an end for another year, and the anticipatory atmosphere morphs into a nostalgic one, with patrons recalling their favourite aspects of the festival just been and lamenting its imminent conclusion. Many of my participants referred to the “post-festival blues” and explained that this feeling began as the festival neared its end and continued in the days and week or so after. Within the festival overall, the atmosphere of anticipation ebbs and flows throughout the festival and between individual events, activities and places, such as when participants eagerly queue up and file in to venues to watch performers they have looked forward to seeing; and new people enter the gates each morning bringing a fresh sense of anticipation for the day ahead, which refreshes the positive expectancy of the earlier arrivals.

Memory

Anticipatory atmospheres are emotionally affective as a result of “a ‘looking forward’ based on a looking back” (Edensor, 2012: 1115). Memory and nostalgia play important roles in producing and experiencing festival atmospheres.

Memory of atmospheres at other festivals contributes to expected and actual emplaced atmospheres, and impacts on enjoyment or otherwise of the present. My informants regularly referred to past festivals as having a better sense of community, especially in relation to festivals that began as small gatherings of like-minded folkies and have since become significant popular events. Stating a connection to past festivals provided evidence of authentic belonging – “I have attended Woodford Folk Festival every year since it began as Maleny Folk Festival” or “I remember when the Nash [National Folk Festival] toured the states, like, before it became a Canberra thing you know; I know it

used to pretty much bankrupt the state folk feds, but it was more about the local folk communities; I liked it better then though it's still a great festival, just different, you know". Nostalgia for past festivals and the small, community atmospheres experienced there (or remembered as being experienced there), wherein all the participants seemed to know each other, often negatively affected how the present festival was enjoyed; the expansion of a festival from a small gathering of folkies to a large event which attracts many non-folkie attendees altered how my informants perceived the festival as having a "folk atmosphere". Claims that previous events were "more folky" or had a more communal atmosphere are difficult to quantify as it is impossible to determine how much the thicker ('better') atmosphere remembered is the result of "nostalgic longing and selective memory" (Edensor, 2015b: 88).

Nostalgic atmospheres are also significantly linked to place. Where a festival has occupied the same site for many years there exists a strong sense of belonging amongst return attendees, which often creates a shared feeling of familiarity and homeliness (see Edensor, 2015b: 86; see also Tuan's [1990] work on topophilias), which is in turn related to the cyclical, recurrent nature of the event.

Festival Atmospheres and Communality

Atmospheres are about connections, between people, spaces, places, memories, feelings, emotions, and senses. A string of lanterns between buildings and trees at a festival doesn't merely illuminate, it connects, encloses and defines spaces for people to inhabit and come together, while also directing movement. Their light adds an element of festivity and decoration to mundane objects and they connect people to an experience and to each other. As I have argued earlier in this chapter, music spilling across the festival site performs a similar function. A festival atmosphere is a coproduction of the connection between people with their subjective moods and senses, to an idea (the 'folk festival'), to place and to time through anticipation and memory. Folk is something people do together at festivals, and this is reflected in the popular conflation of atmospheres of 'folk' and atmospheres of 'community'.

Bille, Bjerregaarde and Sørensen (2015: 33) suggest that "atmosphere is a connective factor, linking people, places and things together in often unpredictable ways". During my fieldwork, a recurring theme of conversation with festival attendees related to the community "feel" or atmosphere of a folk festival. Responses to surveys conducted by

National Folk Festival organisers and noted in their 2012-2013 Report highlighted the importance of atmosphere in patrons' enjoyment of the festival:

"The *sense of community and general atmosphere*. Very few festivals capture that."
"NFF creates a *village feeling* which I haven't seen elsewhere. The lack of division between performers and others is excellent (the session bar adds a lot to this). Everyone gets together in the one space rather than separating...excellent!"
"*Fantastic ambience*, good music, good combination of performances, workshops, art instalments and stalls which encourages participation for everyone attending."
"Great value for money. Fabulous musicians. *Good atmosphere*."
(NFF 2012-2013 Annual Report; own italics)

Amongst my informants, this "sense of community" was rarely expanded upon, with informants unable to effectively articulate what they meant by the phrase, but was invariably linked to a vague idea of 'folk', and often succeeded by a discussion comparing what was often described as the folk (or community) vibe at various festivals. Informants would define factors they perceived as responsible for the generation of a positive atmosphere or vibe at a festival, including but not limited to: the physical size of the festival; the physical location and layout of the festival (rural or semi-rural, contained within one site or spread out); the number of attendees (small numbers of attendees were often identified with 'friendlier' or 'laid-back' experiences, whereas larger numbers were often associated with a sense of energy and excitement); whether the majority of attendees were "true" folkies or non-folkies; whether it was a camping festival; how willing attendees were to socialise or participate; or how long a festival had been operating and how often the informant had attended. Different combinations of these factors determined whether an informant felt a particular festival had a positive vibe or atmosphere, and the combinations would vary from informant to informant depending upon individual preferences and predispositions, highlighting that positive or negative atmospheres and intensities are differentially experienced by attendees⁷⁸.

Despite this apparent subjectivity regarding individual attunement to atmosphere, festival atmospheres are clearly not solely psychological, subjective responses to external stimuli. Multiple informants reported the *same* feelings about a festival's vibe, or the vibe of particular parts of a festival, suggesting that atmospheres are also somewhat objective, measurable and able to be generated. Thibaud's (2015: 43) description of the "merchant ambience" established by the designers of shopping malls and deliberately manipulated

⁷⁸ Most participants I spoke with only noted the positive, good, or communal "vibe" at festivals. Only one participant recounted a story in which he noted that the atmosphere was negative, and this was on an occasion when what he described as "drunken yobs" descended on a festival during the evening concert, and disturbed other audience members and the performance with their disruptive behaviour. Their anti-social behaviour – the opposite of the communal vibe many participants speak about – was an aberration in this informant's festival experience.

through the use of sound (such as background music), temperature and lighting, direction of pedestrian movement and spatial layout combined with the deliberate neutralisation of mundane existence and temporality *beyond* the shopping mall, provides an example of the ways in which different external/environmental factors intersect to establish shared affect, and demonstrates that logics of design can be critical in the construction of specific ambiances. These constructed atmospheres are, however, ultimately dependent upon the presence of bodies to experience them. The intersection of subjective and objective is critical, or following Böhme, “an atmosphere is never exclusively a psychological phenomenon, as state-of-mind, nor solely an objective thing ‘out there’, as an environment or milieu; *atmospheres are always located in-between experiences and environments*” (Bille, Bjerregaard & Sørensen, 2015: 32; my emphasis). The embodied experience of the festival-goer and the environment (including sensory events, weather conditions, pre-existing or built physical environments) coalesce and intersect to establish mutually-constituted festival atmospheres that can be shared by multiple bodies.

Sensing the Festival: Bodily Experience of the Festival Landscape

Although through stage-setting organisers can attempt to influence and produce festival atmospheres, atmosphere is a co-production with the bodies and movements of subjects within the festival landscape. Therefore, in this section, I explore how the interplay of the senses helps shape the folk festival experience, acknowledging Merleau-Ponty’s objection that perception of external stimuli requires a perceiving and practising body (see Csordas, 1993: 148-9), and that “in terms of sensation, there is no simple inside or outside” (Paterson, 2009: 780). The sensory environment of the festival influences and shapes intersubjective atmospheres of folk, that are perceived and *made sense of* by the participant (Rodaway, 1994: 26).

Different modes of participation result in different sensory experiences for participants. *Participation*, a key component of the folk ethos, is a determining factor in how various festival-goers experience, interpret and *create* a sensual festival world. For example, the street performer is more subject to weather (heat, cold, wind, rain) than other participants. The sound engineer’s perception of a concert differs to that of the audience. Their auditory and visual perception is constantly active, engaged and effectual (see Lewis, 1995: 231); they produce, manage and mediate sensory information so that it may be digested by a more passively attuned audience (see Neuenfeldt, 2007), “tuning” the atmosphere for all participants. Finally, for the stage performer, the hierarchy of intertwined sensation may

foreground a very intimate level of active touch and listening limited to the stage area, while stage lighting shining into a performer's eyes may limit their vision of the audience. Importantly, modes of participation can shift throughout a festival, with organisers becoming performers and audiences, performers becoming audience members, etc, with each shift resulting in an alternating between more active and passive modes of engagement, all of which help co-produce atmospheres.

In this section, I use examples from my fieldwork to demonstrate how the senses are engaged at a festival, how the multisensorial landscape of the folk festival impacts upon, and is shaped by, participants in various ways, and how these sensory events and experiences work together to create festival atmospheres. Festival sensory stimuli are perceived and processed in complex, layered and relational ways depending upon modes of participation, but intersubjective festival atmospheres are co-produced through a shared sensory event landscape.

Sensing Folk

Festival participants sustain what Lewis refers to as “mediated states of multiple or diffuse awareness” in relation to bodily perception (1995: 231), operating upon a continuum of sensual engagement, ranging from the semi-habitual vague or subliminal awareness of the world and the body operating within it, to an intensification of focus on sensory perception the body within the sensory landscape. The senses are engaged differentially at a festival depending upon a festival-goer's mode of participation (depending on how actively or passively engaged with folk activity), with certain senses foregrounded or backgrounded at varying times, but which overall contribute to a general ‘sense’ of a festival's atmosphere.

Folk festival atmospheres are integrally related to sound, especially musical sound, which is, as Ingold notes, “subject to the property of rapid fading speeding outwards from its point of emission, and dissipating as it goes, it is present only momentarily to our senses” (1993: 161-2). The sound-world is spatially structured (see Tuan, 1977: 14), and therefore the sounds of a festival help structure the spatial experience of the festival subject in the landscape. Musical sound of some kind, though varying in intensity and form, is almost constantly present at a folk festival, characterising and establishing the festival via the constant experience of sound by participants, as a social place in which music is performed and enacted. The particular combination of sounds at a folk festival help co-produce an

atmosphere of folkiness, an audible place of folk that is recognisable across most folk festivals.

One of the most recognisable sounds of a folk festival is that of the folk music session. The folk music session as it is practiced throughout Australia conforms to particular conventions and expectations⁷⁹. Whether composed of sea-shanties, bluegrass or (what is sometimes colloquially and condescendingly referred to as) ‘diddly-eye’ Irish music/tunes, the sound of the session with its traditional acoustic instruments and general bonhomie amongst participants, is immediately recognisable as a separate sound event to that of the programmed (professional or semi-professional) concert or workshop. The sound of the folk session is the sound of inclusive sociality, a group expression of folk. The musical sounds of many acoustic instruments playing the same tunes and/or singing is accompanied by the sounds of chatter or laughter, or the calling for rounds of drinks, sounds associated with a group of people interacting in a constant ebb and flow of music and sociality.

I had become accustomed, in a vague, somewhat subliminal way, to hearing the specific sounds of the session while traversing folk festival landscapes. The session is generally part of the ‘background’ noise of the festival and helps create a recognisable ‘folky’ atmosphere. The importance of the sound of informal music making within the session in the creation of folk festival atmospheres only became apparent to me at Port Fairy Folk Festival, where an organisational preference for more professional performances of folk through structured concerts, rather than organic, participant-initiated folk, means there are very few informal music sessions. Most folk festival sound-scapes comprise a combination of ‘formal’ concert noises and the sounds of amateur, sociable music making – the lack of the distinctive sound of the session gave the atmosphere of the Port Fairy Folk Festival a markedly different flavour to other festivals, and for me personally, made the atmosphere seem slightly sterile, less ‘folky’, and significantly altered the overall atmosphere of the festival.

Although the sound of the session (or lack thereof) can contribute to festival atmospheres, festival music sessions also provide a microcosmic example of the broader, rich sensory

⁷⁹ Due to considerations of brevity, it is not my intention in this thesis to discuss festival folk music sessions in great depth. Informal session music-making is, however, one of the foremost participatory aspects of folk festivals for many folk musicians, and is worth future exploration. MacKinnon (1993) provides an excellent overview of the role and structure of sessions at British folk festivals and in the British folk scene more broadly.

landscape of the folk festival. Playing instruments or singing is an intensely intersensorial experience. Participants are immersed in the sounds generated by the playing of instruments creating a soundscape peculiar to the session while actively and feelingly or physically engaging in reproducing sounds themselves through the playing of instruments or singing. They taste the cider, beer, wine or Guinness, the consumption of which is often an integral aspect of the session. Participants look at other players for visual cues relating to the music being played (as Rosie does in Chapter 10), and smell the body odours of those players in close proximity. Although taste and smell are probably not the most prominent senses in the festival sensory hierarchy, they are essential parts of the embodied festival experience, and are important contributors to festival atmospheres, because “odors lend character to objects and places, making them distinctive, easier to identify and remember” (Tuan, 1977: 11).

Considering the sense of touch as a sensorium which consists of “the tactile receptivity of the skin, the movement of the body parts and the locomotion of the whole body through movement” (Rodaway, 1994: 42), the music session encompasses the sense of touch in particular in relation to bodies in space. Participants are crammed into small spaces, allowing for little to no personal space as people attempt to manoeuvre the instruments they are playing within the cramped space. Fonarow (2006) and Cummings and Herborn (2015) have discussed bodily dirt and the role of sweat in the sensate experience of participants; likewise, the cramped conditions of the session exposes participants to the smell and physical touch of other participants, especially in hot or humid conditions (such as at Frances Folk Gathering, where excessive heat was almost overwhelming, impacting on players as hands and bodies became sweaty even in the airconditioned pub session, with one participant commenting to me that they didn’t know where their sweat ended and another participant’s sweat began). The session highlights the intense intercorporeality of the festival landscape. Personal space here is related to the haptic, though could almost be considered a sense in itself, as the space around individual bodies is violated, compromised as well as emphasised, leading not only to feelings of crowdedness and discomfort, feelings referred to by participants as negative, but also potentially intimate and communal (see Dawson & Dennis, 2020). Although informants didn’t directly communicate this aspect of sweaty interaction, their humour and the resignation with which they spoke of “not knowing where their sweat ended and the other musician’s began” suggested an interpersonal intimacy and sense of community that was created amongst participants of the session.



Figure 6.4: Session Bar, National Folk Festival, 2014

The ‘sense’ of personal space was also apparent in the experience of festival bush dancing. Farnell and Wood refer to this as a “locational sensitivity”, a way in which dancers sense “vibrational energy that emanates from them into the inter-subjective space between and around them” (2011: 96). Like the aforementioned session, the bush dance held at Frances Folk Gathering was characterised by the interaction of hot, sweaty bodies. During bush dances, participants variously hold hands, link arms and otherwise closely interact, so bodies are regularly in direct contact with one another. The exchange of sweat between participants was inescapable, and was constantly commented upon with both disgust and humour.

The physicality of bush dances varies with the participants involved – many of the dances I attended at various festivals were sedate, particularly where dancers were more elderly. They could also be highly energetic. A dance I attended at St Albans Folk Festival was notable for the enthusiasm and physical energy of the participating dancers. During this dance, I was regularly twirled and lifted from the floor, and the bodily feeling of weightlessness at these times was exhilarating. The sense of touch on this occasion was

foregrounded for both myself and the other dancers on this occasion, but again, like the bush dance at Frances, was still highly intersensorial. In this case, the dynamic dancing would not have been possible without the liveliness of the music provided by the bush band. It was the combination of highly mobile bodies and energetic music from the band, that created an atmosphere of fun and exuberance.

Beyond the sensory engagement of physically active festival participation, such as dancing and session playing, is the more passive experience of the general smell and taste of the festival. Although I have discussed bodily odours which become foregrounded in hot, sweaty bodily engagement, very few festival attendees spoke to me about the importance of taste or smell at folk festivals; as sensory experiences they are tacit, taken-for-granted⁸⁰. Their importance in generating a festival ambience became apparent to me as part of a festival organising committee, where for a number of practical infrastructural and geographical reasons, attracting a large selection of food vendors to participate in the festival was difficult. This resulted in limited food and drink choices for attendees and a lack of concentration of appetising smells. Although this aspect was considered by organisers as peripheral to the fundamental aims and purposes of the festival, much of the negative feedback from attendees and volunteers focused not on the quality of the musical acts, activities offered or venues, but on the lack of food choices within the main site which attendees deemed important in providing an ‘all-rounded’ festival experience. Communal, social consumption of food and drink can add texture to an atmosphere and help produce feelings of community; a lack of food options inhibited this process⁸¹.

Intersensoriality, Intercorporeality and Emotion: Sensing the Festival

The perception of atmospheres is “not by one single sense or by their interplay” (Böhme, 2017: 73). Sensory experience of a festival is a concerted interaction between all the senses, and should be considered more an intersensorial knot- or mesh-work of sometimes harmonious, unequal and sometimes conflicting sequential pattern of perception (Howes, 2005: 9; see also Howes, 1991). As we have seen, each event in the festival landscape will, however, privilege certain sensory phenomena depending upon the purpose and execution of the event whilst the sensory experience concomitantly structures the event for the participants. Intersensoriality is not harmonious, but rather hierarchical (Howes, 2005:

⁸⁰ See Porteous (1985: 367) regarding how environmental conditions such as weather and temperature in some ways dictate the taste/smell experiences of festival attendees.

⁸¹ Negative comparisons were made between the small-scale, not-for-profit community-based folk festival, and the much larger, commercial Womadelaide festival, which offers a dedicated food and drink precinct.

10). By focusing merely on physical sensations, we can overlook the role of emotion (see Böhme, 2017: 74) and the interplay of bodies in creating atmospheric spaces.

The levels of sensual engagement at separate events and activities of the festival are complex and layered. The Instrument Makers display, a dedicated festival space showcasing instrument makers and their products, provides a useful example of this sensual complexity. Musical instruments are, of course, the focus of this display. Upon entering the hall or room housing the Instrument Makers display, the festival participant encounters a pre-existing sensory landscape that must be negotiated. This landscape is characterised by the steady hum of conversation and chatter, punctuated by the sounds of various stringed instruments being plucked, wind instruments blown, concertinas squeezed and other instruments being variously manipulated to produce sounds. Visually, there is an initial confusion with multiple tables and instruments on display, which must be sorted into constituent parts by the festival-goer as they move into and around the hall, until each display and every instrument becomes separate and distinct. In the air there may waft an elusive fragrant hint of wood, resin and other natural materials used to craft this collection of instruments mixed with the slightly musty smell of unwashed bodies.

Here instruments are presented first as aesthetic objects. They are arranged to be visually seductive to attract potential admirers and customers. Though their purpose is to produce sound, this is secondary to the initial lure of visual. Only after a visual inspection of the instrument display will a participant enquire about the sound capabilities and characteristics of the instrument. In the discussion with the maker about the merits of the instrument, along with some trial plucking, blowing, bowing, or squeezing, the participant actively contributes to the overall soundscape of the room.

With the handling and playing of the instrument, the haptic senses become foregrounded. The feel of the instrument becomes as important as the sound and look of it – and may even supersede one or both of these considerations (see Chapter 10). At the same time, the technical ability of the participant to actually play the instrument in question is also physical. The knowledge of where to place one's fingers upon which frets or keys, the exact amount of pressure or breath required to squeeze or blow an instrument to produce sound is embodied knowledge. It is reliant on both a conscious manipulation of the instrument-object and unconscious bodily movement based upon the skill of the experienced musician.

Other sensory aspects come into play here too. The hand-made quality of these artisanally-crafted instruments speaks to the embodied process of making by the crafter, who has established a physical connection to and relationship with the object (see Bunn, 2011; Bronner, 1982) that is transferred to the potential purchaser.

The participant in the Instrument Makers display, by interacting with crafters and their instruments, participates in a reciprocal sensual exchange. The participant physically handles an attractive object, which hopefully produces a dulcet sound and which is pleasurable to touch, hold and feel, potentially evoking “sensory associations or resonances far beyond those immediately apparent to the outside observer” (Howes & Classen, 1991: 267), an aesthetic object which itself has been sensually hand-crafted by the maker. In doing all this, the participant also contributes to the overall sensory landscape of the Instrument Makers display event.



Figure 6.5: Instrument Makers Display, Port Fairy Folk Festival, 2012

There are, moreover, emotional aspects which should not be overlooked in the Instrument Makers display. Hand-crafted objects are usually the result of an emotional investment

(through individual creativity, ingenuity and passion) on the part of the crafter – and this emotional attachment makers have to their instruments pervades the intersubjective engagement between seller and potential buyer. Furthermore, instruments, as physical extensions of players' bodies, are invested with emotion by players, who often consider their instruments as parts of themselves. The possible purchase therefore of a new instrument is an act of emotional adoption by the purchaser. Finally, an instrument purchase can also emotionally connect the purchaser with the festival, as a physical reminder of the festival. The sharing of emotion, then, is present to a high degree in the Instrument Makers display, and establishes relationships (between crafter and purchaser, between purchaser and instrument, between participant and the festival) characterised by their authenticity (see Dundon, 2016: 28), which while not necessarily understood rationally by those involved, provide emotional depth to the generally vibrant atmosphere of the space.

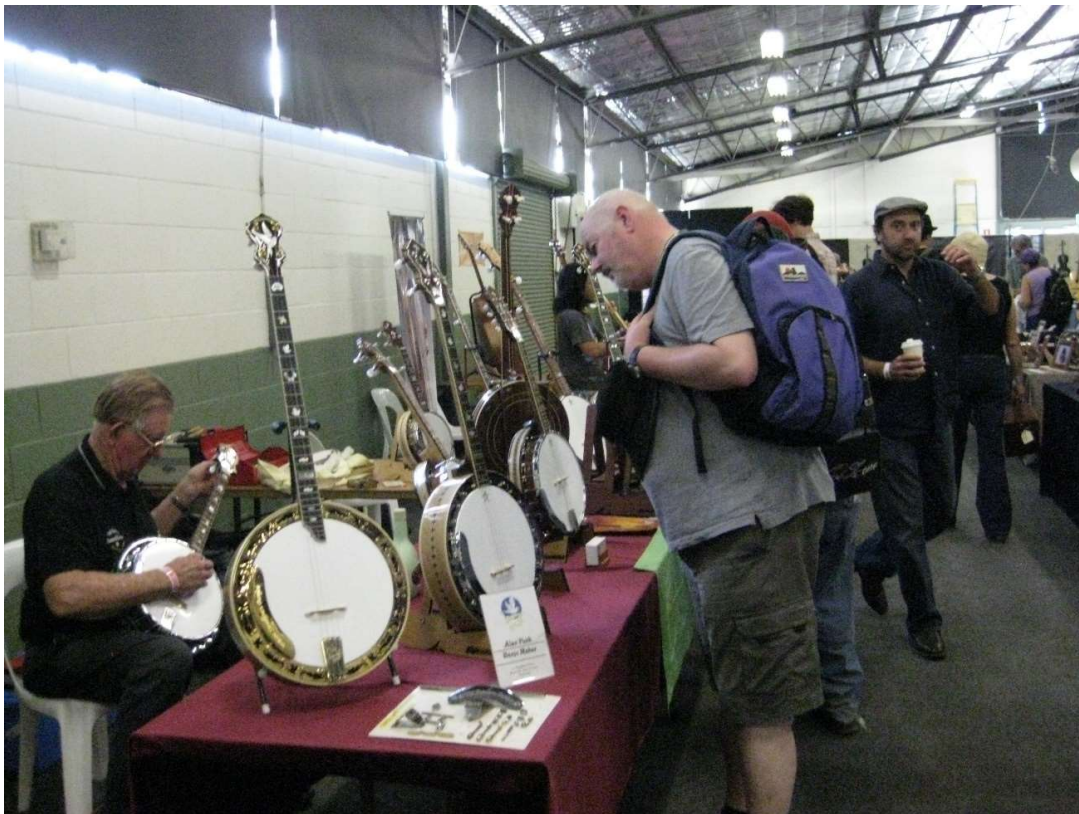


Figure 6.6: Instrument Makers Display, National Folk Festival, 2012

The example of the Instrument Makers display highlights the continual interplay of the senses as they are differentially hierarchised and emphasised in establishing festival atmospheres. In addition, since the perception of the festival participant is not merely a

passive processing of external stimuli, but rather an active relationship between the subject and their environment, I have illustrated how sensory experience creates emplaced sensual events, defines behaviour within festival places, influences infrastructural considerations, elicits emotional responses and contributes to feelings of belonging or otherwise. The physical senses cannot be artificially separated from emotional engagement with festival atmospheres, and I suggest that it is the relationship between a participants' intersensoriality, intercorporeality and emotion that shapes the experience of the folk festival atmosphere.

Conclusion: Moving Through the Senses (Atmospheres and the Embodying of Folk Process)

A key theme throughout this chapter has been that sensory experience is hierarchised in overlapping and porous spatio-temporal sensory events. These events, with their coalescence of multiple sensory phenomena, create an ambience or festival *atmosphere* which, though constantly shifting and changing, is intersubjectively experienced, and is characterised by participants' bodily movement. A festival body is never still but is constantly in motion, walking between festival events, engaging in festival activities, playing music, dancing, always *feeling*, *experiencing* and *sensing*; and in so *doing* and moving with *other bodies*. The folk festival participant moves through a kaleidoscope of constantly shifting and fragmentary sensory events, located in space and time, the interplay of which allows the participant to create a meaningful and memorable folk place-world.

Awareness of the sensual landscape of the folk festival is variable, ever changing, dependent upon the movement of the person/body through and within the festival site (as Rosie's travel story in Chapter 4 illustrated) and their diverse levels of conscious and unconscious sensory engagement with the events and activities in which they participate. Sensory awareness is often subliminal, with festival participants traversing the sensual landscape of the festival with little conscious awareness of the sounds, sights, smells, tastes and feelings generated by the festival landscape, unless particular conditions attract one's sensory attention, such as overly loud music or conversation, extreme weather events or unusual smells. At other times, the body is engaged consciously, as participants actively listen to and view performances, perform music themselves, or dance. At all times, participants experience festival atmospheres, although their awareness of and attunement to them can vary according to their mode of participation and their level of active sensory engagement with the festival around them.



Figure 6.7: Community street parade, Yackandandah Folk Festival, 2012

Folk festival atmospheres are co-productions between festival participants, through both deliberate organisation (logics of design or stage-setting) and the movement and interaction of festival-goers as they transition between different modes of active and passive participation in events. Often, a folk festival may have an overall atmosphere which participants acknowledge (the “festival vibe”, “community feel”) but this overall atmosphere is comprised of multiple micro-atmospheres of varying intensity, which ebb and flow over time and space. The atmosphere of the lively Irish music session in the enclosed bar may be convivial and inviting, as a large number of participants are crammed into a small space and generate a rowdy cacophony of conversation, jokes and music, while the four-person session held in the open outside a tent in the campsite feel intimate, relaxed, and sedate. The atmosphere in a single venue may vary from calm and relaxed or hushed and expectant with a few attentive audience members and a laid-back performer during early afternoon, or it can be ‘thick’, exciting and intense as a closely-packed audience jumps and dances in response to a late night folk-rock band. The movement of bodies within and through time and space results in the perception of different atmospheres even as it contributes to them. Moreover, atmospheres are not necessarily organic; rather,

they can be staged, and much effort on behalf of organisers and volunteers goes into creating the folk vibe so integral to a festival's overall success. The staging of atmospheres is structurally integral to the re/presentation of folk when considering the festival as a public event.

In this chapter I have shown that folk festivals are experienced by participants through their entire body, their emotions and their perception and co-production of atmospheres. The folk process, as it plays out through experience and participation, is *sensed and embodied* by participants – they feel the bodies of other dancers at the bush dance, they hear the sea-shanty or the Irish folk song, they sing in festival choirs, they smell and taste various festival foods, they see the circus performer or the rock band, and all this occurs in the space of intersubjective festival atmospheres of communality. They experience the joy or sadness that accompanies moving music or story-telling. Furthermore, they do all these things *together*. Folk is situated in place and time emotionally, atmospherically and sensually, and the movement and active participation of festival-goers contributes to the production of folk atmospheres.

PART THREE

Festival Events – Performing Folk

Chapter 7: Concerts & Music Traditions

Introduction: Presenting and Processing Folk Through the Concert Programme

In Chapter 4, I explored how the eventmental and atmospheric landscape of festivals (discussed in Chapters 5 and 6) could be navigated via marginally-directed movement, in particular by walking participants. The three chapters in Part Two discussed the logics of design of the folk festival, specifically how the taskscape of the folk festival is organised to create an eventmental landscape in which place and time are deliberately structured to create places of folk, and how these logics of design created an atmospheric landscape of folk, wherein participants co-produced an intersensorial and intersubjective folk experience through their movement. In this and the following two chapters of Part Three, I explore the logics of design of *specific events* within the taskscape of the festival, namely concerts, dance events and Poet's Breakfasts, to explore *how* folk is presented to festival audiences, as well as the specific folk *content* that is communicated. Identifying the structures – logics of design – of these events will illustrate how these specific 'tasks' in the event-scape perform folk and facilitate the process of folk at festivals.

The formal concert is the preeminent event around which Australian folk festivals, as music festivals, are structured, and forms an integral part of the folk process. The formality of the concert (in which the logics of design, such as the separation between audience and performer through staging, encourages more passive modes of participation) balances the informality of the music session and other more actively participatory events of the festival and can be categorised specifically as a display event (see Bealle, 1993: 65) or, in Handelman's terms, an event-that-presents, in which organisers' ideas and ideals about folk (such as participation, authenticity, and folk as a process of face-to-face communication), and folk content (shaped by folk process of continuity, variation and community selection), are presented to festival audiences.

It has been argued by Cooney (1982: 13), that with regard to concerts, "very little folk music is heard at folk festivals". Rather, Cooney suggests that much of what he considers folk is performed in camping areas, after the concerts are finished. This is because for Cooney, the definition of folk is that it "is music learned by ear, made in small group situations, kitchen music" (1982: 13), whereas concerts are generally passive events with large audiences and therefore cannot enact folk process. I dispute Cooney's assertion, and argue instead that concerts, as the primary structuring events of a folk festival, both

perform folk and facilitate the folk process. This occurs through active performer-audience engagement which allows for face-to-face communication of folk tradition (*continuity*), the display of innovation and evolution of folk content (or product), and enables *community selection*. This active performer-audience engagement is facilitated by concert logics of design (which enable the contextualisation of the folk presented) that establish these concert events as *folk music* events.



Figure 7.1: 'Village Marquee' Concert, Fleurieu Folk Festival, 2012

In this chapter, I compare three concert performances: first, a concert by Canadian April Verch featuring traditional fiddle tunes, songs and step dances in the Ottawa Valley tradition; second, Australian singer/songwriter Fred Smith's *Dust of Uruzgan* concert of original songs about his experience with Australian troops in Afghanistan; and lastly, a late night concert by Australian children's entertainer Peter Combe⁸². I will show that in addition to the (folk) musical content of these concerts, performer-audience interaction – determined by the logics of design of concert structures (including the role of the MC in establishing folk credibility), performer's 'stage talk' (see Bealle, 1993) and the selective inattention of integral versus accidental audiences (Schechner, 1976) – establishes relationships in which different but equally valid concepts of folk (as a traditional corpus of music and dance, as a form of social commentary, and as an exercise in nostalgia) and folk ideals (such as participation and authenticity) are communicated, and enables the process of folk.

⁸² Although I witnessed all three performers at the National Folk Festival in 2012, I attended multiple concerts by both Fred Smith and April Verch throughout the course of my fieldwork, and these will inform my discussion, whereas I only attended the one Peter Combe concert.

Choosing Performers: Curating Folk Concerts

Before discussing specific concert events, it is useful to briefly look at the artist selection process to better understand how festival concerts are curated. The artist selection process is integral in determining the folk content presented to festival attendees. In my experience as a folk festival committee member partially responsible for choosing performers, three major factors arose which determined artist selection: (1) affordability – whether the fee requested by the performer seemed reasonable in view of the limited budget of the festival; (2) pulling/star power – whether the performer was recognisable enough or had enough pulling power to bring in (paying) attendees to the festival; and (3) folkiness – whether the selection committee considered that an applying artist could be considered as a folk performer, or their performance had enough folk characteristics, to be included on a folk festival programme. These criteria were applied variably, depending upon the performer application. A high-profile performer with significant ‘pulling’ power might command an inflated fee, even if their ‘folk credibility’ was limited, while a large fee may also be considered for a performer unknown beyond the folk community, with limited drawing power, because their folk credentials were high and/or the performance they proposed was considered by the committee to be important to the presentation and continuation of folk music in Australia. Given, however, that the majority of artists applying to perform asked only nominal fees (sometimes not enough to cover their travel to and from the festival), or no fee at all, then once all other factors were considered, the primary selection criteria applied was folkiness⁸³.

The answer to the basic dilemma of “is it folk music?” was generally arrived at via consensus. At no point was explicit criteria for selection established or even much discussed. Individual members of the panel identified artists they felt would be good additions to the festival programme and communicated this to the panel. The panel then made a joint decision about the applicant. This apparently subjective process of selection was, however, subject to certain tacit considerations and underlying assumptions about folk, and what constitutes folk performance. For most applicants, being already known as a folk performer, either because they played music in the same settings as committee members, or because they were known to have performed at other folk festivals, was the initial definitive characteristic that established them as folk. Being known within a folk

⁸³ Other factors included considerations of overall programming and special consideration was often given for young or up-and-coming performers.

context, being endorsed by other folk performers or folk festival curators, thus became a primary marker of folk legitimacy.

Applicants wholly unknown to the selection panel were assessed on the basis of their application and video or audio samples. Here, a determination of folkiness was easily applied where the music was led by acoustic instruments deemed to be characteristically ‘folk’ or ‘traditional’: fiddles, accordions, banjos, acoustic guitars, bagpipes, bodhrans and so on. However, applications from bands predominantly comprised of ‘non-traditional’ (i.e. electric) instruments, or those from individual singer/songwriters, were considered in terms of content rather than form. These applications were assessed on a range of criteria. Was the content original (i.e. not cover songs)? Was the content drawing upon an established corpus of folk material? Did the lyrics include some kind of social commentary? If the answer to any of these questions was yes, they were often deemed worthy of inclusion, even if there was some residual debate about their legitimacy as ‘folk’ acts.

Despite the apparent arbitrariness of artist selection then, there were unspoken, implicit guidelines pertaining to what would be presented as folk, and thereby received by audiences as folk, in festival concerts. The criteria for folkiness were therefore: (1) context – being known as a folk performer or having been previously determined as a folk performer by other folk gatekeepers (such as other folk festivals); (2) form – using appropriate folk instrumentation and style; and (3) either original content (usually social commentary) or drawing on an established corpus of folk material. It was these three broad guidelines that, in my experience on a selection panel, determined what music was presented as folk to festival concert-goers.

Three Concerts

A folk festival’s concert programme can encompass performances ranging from individual singer/songwriters with or without an instrument, to choirs, to fully electric rock bands, to duos, to multi-member orchestras and any number of other performer arrangements and presentations, and can include intimate, small scale events (with little performer/audience separation) or massive, more spectacular extravaganzas involving sophisticated lighting and technological innovation. Due to the range and breadth of performance types, it is impossible to identify and deconstruct a single concert that would be representative of a typical folk festival concert. Instead, I focus on three performers – April Verch, Fred

Smith and Peter Combe – because these concerts have broadly similar logics of design, in that the named performer is the focal point (the egocentric locus – see Bealle, 1993) of the performance, and they each sing, perform at least some original music, and play an instrument. Despite their apparent similarity of form though, their performances represent three very different examples of the folk music concerts that can be included at Australian folk festivals. The first, April Verch, is an example of traditional folk music (and dance) expounded by a folk artist with deep knowledge of the folk music traditions she performs. The second, Fred Smith, is part of a folk tradition of narrative singer/songwriters, whose original performance material comprises contemporary social commentary. Finally, Peter Combe’s concert of children’s nonsense songs highlights the importance of participation and nostalgia in oral transmission, community selection and continuation. All three concerts *present* and *communicate* folk material, and are themselves *part* of the *folk process* facilitated by folk festivals.

April Verch (and band)

When you see April Verch perform, the first thing that strikes you is the pure energy that infuses her fiddle playing and step dancing. When you listen to her though, what draws you in are more subtle things, her pure voice, the finely detailed elegance of her fiddle phrasing and the depth of a repertoire that ranges through material from bluegrass to Brazilian to Celtic, from a jaunty Canadian folk song to a poignant contemporary ballad. April is a world-class fiddler, a champion Ottawa Valley step dancer, an acclaimed composer, and a vocalist whose voice has been hailed as “absolutely captivating”.

(National Folk Festival 2012, Official Program, p.47)

April Verch is internationally renowned as both a fiddle-player and an Ottawa Valley step dancer⁸⁴, and was only the second woman to win the Canadian Open Fiddle Championship (see Johnson 2000; Johnson 1999). She was also one of six fiddlers chosen to represent the Canadian fiddle tradition at the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver (Verch, 2017).

I saw April Verch perform at many festivals throughout my fieldwork period, which coincided with Verch’s extended tour of Australian festivals. Together with her band, Verch performed (traditional and original) fiddle tunes, songs and step dancing in the Ottawa Valley tradition, sometimes dancing and playing fiddle simultaneously, impressing audiences with her energy and adding an element of spectacle to her concerts. At each concert, Verch explained some of the origins of the style of Ottawa Valley step dancing

⁸⁴ A type of Canadian traditional tap dance with European origins.

and the tune sets she played⁸⁵. At most of her performances, she would also discuss her personal history, explaining that she was from a family and community of Canadian folk music practitioners, and that as a child, she had learnt to play fiddle and dance. The interspersing of contextualising stories, and demonstrations of dance between fiddle tunes and songs were part of the logics of design of Verch's concerts, enabling Verch to situate herself as part of a *living tradition* (demonstrating continuity between the present and the past), and in so doing establishing herself and her music as authentically folk.

As a performer, Verch always appeared modest, downplaying her own achievements and instead only referring to herself as part of, or a representative of, a broader folk tradition. Her music and dancing were energetic and she engaged audiences effectively, interacting with them and on occasion inviting and answering questions from the crowd. I spoke with festival-goers who attended multiple Verch concerts, prioritising repeated attendance over other festival acts. The liveliness of her performance (as one concert-goer remarked to me, April Verch “had more energy than the Energiser Bunny”⁸⁶), along with her ability to sing, play fiddle and dance simultaneously (which was “seriously impressive”, according to another audience member), her varied and extensive repertoire of tunes and songs, and her general capacity to entertain, were cited as reasons festival-goers returned to her performances multiple times.

Fred Smith – Dust of Uruzgan

“An exceptional songwriter and the equal of Bogle, Walker and Schumann” (Sydney Morning Herald), Fred Smith recently returned from 18 months working as a political and tribal advisor alongside Australian Forces in Uruzgan Province, southern Afghanistan. He will be performing songs from his powerful new album Dust of Uruzgan, accompanied by a stunning set of projected photographs from Afghanistan.

(Port Fairy Folk Music Festival 2012 Official Program, p.9)⁸⁷

Iain ‘Fred’ Smith is an Australian singer/songwriter, whose background as a diplomat provides the basis for much of his original material⁸⁸. He spent eighteen months from mid-2009 to the beginning of 2011 working as the first Australian diplomat posted to Uruzgan, Afghanistan, and then as a political adviser from mid- to late-2013, working with

⁸⁵ April Verch also presented workshops at several festivals, in which she more fully demonstrated the elements of step dancing, as well as providing a more thorough history of the traditional origins of the tune-sets she played.

⁸⁶ A reference to a character long used in advertising for Energiser batteries.

⁸⁷ Although he presented a standard concert at the 2012 NFF, it is Fred Smith's themed concert *Dust of Uruzgan* – variations of which he has presented at multiple festivals – I intend to deal with here.

⁸⁸ A previous album was based on his experiences as a South Pacific peacekeeper, and he has been subject of a documentary about his work there and the role his music played in his diplomacy.

provincial government officials and tribal leaders (Regional Arts Victoria, 2014). From this experience, Smith produced an album and a concert experience, called *Dust of Uruzgan*⁸⁹. During these concerts Smith narrated stories and sang about individual soldiers and experiences, often with the aid of a projected slideshow of his own photographs. His narration was characterised by dry wit, and explored the realities of war with both pathos and dark humour. His personal narrative throughout the concert imbued his performance with a sense of authority and authenticity.



Figure 7.2: Fred Smith 'Dust of Uruzgan' concert, Port Fairy Folk Festival, 2012

Audience members I spoke with who returned multiple times to see *Dust of Uruzgan* cited the significant emotional impact it had on them, with some audience members moved to tears as well as laughter. Further, although the concert logics of design – the songs and slide show accompanied by personal narrative – remained more-or-less unchanged, Fred Smith's presentation of the content would vary – his jokes and explanatory narration varied with each presentation, and like Verch, he would on occasion respond to comments and questions from the audience (overcoming the performer/audience divide created by

⁸⁹ Fred Smith has since also published a book titled *The Dust of Uruzgan* (2016), which has formed the basis of another series of concerts/book launches of the *Dust of Uruzgan* around Australia, including at folk festivals.

staging) – suggesting that the personality he presented on stage was significant in drawing return concert audiences. Several of my female informants were particularly enthusiastic in their praise of Fred Smith himself, commenting “I just *love* Fred Smith! He’s just so lovely”.

Peter Combe

Australia’s best known kids singer/songwriter currently undergoing a career resurgence and now with a 3 tiered audience – kids, young adults, over a million of whom grew up on his songs and their parents, who bought the albums 20 years ago in the first place! His ‘American Pie’ is a song called ‘Wash Your Face in Orange Juice’ – compulsory at all concerts! arguably the best known original Australian kids song of the past 25 years. There is much audience singing at the concerts.

(National Folk Festival 2012, Official Program, p.57-8)

Peter Combe’s concert at the National Folk Festival (NFF) in 2012 differed from the concerts of Verch and Smith in two major respects: one, it primarily consisted of children’s songs; and two, it involved significant audience participation throughout the whole concert⁹⁰.

Peter Combe is an Australian children’s entertainer, considered an “Aussie icon” (Bucklow, 2015), who has been writing and performing music for children for more than forty years. Trained as a specialist music teacher, he achieved broad popularity as a children’s entertainer through the 1970s and 1980s, and his music was ubiquitous on television and in schools. His songs continue to be used in school music education programmes. Still touring and creating original music, Combe has broadened his audience by playing late night concerts for adults in addition to his matinee children’s or family shows, providing an opportunity for adult audiences to indulge in a nostalgic return to their early childhood.

The Peter Combe concert I witnessed at the NFF was situated in a venue specially reserved for late night ‘party’ entertainment. The audience for this concert was standing, drinking and fairly rowdy. It was a significantly different audience atmosphere from that at the Verch and Smith concerts. In those concerts, audiences signalled their engagement with the performer through polite/engaged listening, applause when appropriate, asking questions when possible and remaining seated and attentive. At this concert, I could barely

⁹⁰ In addition to these points of difference, it was also a concert performance I only experienced once. Further, it was the only concert in which I struggled to see the artist due to the overflowing (standing and dancing) crowd in the small marquee/bar in which it was staged.

hear Combe's significantly amplified voice and guitar over the crowd's enthusiastic communal singing.

Unlike April Verch, who draws on an established corpus of recognised folk material and writes original music in a traditional style, and Fred Smith, a modern troubadour whose original compositions reflect and comment on contemporary social issues, Peter Combe with his guitar and nonsense children's songs seems more appropriate as part of the Children's Festival. However, despite the nonsensical content of his music and his positioning as a popular children's entertainer, a strong argument can be made that his music is part of a folk tradition, in that it is learned and passed on orally through the generations. Very different in content, style of presentation, audience etiquette and venue/location, the Combe concert provides a useful juxtaposition to the Verch and Smith concerts in discussing how the concert programme of a festival presents and communicates notions of folk.

Performance and Interaction: Building Relationships

Performances are emotional relationships between performers and audiences.
(Hemer & Dundon, 2016: 7)

A festival concert is a reciprocal relationship between the performer and the audience. The strength of the connection between performer and audience is vital in determining the success (if we judge success by the stability and attentiveness of the audience) of a festival concert, and therefore, the success of the folk process via performer-audience interaction. Inclusion in the folk festival programme, as has been previously discussed, means that the content of the concert, or the performer themselves, can be and is considered, in some shape or form, folk. If the concert is the pre-eminent mode of folk performance at a folk festival, then the relationship between performer and audience developed in the concert is integral to a shared understanding of folk by festival participants.

Evaluating a performance, deciding whether it is 'good' or 'bad' (for audience or performer?) is, as Schechner and Appel note (1990: 6), extremely problematic, however I suggest that a 'good' concert performance at a folk festival is one in which a reciprocal relationship between audience and performer is established which enables the communication of folk. Therefore, exploring how the audience and performer interact and thus shape the performance, can provide useful insight into the relationships that are built through concerts at festivals.

At all three of the concerts I explore in this chapter audience members fluctuated between passive and active modes of participation at various stages of the performance (see Obeyesekere, 1990: 130). During the Peter Combe concert, for example, the audience participation (raucous song accompaniment), a significant aspect and result of the logics of design of the concert, was instrumental in driving the intensity of the performance, generating an energetic, party atmosphere. Through the active engagement of both performer and audiences it transported audience members back to their childhoods, and brought forth feelings of nostalgia, an important aspect of folk process.

The Peter Combe concert was illustrative of a concert in which active participation on behalf of the audience was key to entertainment itself, and thus to the success of the performance. The April Verch and Fred Smith concerts relied far less on active audience participation through singing and dancing, but rapport with the audience was established in other ways, such as through stage talk (part of the logics of design of folk concerts which will be discussed later) and through the content of the performance. The intensity of the Fred Smith concert was reliant on the capabilities of Smith as a narrator and evocative songwriter, backed up by slide show images, to emotionally move audiences – but this was contingent on the cooperation of the audience to attentively listen to and engage with the performance. In other words, to engage in a reciprocal ‘conversation’ with the performer, an act of participation rather than spectatorship⁹¹. At both the Smith and Verch concerts, audiences “participate by *listening*, which is a difficult and specialized act. To attend properly and over a period of time, one must make an effort – often an exhausting effort” (Tuan, 1990a: 243).

At folk festivals, how the relationship between artist and audience develops impacts on the way folk is communicated in a face-to-face interaction. It is useful then to look at some of the ways in which performance is structured, the role of stage talk in *drawing in* an audience, and how integral versus accidental audiences can shape the folk experience.

Structuring the Performance

Drawing on Handelman’s suggestion that an event should be analysed in terms of its logics of design, it is useful to examine how concert performances are structured as discrete

⁹¹ See the discussion of Martin Carthy regarding engaged audiences versus voyeuristic ones in Chapter 2.

events. Since a single stage hosts multiple acts over the course of a festival, there are clear steps that indicate to an audience where a performance begins and ends, and differentiates one artist from another. This structuring not only delimits individual folk performances, it also provides opportunities for the MC to frame the performance as folk through their introductory and conclusory announcements.

Usually, the stages which comprise a performance are as follows:

1. MC thanks previous band and then proceeds to make announcements about what is coming up in the venue or thanks sponsors.
2. Previous band, with the help of stage-hands/sound engineers, removes themselves and their instruments from the stage, sometimes stopping to converse with audience members who have approached in order to buy cds etc.
3. New band arrives on stage, setting up instruments and plugging in or arranging microphones as appropriate. Sound check and instrument tuning ensues.
4. When sound check is complete, the sound engineer gives the “all-clear” to the MC.
5. MC then takes the stage and introduces the performer/band on stage, giving appropriate biographical information (especially geographical origins, informing the audience about whether it is a local, interstate or international act).
6. Performance proper commences, and continues for the thirty or forty-five minutes scheduled.
7. MC thanks the band (and may comment on this performance, provide information about where/when the band is playing again at the festival and/or correct any missing/incorrect information provided in the introduction) and then proceeds to make announcements about upcoming performances in the venue or thanks sponsors.

The MC’s introduction of a performer is the key indicator that the performance proper is due to begin, a cue for the audience that the time for idle chat is over, and that attention should be centred on the stage. The MC also performs an important function in the performance itself, by introducing and giving important biographical information about a band/performer, which can be significant in establishing authenticity⁹². As Bealle (1993: 81) notes, “emcees are allowed to say a great deal more about bands and performers than bands and performers are allowed to say about themselves”. It is permissible, even desirable, for an MC to ‘talk-up’ a band, to raise expectations on behalf of the audience about what is to come, to extol the excellence of a performance both in the lead up to it and in the immediate aftermath. MCs can enumerate the accomplishments of a performer/band and thus the rationale for their inclusion at the festival, in a way that might seem

⁹² See Chapter 10 for an ethnographic example of the importance of the MC in managing time and performers, and contextualising performances for audiences.

unappealingly self-aggrandising coming from the performer themselves. The communication of biographical information, such as geographical origin, can attest to the artist's authority as an exponent of a particular musical tradition or style, as in the case of April Verch, who as a native of Ottawa Valley, grew up surrounded by the step-dancing and fiddle traditions she now performs. When an MC comments on Fred Smith's history as an Australian diplomat, serving in Papua New Guinea and Afghanistan, the audience is primed to receive his music as an authentic expression of that experience.

Stage Talk

At concerts, performers communicate with audiences not only through their music, but through spoken communication known as 'stage talk' (see Bealle, 1993). Stage talk performs multiple functions in the concert, including: as a 'filler', filling in idle time between songs and during tuning and set up; as a way of contextualising the performance; as a method of establishing authenticity; as a way of framing the performance; a method by which to introduce songs and individuals in a band; a method by which a performer can advertise other performances or merchandise; and as a method of establishing rapport with an audience. In his analysis of the employment of stage talk by performers at a bluegrass festival, Bealle (1993: 64) suggests:

Stage talk, less formally constrained than music, can be used in broadly creative ways to link performance to a particular perceived past. Often depicted as the filling of idle time on stage, stage talk draws attention to the textual past, to salient features of the music, to the immediate environment, to other performances, or to the performers' own disposition towards the music or the audience. Performers exploit these utilitarian features of conversational speech to make sincere claims regarding the framing of expressive or aesthetic performance.

Stage talk enables performers to directly interact with an audience. This can determine whether an audience fully engages with a performer or merely watches and listens. I have attended festival concerts in which the excellence and skill of the musician was clearly evident, but in which the performer appeared unwilling or unable to speak to the audience, and in these cases, the body language and fidgeting of the audience suggested boredom and polite, passive listening. Yet other concerts, in which the performer spoke to and joked with the audience but where their musical skill was arguably no more than average or mediocre, clearly held the attention of an actively engaged audience. Musical virtuosity is by no means a determinant of concert success or audience acclaim at a folk festival. Rather, stage talk in which the performer *draws in* the audience, actively includes them in the performance, and contextualises themselves and their music, can result in a much more memorable concert experience for all involved. At the same time, conventional stage talk

doesn't have to be complicated. Comments about the weather are common – “how cold was it this morning? It was freezing in my tent” – but though standard, such comments indicate to the audience that the performer is subject to the same challenging conditions as them, can relate to them on the same level, overcoming the performer/audience divide. Stage talk helps a performer to establish a relationship with their audience.

Peter Combe's stage talk consisted of little more than introducing songs and greeting the crowd – the audience was predisposed by the disinhibiting effects of alcohol (the concert venue was a cider bar), expectation and prior knowledge of the songs to readily involve themselves with the performance through singing along and dancing. Stage talk played a much greater role in the performances of April Verch and Fred Smith, though they each employed it very differently.

April Verch employed stage talk in a fairly conventional manner, to fill time while she or her band tuned instruments, and as a way of introducing and acknowledging her band members. She courted the goodwill of concert patrons by commenting favourably on the festival and on Australia more generally. By relating anecdotes that linked her personal biography (especially her childhood learning traditional fiddle and dance from the musical community in which she grew up) to the tunes and dances she performed, she contextualised and framed the performance as a continuation of tradition, with her role that of a caretaker of the folk music practices she presented. Verch never did this in a boastful manner; instead, her stage talk, while situating her within the Ottawa Valley musical community, granting her a level of authority and establishing her authenticity, suggested that the music was bigger than her, and that there were other musical ‘greats’ who were better exponents than she.

Much of April Verch's stage talk revolved around explanation of the tunes and songs she played. The following is an example of Verch's stage talk at one of the concerts she performed at Port Fairy in 2012, in which she explains Ottawa Valley step-dancing:

...there's a specific step that goes with it, so like, there's the Heel Toe Polka that you do to the Heel Toe Polka, and there's, ah, a seven step and things like that and those are mostly Western Canada. So the Ottawa Valley dance tradition is called Ottawa Valley Step Dancing, that you've seen me flailing about up here. And as I said before, ah, the valley was settled by people who came to work in the lumber camps, and the story I was always told as I was growing up, is that's kind of how this tradition evolved as well. So the lumberjacks would work hard all day, and at night they'd retire to their shanty, and ah, kick back and entertain themselves. And they had smaller instruments that they would bring to camp for the winter, they'd have harmonicas and fiddles, the odd guitar, but they didn't have pianos and accordions which often accompanied the music, so those that didn't have

instruments would use their feet to accompany the music. And that's apparently how this tradition started. Now obviously it's evolved, because if you can see a big lumberjack in gum rubber boots doing this kind of dancing, then you have a pretty good imagination! Um, but it has a little bit of Irish hardshoe like you would see in Riverdance and there's some of that influence, also there's even a bit of clogging or flat-footing from the Appalachian mountains in the US, um, and there's some tap dancing, and that's come in more recently. There's more tap in this style of dancing now even than when I started, you know, when I was three...

Nearly every song, tune or dance performed during her set was accompanied by a story about where it fit in the folk tradition (whether of Ottawa Valley or elsewhere), how she came to learn it and from whom, or why she played it. The previous example not only demonstrates that Verch understands the origins of the tradition she performs, but knows how the tradition is evolving even as she performs it – an illustration of folk process in action. Such explanations demonstrated her broad knowledge of a folk corpus, her authority as an exponent of a folk tradition, and provided context for the audience. Audiences were left in no doubt that the material presented in Verch's concert was *authentically* folk, as part of a *continuous* and *evolving* tradition.

It was not merely *what* Verch said during stage talk though – whether it was including the audience in the difficulties of keeping instruments in tune in open marquees, or explaining the antecedents of a song or tune – but *how* she said it that endeared her to audiences. Verch's enthusiasm for the folk traditions she performed was evident in all aspects of her stage talk. This enthusiasm was an essential part of her personal charisma, and was instrumental in 'drawing in' audiences, maintaining attention throughout the concert, and communicating the inherent *value* in maintaining and continuing the folk music practices she performed.

Fred Smith incorporated some of the conventional aspects of stage talk, such as referencing aspects of the local festival or community in order to endear himself to the audience, or commenting on aspects of stage craft, such as the technical problems faced in a festival setting. He too used stage talk to introduce and extol the virtues of his band (not himself), or promote his cds or other performances. Where he differed from April Verch lay in his use of narrative to shape the performance. *Dust of Uruzgan* was, in some respects, less of a conventional concert than an informative lecture which utilised Smith's skills as a singer/songwriter to illustrate the narrative.

Unlike Verch, Fred Smith's original compositions didn't belong to a broader folk corpus. Instead, his music represented social commentary, chronicling the lives and histories of

Australian men and women impacted by war⁹³. By framing the songs in terms of his own experience as both an observer and participant among the troops in Uruzgan Province, Smith established his authority as a chronicler of life on the battlefield of Afghanistan. Smith's stage talk functioned as a device to contextualise the narrative aspects of his music. It was particularly effective, however, because of Smith's personal charisma – especially his dry wit and self-deprecating delivery – which gave the impression that he was speaking directly, personally, to every individual member of the audience. Smith's dry wit was demonstrated when he explained his new album to the St Albans Folk Festival (2012) audience, stating in a dead-pan voice:

I've got a new record, *Dust of Uruzgan*. It's a collection of songs I wrote working in Afghanistan. [...] allowed me to pursue my ethno-musicological interest in the musical comedy tradition of the Taliban...

Like April Verch, Smith demonstrated a humility (a key part of the folk ideal in which personal authenticity and truth is more important than self-promotion) which de-emphasised self even while recounting stories and singing songs which were powerful as a result of the authority he was able to establish as a critical observer, and this was part of what endeared him to his audience, providing the means by which he could more effectively communicate his music.

The importance of stage talk in Fred Smith's performance was highlighted by the comments my informants made about his concerts. While they invariably enjoyed his overall performance and thought his songs well-crafted, funny and/or emotionally moving, they also referred to the stories he told and his dry humour as being aspects of the performance they particularly appreciated, because it helped them make sense of the concert (resulting in a more intense folk experience). One of my informants said that she felt that Smith had "taken her on a journey". Given that the narrative surrounding the songs he performed was integral in contextualising the songs and slide-show pictures, it was clearly Smith's stage talk that was partially responsible for the way in which this audience member was "drawn in" to the performance.

Community Selection: Integral Versus Accidental Audiences

Stage talk, as we have seen, helps to establish authenticity and contextualise a performance. It also represents an important aspect of concert logics of design that enable

⁹³ In this respect, Smith could be seen as continuing a tradition of singer/songwriters as social and political commentators that was a significant aspect of the 'urban' folk revival of the 1960s.

performers to establish rapport between themselves and an audience. Developing rapport is an essential aspect of communicating folk, because although my own experience at a range of folk festivals has demonstrated that overall, folk audiences are by-and-large polite audiences⁹⁴, festival audiences also have notoriously short attention-spans. Ronstrom, Malm and Lindberg (2001: 60) in their discussion of folk in Sweden, equate concerts at festivals to the informality of television whereby audiences simultaneously engage not only with what is presented, but in other forms of social interaction (eating, conversing etc), and for this reason, festivalisation creates “notorious difficulties in catching and maintaining the audiences (sic) attention over a longer period of time”. This leads, they argue, to festival-goers engaging in activity similar to television remote “zapping”, involving “repeated changes between different stages and performances” (2001: 60).

Ronstrom, Malm and Lindberg’s analogy of channel-changing (or ‘zapping’) is apt, with many festival-goers dropping in and out of concert-venues to sample acts, or in order to pass the time prior to another performance (in the same venue or elsewhere – refer to Rosie’s experience in Chapter 4 regarding walking and movement as part of the festival experience). There are multiple factors that influence this kind of ‘concert hopping’, the foremost being the ‘holding power’ of the performer, and their ability to communicate a particular folk experience⁹⁵.

Relationships between audience and performer are, however, reciprocal to a more or lesser degree, and, arguably, a “performance is licensed by its audience which can, at any time, ratify or withdraw that license” (Schechner, 1976: 13). While the infrastructural logics of design of the concert (with its cues to signal when an audience should begin to pay attention) and the methods by which performers present themselves and their music to audience (through stage talk, personal charisma and musical style) are essential parts of the concert performance, a cooperative audience is ultimately required to authorise the performance. Without this authorisation, the community selection aspect of the folk process cannot be satisfied. The *type* of audience therefore in part shapes the concert, and determines its ultimate success.

⁹⁴ MacKinnon (1993) notes there are established norms of behaviour for folk audiences in Britain, which, though informal, involve polite attentiveness.

⁹⁵ Other factors (external to the performer), such as the style and size of a venue space and the porousness of its boundaries, influenced audience stability and fluidity. Venue infrastructure therefore also has an impact on how folk is experienced through concerts.



Figure 7.3: 'Bakery Venue' Concert, Uranquinty Folk Festival, 2011

Schechner (1976) differentiates between 'accidental' and 'integral' audiences, suggesting that "an accidental audience comes 'to see the show' while an integral audience is 'necessary to accomplish the work of the show.' Or, to put it another way, the accidental audience attends from pleasure, the integral audience from ritual need" (Schechner, 1976: 13). In other words, accidental audiences attend for many reasons, but are not personally invested in the performance, whereas integral audiences are supportive audiences that are already established, often drawn from friends and supporters or established fan bases.

There are various levels of accidental versus integral audiences across a folk festival. On an overall macro-festival scale, there are accidental audiences (members of the broader non-folk community) and there are integral audiences (members of the folk community – artists, volunteers, organisers, regular folk club participants and so forth – without whom the festival couldn't or wouldn't operate). During the festival, as with any performance, audiences can change from accidental to integral – in fact, I would argue this is one of the purposes of a festival, that by the presentation of folk in a positive and entertaining way, casual attendees are converted into committed folk audiences, and hence, become part of the folk process. Schechner suggests that one method of identifying members of accidental audiences versus integral ones is that integral audiences often pay less attention than accidental audiences who have paid to attend and who attend as individuals or in small groups (1976: 14). Integral audiences of folk festivals are often identifiable by the fact that

they pay less attention to the concert programme in itself, preferring to spend time in the session bar or in private sessions, sometime eschewing concerts altogether, choosing to participate in the folk process by playing music themselves, rather than experiencing new (to them) folk concerts as audience members. It is notable that many organisers at festivals are, when off duty, seen at the bar or at artist/organiser-only 'backstage' non-concert events, only accessible by those 'in the know' (see MacKinnon, 1993: 115). Inattention to festival concerts generally can be a method by which those with inside knowledge can demonstrate their insider privilege (Schechner, 1976: 14).

At a concert level, there are also clear differences between accidental and integral audiences, but the composition of these can shift substantially over the course of a festival. This results in variation in attention levels. As Ronstrom, Malm and Lindberg (2001) have noted, the attention of concert audiences at festivals can be difficult to attract and maintain. Excluding those macro-level integral audiences discussed above who are selectively inattentive (Schechner 1976: 14-15), accidental audiences at festivals tend to predominate. The extensive programme of most festivals ensures that even committed folkies who attend folk clubs and other events regularly will be presented with unknown performers. During the first evening/day or so of the festival, festival performers largely play to audiences willing to be entertained but who have no personal investment in the performance. This is an opportunity to present folk to audiences who then *community select* as part of the folk process whether they attend further concerts. Over the course of the festival, or sometimes even within a concert itself, where the performer is sufficiently charismatic or entertaining, accidental audiences can transform into integral ones. I argue that this is what occurred for those returning audience members at the April Verch and Fred Smith concerts⁹⁶. Unlike the macro-festival level integral audiences discussed above, the transformation of concert-goers from accidental to integral audiences leads to a heightening of focused attention rather than selective inattention.

⁹⁶ My ability to comment on the type of audience present (and the general composition of the audience) at the Peter Combe concert is limited by having only witnessed one concert. I would suggest, however, that the audience was probably mostly accidental, attending from pleasure ('to see the show') rather than need (Schechner 1976: 13).



Figure 7.4: April Verch (and band) and audience, Port Fairy Folk Festival, 2012

Both Verch and Smith, with established reputations on the folk music circuit, at the beginning of a festival attracted a mix of what I consider *deliberate* accidental audiences – those festival-goers who had heard of them and sought out their concerts at the festival, *unintentional* accidental audiences – those who happened upon their concerts purely by chance as they have moved about the festival, and *existing* integral audiences – those who attended the festival *on the basis* that they were part of the programme. Some members of the accidental audience at the early concerts (i.e. Friday night performances), were so impressed or emotionally moved by the experience that they became integral audiences, evidenced by their purchasing of cds and other merchandise and their *need* to witness more April Verch and Fred Smith concerts over the rest of the weekend, to the exclusion of other forms of entertainment and concerts. These returning audiences ensured that subsequent concerts were highly patronised, limiting the opportunity for new accidental audiences to attend. A number of these returning concert goers brought along other festival attendees and would whisper to their friends about upcoming aspects of the performance. Some of the comments I overheard from one April Verch audience member related to aspects of her performance, such as “didn’t I tell you what a great fiddle player she was?” and “wait until you see her play fiddle and dance as well, she’s amazing”. Such comments demonstrated the speaker’s superior (insider) knowledge, and by bringing additional audience members to the concert, ensured the success of the concerts over the whole festival. I noted that returning audiences were also more ready to laugh at jokes made by the performers (as they anticipated the joke or anecdote), or interject requesting songs or tunes, demonstrating

the reciprocal relationship that has been formed between the performer and their more devoted audience.

Audience attention is greatly variable across the concerts at a festival. The ability to transform at least some of their audience from accidental to integral meant that Fred Smith and April Verch were more effectively able to communicate the folk content they were performing, and ensured that this was extended beyond their concerts through their integral audiences' willingness to buy cds, join fan mailing lists, and possibly attend concerts and gigs beyond the festival itself.

Presenting Folk: Performing the Folk Process

So far I have discussed the role of performer curation by organising committees in shaping audience ideas of what constitutes folk, how concerts are structured including the role of MCs in communicating folk authenticity, and how the performance style of artists themselves impacts and develops relationships between folk performers and folk audiences. But what about the *content* of the music presented at festival concerts? The material that artists present – the songs they sing, the tunes they play – is essential in analysing the role of concerts in defining, shaping the folk process and communicating notions of folk.

Concerts are the most formal method of articulating folk at a folk festival. Concerts present ideas of folk to audiences there to be entertained; a far different experience of folk to the informal sessions and workshops that represent the more participatory forms of folk engagement. Given that formal concerts are the central organising feature of folk festivals, folk festival concerts can be considered as an integral part of the *folk process* in contemporary Australia, and therefore the material that is presented at these concerts is critical.

The International Folk Music Council's 1955 definition of folk music refers to the critical factors of the process by which folk music evolves, namely *continuity, variation and community selection*. In this definition, it is the *process* by which music evolves which provides the definition of folk. Graeme Smith (2003: 288) articulates the folk process as follows:

Traditional musical genres from limited communities with intact cultures are particularly important to the folk-music movement. Ideally these genres should have evolved through selection and been modified by *oral transmission* – the 'folk process'. To the folk-music

movement they are not just genres to be studied or preserved but models for musical expression independent of distortion by modernity, commercial forces or elitist intellectual art.

Further:

Composition of original songs, which may appear similar to songs written elsewhere in other genres, is seen as providing the ‘folk community’ with new material for selection, rejection or modification through the ‘folk process’. Similarly, instrumentalists who adopt distinctive styles of performance are seen as affirming historical continuity and identifying themselves with marginal social groups.

All three of the performers discussed in this chapter satisfied at least one of the requirements of the folk definition, *community selection*, merely by their inclusion in the programme of the folk festival. Ideas about what can be considered folk are shaped by the broader folk community, embodied by the festival selection committee, who create the festival programme accordingly. In turn, the concerts that are presented at a festival shape how the broader folk community interprets folk. Thus, the process of community selection effectively situates the three performers as legitimate folk performers. Further, their presentation of musical content through their concerts satisfies that other aspect of the folk process, that it be *orally transmitted*. It is useful, therefore, to look at what content is being transmitted, or how different interpretations of folk content, are being transmitted to audiences in each of these concerts.

April Verch presents music and dance drawn from the orally-transmitted traditions either of her native area (*continuity*) or she draws from a corpus of traditional tunes and songs from other established regional and cultural traditions. Her virtuosity and individual style may alter the tunes in some degree (*modification*), but they remain recognisable. Verch’s original compositions are presented within the context of this extended corpus, situating her new music within an established tradition, thereby “providing the ‘folk community’ with new material for selection, rejection or modification”. In addition, Verch’s stage talk deemphasises her formal college-level musical education in favour of her experience of learning tunes and dances as a child from local, community musicians at music sessions and dances. This reflects in part a disinclination to ‘talk-up’ her formal qualifications (non-folk) in addition to situating her as a caretaker of a community-based musical tradition (folk). Her stage talk helps to contextualise her music for audiences as a legitimate folk tradition. Her entire concert demonstrates folk process, while her inclusion in the festival and her ability to engage audiences enables the folk process to occur at the festival.

April Verch's concerts predominantly featured fiddle tune-sets. Generally the songs that she performed at her concerts were either traditional, or covers of songs which have become established within the folk traditions that she explores, for example, the Lester Flatt and Chuck Johnson bluegrass song, "I'm Waiting to Hear You Call Me Darlin'". The original song was performed by Earl Scruggs and Lester Flatt, who, with the Foggy Mountain Boys, are credited with being two of the most influential musicians in the development of bluegrass (Smith 1965: 252). The song has since become a standard in the bluegrass repertoire. By performing such a well-known bluegrass song, Verch demonstrated her familiarity with the stylistic characteristics of the bluegrass tradition and its recognised song corpus (presenting herself as 'authentically folk'), and a broader knowledge of a folk music corpus beyond the Canadian Ottawa Valley styles in which she is established as a proponent. This was an example wherein Verch selected a song within the bluegrass style which had already through community selection been accepted as a folk song, modified it with her own arrangement, and then presented it as the evolution of a folk tradition.

Fred Smith does not, as Verch does, present and continue regional/cultural folk traditions in his performance but is instead representative of a long-established tradition in the folk scene of the singer/songwriter commenting on contemporary social and political issues⁹⁷. It is his *style of performance* therefore that represents *continuity* in the folk process, and his longevity as a performer in the Australian folk scene, and repeated bookings at folk festivals and clubs, suggests *community selection*. His songs have also been added to the overall corpus of folk music in Australia, with every performance of them at folk festivals increasing their recognition (*folk process*). His music is now regularly played on radio and television programmes, especially during times of national significance such as Anzac Day and Remembrance Day, demonstrating that he is being accepted as part of, and representative of, the Australian folk music tradition, because the themes he explores in his music (the content) are relevant to and speak to the broader public in a meaningful way.

The eponymous song of Fred Smith's concert, "Dust of Uruzgan" provides an example of Smith's style of narrative songwriting. The song tells the story of a young Victorian man killed by a roadside anti-personnel mine from the point of view of a Queensland soldier

⁹⁷ As discussed in Chapter 2, the singer/songwriter was a key aspect of the popular folk scene of the 1960s, which in some respects drove the 'urban' folk revival in Australia in the 1960s and 1970s.

also injured in the explosion. The song begins by introducing Paul and establishing Paul's voice in the narrative:

*In the ring they called me "Warlord", my mother calls me Paul, you can call me Private Warren when you're filing your report.
As to how I came to be here, this is what I understand, in this hospital in Germany from the dust of Uruzgan.*

The song builds through a number of verses, providing rich detail about the working and living conditions of those stationed in Kandahar:

*We started up near Chora working 14 hours a day mentoring a Kandak from the Afghan 4th brigade.
Down through the Baluchi into eastern Dorafshan working under open skies in the dust of Uruzgan.
It's a long, long way from Townsville, not like any place you'll see – suddenly you're walking through the 14th century.
Women under burkhas, tribal warlords rule a land full of goats, and huts and jingle trucks in the dust of Uruzgan.*

In the final verses we learn how Paul came to be in the German hospital referenced at the beginning of the song:

We'd been standing still for hours when I took a quick step back. Kicked a small AP mine and everything went black. I woke up on a gurney, flat out on my back. I had to ask them seven times just to get the facts.

I lived to tell the story through a simple twist of fate – the main charge lay ten feet away from the pressure plate. You see the mine was linked by det cord to a big charge laid by hand, hidden under Benny by the dust of Uruzgan.

I was a Queensland champ Thai Boxer now I look south of my knee, and all I see is bed sheets where my right foot used to be. Benny's dead and buried underneath Australian sand, but his spirit's out there wandering through the dust of Uruzgan.

(lyrics by Fred Smith quoted in Regional Arts Victoria, 2014).

During the song, slides of Smith's photographs were employed to add further context and emphasise the poignancy of the narrative. While the facts narrated are matter-of-fact, the personal cost to the soldiers – one killed and the other permanently disabled – is brought to the fore. The focus on and celebration of the working lives of the 'common' or 'working man' is common in the broader folk tradition in Australia⁹⁸, and through his focus on the realities of the life of the soldier, this style of narrative songwriting places Smith well within that tradition.

The Peter Combe concert doesn't feature folk music derived from particular regional or stylistic traditions (like that of April Verch), political or social commentary in the narrative

⁹⁸ See the discussion of the English and Australian folk revivals in Chapter 2, and also the Australian Legend in Chapter 9.

singer/songwriter tradition (like Fred Smith), nor is there much specifically ‘folk’ instrumentation barring the use of an acoustic guitar. However, the longevity of Combe’s career has meant that his songs have become popularly accepted within the community (*community selection*) and have been learnt and sung by children through the medium of television and recordings at home and through children’s music programmes in schools. This means that the songs have been *orally transmitted*. The intergenerational appeal of his songs, evidenced by the adult shows such as that presented at the National Folk Festival, and Combe’s regular concerts for children, argues for a level of *continuity*. As a consequence, Combe’s songs can be considered part of the broader corpus of Australian children’s folk music.

One of the most popular songs of Peter Combe’s repertoire, and one which inspired the most enthusiastic audience participation on the night of the concert I witnessed, is his song “Wash Your Face in Orange Juice (Mr Clicketty Cane)”. The song develops as lines of lyrics are added to each verse, building the song from a verse of consisting of three lines, with the final line “wash your face in orange juice” being repeated in every verse, until the final verse of eight lines. The final line of each new verse is added on to the previous, creating an easy to learn call-and-response song which demands audience participation. The first verse “*When Mr Clicketty Cane plays his silly game/ All the kids in the street, they like to do the same/ Wash your face in orange juice!*” eventually builds to the following:

*When Mr Clicketty Cane plays his silly game
All the kids in the street, they like to do the same
Wash your face in orange juice
Clean your teeth with bubble gum
Fix the fence with sticky tape
Brush your hair with a toothbrush
Fry an egg on a slippery dip
Belly flop in a pizza!*

(lyrics by Peter Combe, from official website, 2020)

The audience is called upon by Combe to repeat each line back to him, as well as perform simple actions which are taught to the audience at the beginning of the song, a bodily (not only oral) communication of folk. “Wash Your Face in Orange Juice (Mr Clicketty Cane)” is representative of the sort of easy to grasp whimsicality in Combe’s lyrics, and demonstrates why adult audiences either remember the song from their childhood, or are able to learn it anew even when under the influence of alcohol at a late night concert. The easy-to-learn lyrics and movements encourage audience participation, and establish a

reciprocal relationship between the performer and audience which is an important aspect of folk process within the structure of the concert programme.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the concert programme of a festival communicates notions of folk performance in multiple ways. Firstly, the method by which concert artists are selected for inclusion in the programme indicates that folk performance is defined by context, that the situating of an artist within a folk festival confers upon the artist an identity as a folk performer, and that this identity is reinforced by subsequent selection by other folk festivals and folk venues/clubs. Folk festival curators and programme committees select artists on the basis of criteria which are generally ill-defined and unspoken, but which takes into account previous identification with, contextualisation and characterisation of folk attributes by other (folk) cultural gatekeepers. Previously untested bands and performers not prejudged as folk are chosen based on style, sound, instrumentation, presentation, and content, all of which are subjectively assessed by selection committees as to how ‘folky’ they are.

Through the logics of design of the concerts, differing uses of stage talk as well as the musical content that is presented, performers establish a relationship with audiences. When this is done effectively, where attention is held and maintained, folk themes, musical styles and lyrical content are all explored in a reciprocal relationship. How well a performer ‘brings the audience with them’ is a marker of a performer’s skill in using stage talk and musical prowess to articulate personality and interesting content to an audience. By converting accidental audiences into integral ones, April Verch and Fred Smith extended their ability to communicate their particular forms of folk music, Verch being representative of a broad traditional style and Smith articulating a narrative commentary of contemporary themes. Audiences were left with an understanding that both traditional music and dance, and contemporary songwriting, are equally valid within a folk context.

Allowing for a reading of folk which includes oral transmission of song through the generations, the Peter Combe concert was a form of light entertainment that communicated that a folk festival was a place that was fun, a place where people can drink and have a good time, singing and dancing together. In a sense, it communicated that folk as it is practiced at festivals in Australia, is not restricted to grizzled, ‘finger-in-the-ear’ folk

singers (see MacKinnon, 1993: 113), but a genre – and an ethos – that embraces a range of performance types and audiences, and in which participation is key.

The content of each concert, and the way it was presented by each performer, demonstrated aspects of the folk process through continuity, evolution, and community selection. The successful engagement of audiences through the concerts' logics of design provided a means by which this process could be continued, by enabling audiences to participate in the folk process. Thus, concerts at festivals not only present folk process, but facilitate it.

Chapter 8: Dance Traditions – Presentation, Participation & Pedagogy

Introduction

In front of the Instrument Makers display hall and the festival merchandise shop is a large expanse of bitumen. Used as a thoroughfare by festival-goers, it is decorated by strings of coloured bunting strung between the surrounding buildings. On a late Sunday afternoon, long after the sun has ceased beating relentlessly down on the mostly empty space, a motley assortment of gaily dressed men and women begin to congregate. Several carry musical instruments, some haul bags full of long wooden sticks, and there is even one dressed up as a traditional hobby horse. As they arrive it becomes obvious that there are separate groups within the mass, differentiated by different costumes and colours. They chat amongst themselves, and there is lots of laughter.

It is clear something out of the ordinary is about to occur. Gradually some of those gathering who carry musical instruments – violins, accordions, concertinas, a banjo and a drum – move off to one side, pulling out and beginning to tune their instruments. Everyone else separates into groups depending upon their costume, leaving clear a large space in front of the musicians. After some discussion between members of different groups, a set of six performers walk into the open space. They all wear white shirts with black and red sashes across their chests, black trousers, leather pads full of brass bells around their shins and hats decorated with flowers, and each carries two large black and red handkerchiefs. They arrange themselves in two rows facing the musicians, who, after a nod from the nearest performer, strike up a lively tune. As the musicians begin playing, the conversations between the remaining groups ceases, and all attention is turned towards the black and red-clad group, who begin to dance with a kind of step-hop action, waving their handkerchiefs through the air in time with the music. The sound of bells jangling accompanies the music as the dancers step, skip and jump. They are performing a traditional English morris dance, and they are observed and surrounded by other morris dancers, each group awaiting their turn to perform. Their presence and activity transforms the empty space of the open plaza into a place of colour, movement and music. Although some passers-by stop to watch, those performing appear to be focused inward, dancing for their own enjoyment rather than for the casual observer.

(field notes, National Folk Festival 2012)

The above passage is a partial account of a dance event I observed at the National Folk Festival (NFF), known as massed morris, in which the various morris dancing groups gathered at the festival commandeered a largely unutilised space for the purpose of sharing and performing English folk dances with each other. It represents only one example of the many ways in which dance – both formal and informal – features at Australian folk festivals.

Dance can be both a spectacular and participatory activity at festivals, with both displays and workshops formally incorporated into the event programme, along with unofficial or spontaneous opportunities for dance and rhythmic movement. Different forms of dance can be categorised according to an axis of formal/planned versus informal/spontaneous, and display/spectacle versus participation, with most dance types performing multiple

functions. Maypole dancing, for example, is often programmed as an activity within the Children's Festival, and is planned and scheduled by organisers as an opportunity for participation, yet it also provides a colourful spectacle for onlookers. A maypole dance adds to the overall visual amenity of the festival and helps establish a celebratory atmosphere, whilst maintaining and continuing a folk practice or tradition, and is thus in keeping with the overall festival ethos.

Most Australian folk festivals offer displays of dance on special stages or in designated performance areas. Anglo-Celtic forms of traditional dance (such as English morris, Welsh dances, Scottish sword dances, Irish step-dancing and jigs, Appalachian clogging etc) tend to predominate, reflecting the prominence of these forms within the Australian folk community. In addition, belly dance is often included in many festival programmes, and some festivals have incorporated Dutch, Balkan, Greek, German, African, Spanish and other dance traditions⁹⁹. Dance as a spectacle is also occasionally included in musical concert contexts, such as April Verch's incorporation of Ottawa Valley step-dancing in her concerts. Dance displays are presentational events in which traditional dance types, products of folk process, are displayed to festival-goers, and are, MacKinnon (1993: 72) argues, the primary *spectacular* events at folk festivals.

Although dance as display is an important part of the festival programme, participatory dance offers an opportunity for attendees to engage bodily with the festival, to embody the folk ethos of participation. Participatory dance can include workshops, in which a particular type or style of dance is taught (usually at a basic but sometimes an intermediate level); social dance events such as informal, generally accessible bush dances and ceilidhs or more formal, generally less accessible colonial-style dances, both of which feature set dances performed in groups such as schottisches, polkas, reels, waltzes, and quadrilles; and spontaneous free-form dancing by audience members at concert events, particularly during the more energetic concerts scheduled late at night. Dancing with other people – whether learning to dance with other beginners, sharing a formal dance set with constantly changing partners, or bopping along to a band in the company of strangers – helps develop the atmosphere of community on which most folk festivals pride themselves. Further, in the case of workshops and social dances, the teaching and promotion of dance traditions

⁹⁹ Except where a festival makes a deliberate effort to include indigenous performance in its programme, Australian Aboriginal dance forms are most often only included in larger festivals.

enables the celebration and continuation of those traditions by new generations, a face-to-face (or body-to-body) communication of folk which facilitates folk process.

In this chapter, I will be considering three of the different ways in which English morris dancing occurs at Australian festivals – as formal displays, structured workshops and casual massed events – to investigate how dance reinforces and demonstrates the folk ethos, with its emphasis on the demonstration of folk traditions, active participation in and sharing of folk traditions, and the folk process, through the passing-on, continuation of and re-interpretation or reinvention of traditional folk practice. I focus on three case studies of morris dancing contexts within the Australian folk festival, drawing on Nahachewski's (1995) ethnochoreological categories of participatory and presentational dance, and adding a third intermediate type, which I have termed pedagogical. Firstly, I look at the formal display (*presentational*) which is programmed by organisers to showcase morris as a folk tradition. In Handelman's terms, an *event-that-presents*. Secondly, the workshop (*pedagogical*), in which the tradition is taught to non-dancers or dancers from other traditions/styles, thus incorporating aspects of both presentation and participation. As a transformational event, this fits Handelman's typology more as an *event-that-models*. Finally, I discuss the massed morris (*participatory*), wherein multiple morris groups occupy an empty festival space and dance together for fun, creating an event that Handelman might consider *spectacular* (Handelman, 1997: 394), in which the structures of the event are not hidden, but displayed to all (evidenced by the open negotiations between dancers and musicians), and which helps establish a carnivalistic atmosphere.

In order to explore the notions of presentation, pedagogy and participation in dance as they pertain to folk process, I present case studies of archetypal morris events at the NFF representative of those that occur both at the NFF and other festivals¹⁰⁰. Exploring the logics of design of each event will demonstrate the ways in which festivals present both the folk ethos (in this context, the importance of participation) and traditional dance as a product of folk process, whilst also exploring how folk process is itself facilitated through dance events at festivals.

¹⁰⁰ Due to ethical considerations, rather than identifying individual dancers or groups, these case studies are archetypal examples of morris events, and represent my experiences at many such morris events across multiple festivals.

What is Folk Dance?

Morris dancing is recognised (by participants, festival organisers, and general observers) as a common form of ‘folk dance’ in Australia¹⁰¹. However, folk dance as a concept, like the concept of folk music (discussed in Chapter 2), is problematic¹⁰². Buckland (1983) suggests little has been done to define the term ‘folk dance’ since the early days of the first (English) folk revival and that defining the term ‘folk dance’ in terms of who ‘the folk’ are or forms of dance is unhelpful, as is replacing the term ‘folk’ with either ‘popular’ or ‘traditional’.

Hoerburger (1968) attempts to define folk dance through a typology that differentiates between folk dance in its first existence, and folk dance in its second existence. Firstly, he argues that “folk dance in its first existence is chiefly an integral part of the life of a community”, whereas in its second existence, folk dance is “no longer an integral part of community life... but only of a few interested people – as an occupation of their leisure time; as a hobby; as a sport; as a means of inter-human understanding; as a colourful performance or show; and so on” (1968: 30-31). Secondly, in its first existence, folk dance does not remain choreographically or musically unchanged but rather allows for improvisation and evolution within its specified framework; whereas, in second existence folk dance there are “fixed figures and movements, which vary only slightly” (1968: 30-31). Finally, in their second existence folk dances must be intentionally taught rather than “learned in a natural, functional way” (1968: 30-31). Essentially, folk dance in its first existence is a product of folk process, whereas in its second existence, it is a fixed, unchanging representation of what was once a living tradition (no longer part of folk process).

Although Buckland argues Hoerburger’s criteria for first existence folk dance is “both ethnocentric and unrealistic” (Buckland, 1983: 322), and that it makes ‘second existence’ folk dance unworthy of study *as* folk dance, it is useful to unpack Hoerburger’s typology. Folk dance at Australian folk festivals, particularly morris dance, could broadly be considered ‘second existence’, but with reservations. Within the folk community, despite

¹⁰¹ Morris dancing was an important aspect of the first folk revival in England (see Chapter 2), and thus its practice in Australia and at Australian folk festivals could be seen as an expression of continuity and connection between folk practitioners both in Australia and overseas, evidence of a transcontinental community of folk.

¹⁰² Buckland (1983) provides an excellent overview of the history of the attempts to define folk dance, tracing academic and popular debates and understandings about the term, including those debates about the definition of folk music that have informed discussion of folk dance.

dance being considered important, it is only practiced by a “few interested people” who perform it as a hobby. Hoerburger’s final criterion, that second existence dances must be taught, is also applicable. However, it is the second consideration that is problematic.

According to Hoerburger’s second criterion, first existence dances allow “for improvisation and evolution within a specified framework” whereas second existence dances are fixed with only minor variability. I would argue that folk dances (morris dances particularly) in Australia satisfy the criteria of *both* Hoerburger’s first and second existence categories. Many dances (usually termed ‘traditional’) within a morris side’s repertoire are learned from written sources and other dancers and maintain the same basic form with very little variation. It is these dances which enable morris dancers from around Australia (and indeed the world) to participate in ‘massed morris’ events in which everyone performs the same ‘traditional’ dance. However, there is significant choreographic and musical improvisation and evolution in the morris community in Australia. Many sides choreograph new dances based on existing frameworks (traditions) and apply musical accompaniment in innovative ways whilst still conforming to basic ‘rules’ of the dance form. This is a clear indication that folk process is at work – dances are selected by the morris community, undergo a process of evolution whilst maintaining continuity with the past, and are passed on. This clearly conforms to Hoerburger’s notion of first existence folk dance, whereby folk dance is a living tradition, or process. Dance at festivals is thus both first and second existence, or both a living process of folk evolution, and a display of an historical (fixed at a particular moment in the past) dance performance. Accepting that folk dance, particularly morris dance, fulfils both roles at festivals, enables us to explore how festival structures facilitate folk process through different folk dance events at the festival, which can be considered in terms of presentation, pedagogy and participation.

[Morris Dance in Australia](#)

Morris dancing is a form of ‘traditional’ dance from England, mostly performed in group formations (usually in ‘sets’ of six or eight dancers) and accompanied by (usually) live music – generally traditional English tunes, played on melodeon, whistle or fiddle. There are a number of regional variations (including Cotswold, Border, Northwest and other variations) which involve different styles of stepping, dance accoutrement (such as sticks, garlands, and handkerchiefs), and costumes. Although its origins are contested, there are references to English morris dancing as both a court dance and a folk dance as early as the mid-1400s (Heaney, 2004; Gallop, 1934). Contemporary morris, however, traces its

origins to the first folk revival of the early twentieth century, when Cecil Sharp, Mary Neal and Maud Karpeles were instrumental in collecting and recording the folk dances of England, and re-establishing them as both examples of English national identity and healthful activities for the working classes (see Featherstone, 2009). Most dancers I spoke with recognise the constructed and contested authenticity of modern morris dancing (originating from dances recorded at a single moment and representative of specific examples of what has always been an evolving tradition), but see themselves as part of a long-standing English folk tradition (Spracklen and Henderson, 2013: 236). As one dancer expressed to me:

It's all well and good to dance according to Sharp's instructions, but you have to remember, he was only recording the particular dances and dancers he saw at the time. Some of the dancers had funny styles. The dances had already changed. They [the dances recorded by Sharp] shouldn't be considered as gospel.

In Australia, although there are references to morris being danced in the early twentieth century (Fahey, 1995), morris was established mostly throughout the period of the 1970s folk revival by English expatriates and those Australians exposed to morris while travelling in England. Much of the tradition has been self-taught, from the original notes of Cecil Sharp, manuals produced by the English Folk Song and Dance Society, and from what is known colloquially as 'The Bacon' or the 'Black Book', Lionel Bacon's (1974) *A Handbook of Morris Dances*. Although some sides focus more heavily on maintaining traditions established by Cecil Sharp and other early exponents, most Australian morris dancers see themselves as part of an evolving tradition, acknowledging the past whilst adapting as required (in other words, complying with the criteria of Hoerburger's first and second existence categorisation of folk dance).

At Australian folk festivals, morris performs a number of roles and occupies different spaces. As a folk practice, it fits within the purview of most festivals, with their emphasis on preserving and presenting folk traditions. Commonly associated with and located within the 'imagined village' of the English countryside, morris dancing emphasises the connection between the folk festival and the rural idyll (see Goodwin-Hawkins, 2016: 318). As a spectacle, it is colourful and noisy, and with its origins in street-based performance (it is commonly employed as a form of busking) it can fill both the open spaces of the festival as well as being displayed on stage. Within the festival generally, morris dancers usually participate in parades and processions, often substantially enlarging festival parades and contributing to the carnival atmosphere desired by organisers as they process around a festival site, engage in social dances, run dance workshops, play in

sessions, and perform in blackboard concerts and competitions. Morris dancers rarely restrict their performances to their (paid) scheduled displays, but will perform at multiple locations throughout the festival for their own enjoyment. By engaging with the festival as stage performers (as formal displays), street performers (through busking and dancing for fun) occupying empty spaces or moving throughout a festival as part of a procession, educators (through teaching workshops) and general participants (in sessions, competitions and blackboard concerts), morris dancers with their colourful costumes, music and sounds of bells and sticks clashing, contribute significantly to the atmosphere of celebration, participation and fun within a festival, as well as being a locus of folk process.



Figure 8.1: Morris dancers at Music at the Creek, 2011

Morris Presentation: Displaying Tradition

Nahachewski, in his discussion of folk dance, situates presentational dance in opposition to participatory dance, suggesting that presentational dance should be considered as a product rather than a process, with its success or otherwise as a performance judged by how it looks (1995: 1)¹⁰³. Presentational dance usually maintains a separation between performers and audience, with this separation supported and maintained by physical structures such as formal stages. This structural separation between performers and

¹⁰³ From personal experience as a morris dancer, the embodied feeling of skilfully executing a dance, while in itself a process, results in a successful performance that looks good to an audience (a product).

audience is part of the logics of design that identifies presentational dance as, in Handelman's terms, an event-that-presents (see Handelman, 1998: 41); in this case, the presentation displays what organisers and participants consider a valuable part of the folk experience at festivals, a high-quality (and knowledgeable) demonstration of folk dance, skilfully executed.

The formal stage performance by a morris side at the National Folk Festival in Canberra provides the first case study of morris dance as a specific event type within an Australian folk festival. This performance was scheduled mid-morning on a Saturday, as part of the official programme. The formality of the event was evidenced by its logics of design – it was held in a venue dedicated to dance performances, an open marquee with a large stage raised several feet from the ground. Around the sides and in front of the stage was temporary erected metal seating, several tiers high, to provide spectators with an unobstructed view of the stage.

Morris is typically danced in the streets and squares of villages and at pubs, spatially and socially located within the local community. Here, through the use of staging, it is turned into a spectacular performance for the visual consumption of festival-goers, designed to demonstrate a sample of traditional folk dance in a limited time frame (also part of the logics of design that establish this as a *display* performance) of forty-five minutes.

A group of ten performers and several musicians, all dressed in the same costume, stand talking at the rear of the stage. Eventually, six dancers (three men and three women) disengage from the main group, walking in formation of two lines of three toward the middle of the stage, facing the audience, where they wait silently, with large white handkerchiefs dangling to the floor from their hands at their sides.

They are wearing white long-sleeved buttoned shirts tucked into white trousers, each with a black belt and shoes. They have coloured baldrics crisscrossing their upper torso, with a rosette design where the two ribbons cross. Four of the dancers are also wearing open waistcoats with a selection of badges pinned on the front. They all wear straw boater-style hats decorated with colourful flowers. Below their knees they have leather pads with rows of brass bells affixed, which tinkle as they move into position.

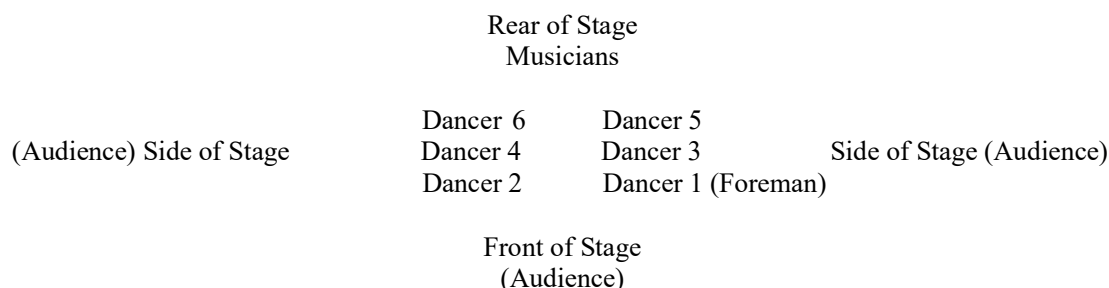
As they wait in position, all facing forward, the Squire of the team, who is not dancing in this particular set, walks forward with the microphone and addresses the spectators in the manner of a spruiker, introducing the side to the "ladies and gentlemen of the audience" and explaining that they perform dances in the Cotswold style of morris, "from, as the name suggests, the Cotswold region in England" and that "although the origins are lost in the mists of time, the dances may be linked to fertility and pagan rites" (at which the audience laughs). He adds that they usually dance for money or beer, and congratulates the audience for availing themselves of the opportunity to watch them for free – although if they want to help out with either, all contributions are welcome, and they [the side] can be found at the pub following the performance. Interestingly, his spiel seems directed at non-

knowledgeable, non-morris dancers, yet at this stage, the audience is almost entirely composed of dancers from other morris sides. He then moves back to the rear of the stage, joining the members of the side who are not participating in this dance. In the meantime, the dancer at the top of the set (nearest the audience) turns and nods at the musicians, indicating that they are ready. One of the musicians begins a tune on the accordion, and as the fiddle joins in, the morris men and women start dancing.

(adapted from field notes, multiple festivals)

The performers orient themselves on stage facing outwards towards the audience, with musicians situated at the rear of the stage. These logics of design differ from ordinary street performances, in which the dancers tend to face the musicians, allowing the Foreman of the dance set and the musicians to communicate with one another. This arrangement highlights the dancers, rather than the musicians, in the stage performance, where the focus is on folk dance *display*, and indicates that the dance has been carefully rehearsed prior to the event. Further, because the audience seating is arranged in tiers, all aspects of the dancers' movement is on display (feet, hands, etc) to all audience members, not normally possible when dancing occurs in street and community settings.

Figure 8.2: Stage Performance Layout



In their forty-five minute allocated performance time, they perform eight dances. Each dance is clearly carefully rehearsed and choreographed to present a polished display, a finished display of product rather than process, designed to 'show off' quality morris dancing, but also to display the skill of the team.

Between dances, the Squire engages in 'stage talk', addressing the audience directly, explaining whether the dance is traditional or an original choreographed by the side, and the tradition/style it is performed in. This contextualises the performance for the audience (both dancers and casual observers), locating particular dances and the performance overall within individual dance traditions, clarifying whether dances are representative of 'traditional' morris (such as that recorded by Sharp et al) or 'contemporary' morris. By

doing so, he articulates that the dancing displayed is representative of folk process – a continuity between past and present, illustrative of evolution and community selection. In addition, he intersperses his explanations with jokes, mostly about drinking or deriding the prowess of the dancers; on one occasion, following a dance in which a stick was accidentally dropped during a stick throwing chorus, he remarked that the dancer who dropped the stick would be buying a round of drinks for the side. Most of his jokes are ‘in-jokes’ or category-routinised humour (see Handelman and Kapferer, 1972) – directed at the morris dancers in the audience who have a shared knowledge of morris dance history, culture and individuals within the Australian morris community.



Figure 8.3: Morris Squire addressing audience during stage display, National Folk Festival, 2014

Most of the Squire’s explanatory spiel and humorous commentary is clearly intended to indicate that the performers don’t take themselves, or morris generally, too seriously, instead considering it all a bit of fun, yet still fulfilling the function of situating and contextualising this particular performance within a morris continuum, part of a living folk tradition. While the dancers wait in formation for the dance to start, they laugh and nod at what the Squire is saying, and occasionally an individual dancer will respond with a witty riposte or a bow which will elicit a laugh from the dancers in the audience. However, when the music begins, and the dancers prepare to dance, they become serious, concentrating on the movements of the dance. Although they will joke about their ability,

this stage performance – positioned as they are on a raised platform, with audiences able to watch them from raised tiers around three sides of the stage – puts them on conspicuous display, and with many knowledgeable dancers in the audience, the focus is on delivering an accomplished performance. This performance displays high quality morris dancing, skilfully executed, as a *product* of folk process, whilst presenting an ideal of folk that takes the performance, folk dancing, seriously, but in which those who perform it (emphasising the folk ethos of amateurism and participation) do not take *themselves* too seriously.



Figure 8.4: Morris dance display, Fleurieu Folk Festival, 2015

The audience during the performance – mostly other dancers with only a few casual observers – are differentially engaged. Casual observers are mostly seated, watching attentively as they would any other performance at the festival. These are, in Schechner's (1976) terms, *accidental* audiences, audiences who are much more likely to pay attention to the drama on stage, as they have invested the time and made the choice to attend this, rather than any of the other competing events in the festival landscape at that particular time. Some of the dancers in the audience (identifiable by either wearing morris kit or their general association with the morris throughout the festival) sit avidly scrutinising the performance, but the majority mill around the sides of the stage, chatting amongst themselves, paying minimal attention. This 'selective inattention' is the characteristic of the *integral* audience, who attend from the need to support the formal performance of fellow morris dancers, but who don't feel the need to pay close attention. Following Schechner, this selective inattention does not reflect *laxness*, rather "this audience is sitting in judgment – but that judgment is based on its knowledge and love of the music [and

dance] – and somehow the judgment supports the musicians [...] this kind of appreciation takes knowledge of what the performer is trying to do – a real sense of the task at hand” (Schechner, 1976: 15-16).

At the beginning of this performance, the audience consists mainly of dancers from other morris groups, and a few other folk dancers. Although the performing side are given reasonable prominence in the printed programme, it seems to be mainly an integral audience (see Chapter 7), a supportive audience drawn from the same general folk dance community. This is evidence of the peripherality of folk dance in the general event landscape of the festival. It is not a performance sought out by festival attendees generally (evidenced by the lack of non-dancing festival attendees waiting in the audience for the display to start). As a method of displaying tradition through presentational dance, the impact on *accidental* audiences is therefore limited, with the morris performance on display mainly to insiders. For morris participants though, the stage performance is the most formal method by which tradition, as defined by a particular group, is displayed to other members of the same general folk community.

As the event progresses, the music and activity on stage seems to draw in a broader *accidental* audience. It is at this point that the value in scheduling morris as a folk event becomes evident. Folk dance is presented to audiences who may not have previously encountered any kind of folk dance, and therefore this performance shapes their experience of folk. By watching this performance, they perceive that dance is an important and legitimate expression of folk as practiced in contemporary Australia. The logics of design of the event, situating the performance on a dedicated stage, presents morris as a significant form of folk activity to the accidental passer-by who stops to watch, having been attracted by the music and movement. It is here that discussions about first or second existence folk dance, or how to define folk, become purely academic – for the casual festival participant, the morris dance being performed on the festival stage *is* folk.

In addition, the stage talk by the Squire of the side situates – for both the ‘insider’ integral audience and the casual, accidental audience – morris within a broader tradition of folk dance in both England and Australia. Although jokes about fertility could be construed as category-routinised humour for integral audiences, for casual audiences, such commentary connects morris dance, and folk dance generally, to an ‘earthier’ pastoral ideal of folk, where folk is connected with seasonal observances and even pagan origins. The humour

and self-deprecation of the stage talk (like that at concerts) makes the overall commentary of the Squire more entertaining for both accidental and integral audiences, and hence allows for the better communication of contextual and historical information about the origins of the dances, of the style of dance, and of morris dance generally. This can then inform how audiences make meaning from the performance, and share in an understanding of morris as a *product* of the folk process, whilst also being part of an *evolving tradition*, and as a tradition of folk.

Morris Pedagogy: Passing On Tradition

Dance workshops at folk festivals are highly participatory events, and morris dance workshops are no exception. Workshops in general at a festival actively involve participants in the folk process, by teaching participants new (folk) skills, or helping them improve skills relating to folk performance, and introducing and inducting festival-goers into a folk community, all in a face-to-face (or body-to-body) interaction. If programmed morris performances presented on dedicated stages are, in Nahachewski's terms, *a product* on display, I suggest that the workshop is an exercise in pedagogy, a process designed to teach the skills which then *enable* the second of Nahachewski's ethnochoreological categories, *participatory dance*, to occur¹⁰⁴. As the pedagogical process of the workshop is an exercise in *transformation*, transforming non-folk dancers into folk dancers, I argue that the workshop could be considered in Handelman's terms as an event-that-models (Handelman, 1998: 27-31).

In the following passage, I describe an archetypal morris dance workshop, representative of many held at the National Folk Festival. This event provided an opportunity for the teaching of folk dance via both oral instruction and physical demonstration and represents an important aspect of the folk process at Australian folk festivals.

The morris workshop is due to begin at 10am. I arrive at the venue just on time – a large dance hall which features a sprung wooden dance floor. People mill about on the edges of the floor, chatting or playing with mobile phones. The Squire of the morris team presenting the workshop confers with his team, who are congregated in the centre of the floor. This time they are not wearing their official kit, but are instead casually dressed in variously coloured t-shirts emblazoned with their side name and motif. Moving away from the rest of the team, he begins addressing those around the edges of the room, welcoming

¹⁰⁴ I differentiate here between the participation of the workshop and the participatory dance referred to by Nahachewski, wherein "participatory dances take place at social events where a particular community comes together to celebrate" (Nahachewski, 1995: 1), because the participation at a workshop is part of a pedagogical process to create morris dancers, or a morris community, whereas 'participatory dance' in Nahachewski's terms is better suited to a coming together of the morris community to engage in morris dance together.

everyone to the workshop. Using rather grandiloquent language, he advises that this morning they will be “teaching a dance of great antiquity” which “celebrates the coming of spring” and he warns the participants that “the dance is known to increase fertility” (this is an in-joke for the morris dancers present as tropes of and jokes about fertility are commonly employed whilst addressing the public when busking in the streets, reinforcing the rustic earthiness of morris as a rural tradition). He explains that this is a dance in the Cotswold style; but offers little other information about the dance.

To provide attendees with an example of what they will be learning at the workshop, a set of dancers forms up and demonstrates the dance that will be taught. The Squire then invites everyone present to join them on the dance floor and form groups of six. Most of the onlookers (especially the experienced dancers) move in quickly, forming groups with those they know. Others shuffle onto the floor, looking reticent and unsure. Eventually eight groups of six and two groups of four are spaced around the hall, with members of the host side scattered throughout. Several members dispense colourful bandannas that can be used as hankies to anyone who has not brought their own.

The teaching part of the workshop then begins. The first thing we need to learn, the Squire informs us, is how to do a double step. He asks one of the host dancers to demonstrate, as he calls out “one-two-three-hop, one-two-three-hop”. After several counts, the host dancers scattered around the room join in with the stepping, indicating to those participants nearest them to join in. Eventually, everyone in the room is stepping and hopping – but all with different timing and leading off different feet. The Squire stops things and tries again, this time clarifying that everyone should start on their left foot, then asks one of the musicians to play part of a tune. As they play, the experienced dancers begin stepping in time with the music, and gradually the beginners join in more or less successfully, so as I look around the room, bodies seem to be rising up and down in vaguely the same time. The Squire indicates for the musician to stop playing, and the stepping stops. The Squire then explains that now we’ve “got the knack of stepping, we just have to add in the hands”, and the experienced dancer next to him demonstrates how the hankies should be raised and lowered, flowing in time with the steps. Again the musician starts up, and the participants begin to copy the host demonstrators nearest them. The experienced dancers all do this easily, but the coordination required between hands and feet proves too much for most of the newcomers, many of whom frown in concentration or laugh as their footwork disintegrates with the addition of hand movements. Nevertheless, when the music stops this time, the Squire congratulates everyone, saying that “now we’re all morris dancers”.

Having ‘mastered’ the basic dance step, the workshop progresses as the Squire explains how the chorus works, has the side demonstrate it, then has all the groups practice it. This process is repeated for other figures of the dance. While the Squire directs proceedings in a general way, and explicates upon the movements, it is the presenting dancers scattered through the groups, and to a lesser extent the other experienced morris dancers, that provide the most useful instruction to the non-dancers (or more accurately, the new-dancers) in each group, as they demonstrate in greater depth what is required and explain what participants are doing wrong.

(adapted from field notes, multiple festivals)

An analysis of the logics of design of this event demonstrates that in this context, folk (as a dance tradition) is expected to be both communicated and experienced bodily, a physical transmission of folk. The first element of design is that as the event begins, the Squire welcomes participants to the workshop and sets the stage for the process of the learning of folk, by communicating that participants will be learning a dance “of great antiquity”, in

other words, the dance to be taught is an example of continuity of tradition, linking the past to the present, the dance a product of community selection over the ages. The Squire's role in the event is to contextualise *what* participants will be learning (a traditional folk dance) and provide verbal instruction as to how to perform that folk dance. Another element of the logics of design is that other members of the team hosting the workshop are dressed more casually than during their stage performance, indicating that they are not there to *display* the dance, but engage with workshop participants in a much more casual manner. The only formal *display* aspect of the workshop is the initial demonstration of the whole dance by the host morris side, but the lack of formal costume, and – as a third element of design – the lack of separation between performers and audience highlights that the purpose of this display is to simply provide an example to workshop participants. Conducted on the same level as workshop participants, within the same space, this is part of the logics of design that enable a more face-to-face (body-to-body) communication of folk.

Festival workshops generally differ from other festival events in that there are very few spectators. This morris workshop is no different. Those inside the hall are all involved in some way in the workshop, *physically* involved in the process, either as teachers (both those presenting the workshop and other experienced dancers familiar with this dance and tradition) or as beginner/learners or semi-experienced/learners.

At the conclusion of the dance demonstration, participants are deliberately (and sometimes physically), pulled onto the dance floor by members of the host morris side, ensuring that even the initially reluctant are encouraged to participate (part of the festival and folk *ethos*), and arranged in groups that best allow for teaching via an experienced dancer. These groups where possible consist of a range of experienced, semi-experienced and beginner dancers, so that learners are not wholly reliant on the Squire for instruction, but instead, can learn from their fellow group members.

The structure of the workshop, with the Squire introducing and explaining dance figures, and the experienced dancers demonstrating and then guiding workshop participants to perform the movements themselves, enables the transformation of workshop participants into dancers, and importantly, is transformative not only of the individual, but the workshop group as a whole. Morris dancing requires the learner to dance with others in a cooperative manner. Inability to perform steps or movements in the correct manner or

sequence causes the disintegration of the dance for all other members of the group, and thus can negatively impact on other festival participants' experience. Some participants may fear being made to look foolish; therefore, the manner of the Squire in delivering their spoken instruction, and the uncritical and supportive demonstration by experienced dancers within sets, is of utmost importance. Experienced dancers lead by example, and despite the lack of successful execution of movements by many workshop participants, the Squire makes participants feel included in the folk process (participating in a folk tradition) by informing them that "they're all morris dancers now". The purpose of the workshop is not necessarily to create highly-skilled dancers, but to *introduce* participants to the basic bodily *experience* of folk dancing together. The process of learning to dance, under the instruction of experienced dancers in a structured workshop, *transforms* festival participants into folk dancers.



Figure 8.5: Morris dance workshop, National Folk Festival, 2012

A further function of the workshop, generally unspoken, is to *recruit* new dancers. Recruiting dancers who will join a morris side and practice every week outside of the festival, is a key outcome sought by those teams who present festival workshops. By engaging inexperienced or non-dancers in a workshop that is fun and entertaining, morris teams can potentially replenish and increase their ranks of dancers, enabling them to

continue performing at other festivals and events throughout the year. This is a key method by which tradition is ‘passed on’ or continued.

Even if workshop participants do not formally join a morris side (and only a small minority commit themselves beyond the immediate festival experience), the process of learning how to dance aids festival participants in better understanding and appreciating both the stage and street performances of morris dancing, and perhaps other folk dancing, that occurs at a festival. By participating in a workshop, festival-goers recognise the effort that dancers put into their craft, and therefore, better understand the stage talk and category-routinised humour at performances in which the Squire may downplay the abilities of the dancers in favour of provoking a laugh from an audience (exhibiting a modesty about the performance consonant with the folk ideal which prioritises amateurism over expertise, and preferences modesty over conceit and self-satisfaction). Having learnt one dance, these workshop participants may not be ‘proper’ morris dancers (despite the Squire’s assertion in the workshop) in the sense of belonging to a side and giving performances, but they have some (embodied) experience with morris that extends beyond that of casual onlookers.

The pure physicality of participating in a dance workshop demonstrates that the folk process at festivals is not only a process of oral communication, but also bodily communication, and also demonstrates the importance of ‘active participation’ in the folk ethos. The whole-body process of learning the dance equates to a full-bodied acquisition of folk – bodily tradition passed on from experienced dancers and reproduced through imitative movement. Unlike the formal display, the pedagogical experience of the workshop could be considered in Handelman’s terms as an *event-that-models* (rather than an event-that-presents): it is purposive and transformative, in that by design, it transforms non-dancers into dancers (Handelman, 1998: 27-31), and thus ensures continuity in folk process.

Morris Participation: Sharing Tradition

The second of Nahachewski’s ethnochoreological categories, *participatory dance*, is exhibited best in the ‘massed morris’ event. Although massed morris displays morris dancing to festival crowds, it is not conducted on a stage, but rather in the open spaces of the festival. Nahachewski explains that “in participatory dances, the focus tends to be on the dancers themselves. The process of dancing is important” (Nahachewski, 1995: 1). I argue here that although massed morris offers value to a festival through the provision of

spectacle in street performance and therefore exhibiting folk dance to festival attendees, the main function of massed morris is to provide dancers with an informal opportunity to dance together (a physical communication of folk), and share in the various traditions they perform.

Massed morris could best be compared to a folk music session¹⁰⁵. Morris dancers from multiple sides, sometimes, as in the case of the NFF, from all over the country and occasionally from overseas, come together to collectively share dances. While massed morris events occur in public, in the streets and open spaces of the festival, like sessions they are for the benefit of the participants rather than casual spectators, and reinforce notions of the morris as a *community* (an important aspect of the folk ethos). Like a music session, in which participants take turns to begin and lead a tune that is common to the repertoire of most folk musicians, the massed morris event provides an opportunity for dancers to perform commonly known, usually traditional rather than contemporary, dances. Massed morris could also be considered akin to music sessions in that they generate vibrant atmospheres within the festival, injecting music, movement and a sense of general conviviality into the festival landscape.

This massed morris event occurs at 4:30 on Sunday afternoon in a large, concreted plaza area. Part of the logics of design of the massed event is that it is held as the festival overall is beginning to wind down, positioning this event as an important spectacle in the festival landscape and helping to generate a more lively atmosphere through increased sound and movement in the area, by bringing together all participating morris dancers present at the festival.

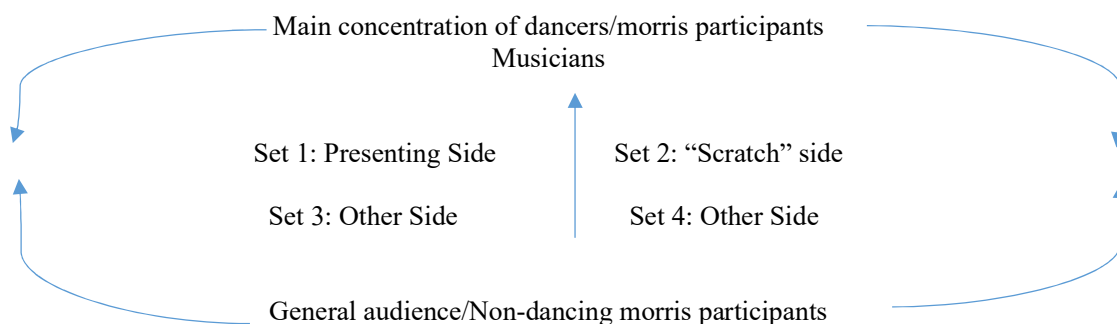
In the open plaza, dancers mill about, and there appears to be general chaos. Eventually, after negotiations between Squires and musicians, twenty-four dancers form up into four sets of six, with five musicians representing several morris teams in a small cluster at the 'top' – the direction to which all the sides are oriented. One of the sets is made up of the side discussed earlier, two other sets are made up of complete morris sides, and the final set is a 'scratch' side, containing a mixture of dancers wearing various kits. There is much chatting throughout the groups, as dancers clarify which dance they are performing in which tradition, and occasionally the dancers switch positions within the sets leading to a lot of bustle and shuffling around (a common heckle by morris dancers to performing sides, and by Squires to their own sides, is "shuffle on!", referring to the sometimes chaotic movement into position by dancers, as they realise they are in the wrong positions for a particular dance and have to move around the set). This confusion is common in massed morris, where dancers often dance with unfamiliar partners and sometimes in unfamiliar positions, and may be unsure of what dance they are to perform and in what

¹⁰⁵ For morris musicians especially, who enjoy the opportunity to play morris tunes with musicians from other sides. Instead of one or two musicians, a whole band may be able to play together at a massed morris.

style or tradition. Often, many dancers will not know for sure what dance is to be performed until the musicians start playing.

The dancing of the massed morris lacks the polish of a scheduled stage performance by a single team (demonstrating that this performance is about the practice of folk, rather than the display of it). During this particular Cotswold dance, two of the sides dance in the same style, one of the sides seems to utilise a different stepping technique, and the scratch side is untidy, with dancers occasionally bumping in to each other and turning incorrectly in figures and choruses. Within the sets there is much more chatter than would be acceptable in a stage performance, as the Foreman not only calls the figures and the dances, but additional instructions to the set about direction and technique. Members within the set ask hurried questions of each other, such as “which way?”, “left?” and so forth, and partners direct each other as to the order of stick clashing. This all occurs with good humour and much laughter (from both the participants and the audience) when things go wrong.

Figure 8.6: Plaza dance space



When the dance ends, the various groups leave the central dance space, laughing and chatting together. There is a lull while nothing seems to happen. No one directly addresses the audience, although the hobby horse moves around interacting with bystanders, especially children. After a few minutes, one of the Border sides moves into position. Although, as a cohesive unit there is no need for the muddled entry to the dance space of the previous performance, when dancers had to keep changing positions, the ‘walking on’ is still far more casual than the stage performance I had witnessed by this side earlier in the festival. It is still casual, with dancers interacting with each other and the dancers in the audience as they “shuffle on”.

(adapted from field notes, multiple festivals)

The event progresses in this way for about an hour. One side after another take turns to perform one dance, alternating between single sides (either full or scratch sides) and joint, mass dances which involve multiple sets of different sides. The logics of design of the event, whereby dances performed are a result of organic negotiation between team Squires, individual dancers, and musicians, ensures that the entire process appears relaxed and casual, evidenced by the ‘shuffling on’ of dancers and the talking during the dancing. The primary objective is to include as many dancers present as possible, evidence that this event is primarily *participatory*. This is particularly demonstrated when an older bearded

man, not in kit, is pulled into a Cotswold dance by one of the sides. I found out later that he had introduced himself to the team and mentioned that he had danced years ago in England. Although the dance he joined in was a local variation (evidence of the evolutionary aspect of morris as a *living tradition*, or folk process) of the traditional (*continuity between past and present*) dance he knew, he was able to participate in the dance with only minimal direction from his partner in the set (demonstrating evidence of *community selection*). Although this argued for a spirit of inclusivity obtaining at the massed morris event, such inclusivity was limited to those with the knowledge and skills to participate: dancers and ex-dancers only. On the whole, the broader public was mostly ignored.

The event was structured primarily for participating morris dancers. Dances were determined on the basis of common knowledge rather than careful rehearsal, groups were arranged depending upon the skills, experience and willingness of individual dancers rather than necessarily being restricted to official sides, resulting in mixed costumes and dance styles. However, passing festival-goers were drawn to observe the spectacle. With the multitude of colourful kits, the waving of handkerchiefs, sticks or garlands, and the obvious enjoyment of the participants, as well as the sound of many bells and clashing of sticks along with the live music, the event presented a fun (and noisy) spectacle which attracted passers-by. Due to the numbers of morris dancers participating (and the combinations of colourful costumes and varieties of musical instrumentation), the massed morris presented a larger, and perhaps, more attractive spectacle than the street or stage performances of individual morris sides (despite the lack of precision) and therefore engaged the attention (at least temporarily) of more festival attendees drawn to the colour, sound, movement and casual good humour of the event. The noise and activity of so many costumed and dancing performers significantly added to the atmosphere in the plaza.

The lack of interaction with the non-morris audience in favour of conversation and discussion amongst the participating morris dancers demonstrates that the massed morris event is focused inwards rather than outwards. Although the event adds to the festive atmosphere of the festival, for the dancers involved, the impact on other festival attendees' festival experience is of minor importance. The purpose of the massed morris is participation rather than performance, process rather than product, sharing rather than display. The festival, which has brought together morris sides from around the nation,

provides the opportunity and space for this engagement with one another in folk dance performance.



Figure 8.7: Massed morris event, National Folk Festival, 2014

Although the massed morris is in many respects directed inward, towards the dancers, rather than outward, towards the spectators, the impact that the massed morris event has on the festival is considerable. While it could be considered an event-that-presents, it may be better to consider the massed morris event in terms of *spectacle*, which “connotes something exhibited to the view, a show, a pageant, a sight, marked by great display, dramatic and thrilling” (Handelman, 1997: 394). There is, according to Handelman, little that is hidden in spectacle, rather, everything is on display. The interactions of morris dancers as they engage in their performative folk dance practice, is fully on display to onlookers, who are attracted by the sight, sound and movement of the morris dancers in action. This sound, colour and movement directly impact the atmosphere of the festival in the immediate area, creating a sense of festivity which is shared by not just those involved in the dancing, but by the spectators. The massed morris event demonstrates to festival audiences a folk dance that is a process, a living tradition, in which participants engage

regardless of audience approval, but in so doing, plays an important role in the production of a folk atmosphere for all involved, either as participants or onlookers.

Conclusion

Although there are many types of folk dance at a folk festival, and various opportunities for both organised and spontaneous dance in which festival-goers can participate, English morris dancing is a common form of folk dance that occurs at many Australian folk festivals. In this chapter I have described three festival event types in which morris dancing is featured. The stage performance, morris workshop, and massed morris, could, in Handelman's terms, be considered respectively as an event-that-presents, an event-that-models, and a spectacle. In my terms, drawing on Nahachewski's typology of folk dances as being either presentational or participatory, I define each event type respectively as presentational, pedagogical, and participatory.

In the first instance, I described a formal, programmed dance performance (as part of the logics of design as a display event occurred on a stage – separating performers and audiences – and within a specified time frame) in which a *product* (see Nahachewski, 1995: 1) was presented to an audience of other folk dancers and general festival attendees. This product – the formal set of morris dances – had been rehearsed, arranged and generally carefully pre-prepared as a demonstration of the presenting morris side's repertoire and skill. Despite this careful preparation, the Squire's stage talk was delivered in such a way as to deprecate the overall skill needed to perform these dances, and featured comments relating to morris dancers' predilection for alcohol, for example. These comments helped situate the dance for audiences as a fun activity, and presented the dancers as folk practitioners who didn't take themselves too seriously. Morris dancing was *presented* to audiences as an example of folk dance that was still practiced in Australia, representing *continuity* of folk practice in the Australian folk community. In addition, the morris side demonstrated some of their own originally choreographed dances in established morris styles, representing *evolution* in the folk process.

The second example I described was the morris workshop. This was an entirely participatory event (evidenced by the logics of design that ensured the Squire welcomed and contextualised the folk activity for participants, and the lack of spectacle in both the costume and dance demonstration of the host morris side) for both morris dancers and casual festival attendees, in which non-dancers learnt a dance through both spoken

instruction and imitation of existing morris dancers. I describe this as a *pedagogical* event in which embodied education about a folk practice was intentional and designed to create new dancers (and dancers from other traditions), wherein morris dance as a folk practice could be *passed on*. The presenting Squire announced “you’re all morris dancers now” – indicating that participation in the workshop transformed non-dancers into dancers, or non-morris into morris. This event was representative of how the oral tradition element of the folk process should be expanded to include bodily transmission, in which folk practitioners learn from other folk practitioners in an actively engaged and participatory process.

Finally, I described the mass morris event, a spectacular event in which participation amongst existing dancers was the primary motivation for engagement. This event provided an opportunity for different morris teams to share common traditions and learn from each other, whilst being on full display to other festival participants (who were attracted to the spectacle partly because of the element of design of holding the event as the festival was concluding, when there were fewer events competing for spectators). The dances chosen (by negotiation and consensus) to be performed represented those *selected by the morris community* as dances commonly known, and thus the massed event was an opportunity to demonstrate common knowledge of morris traditions, whilst engaging in a pastime that was, according to Hoerburger’s typology of folk dance, “second-existence” folk dance in which dancers participated as a hobby. In addition to being an opportunity for the morris dance community to come together as a social event, the massed morris also created a festive atmosphere in the festival plaza, and presented morris to audiences as a living folk tradition.

Morris dancing, as an example of folk dance practiced at Australian festivals, demonstrates one of the ways in which the folk process plays out at folk festivals. I have described three event-types in which morris dancing features at a festival, but these three event types are crucial in displaying folk dancing, passing on folk dancing, and sharing folk dancing within a community, through presentation, pedagogy and participation, whilst also contributing to the atmospheric landscape of the festival.

Chapter 9: Spoken Word & Oral Traditions

Introduction: Oral Performance and Poet's Breakfasts

Although often a marginal performance type in comparison with the multiple concerts, workshops and dance events which comprise the taskscape of festival programmes, most Australian folk festivals feature various opportunities and spaces for spoken word performances. These can include modern poetry slams, the recitation of poetry both by buskers and performers at blackboard concerts, 'soap box' spaces specifically reserved for oration, and interactive heritage display areas such as 'Stockman's Camps' in which 'traditional bush/swagmen' engage in the performance of bush poetry and yarning whilst demonstrating crafts such as blacksmithing and damper-making. The most ubiquitous form of spoken word performance though at folk festivals across Australia is the Poet's Breakfast.

Poet's Breakfasts are generally considered a minor aspect of folk festivals, constituting little more than a few hours of a three-day festival, at times (early morning) when few attendees have either arrived on site or arisen from bed. They are not located in large venues or given much prominence in either advertising or festival materials like printed programmes, and they are attended by only a tiny percentage of the overall festival population. Despite this, the Poet's Breakfast is a significant event which, through its celebration of oral folk traditions in Australia, assists in establishing the folk credentials of the festival, and helps cultivate a folk atmosphere indelibly linked to notions of Australian-ness. Further, the logics of design of the Poet's Breakfast facilitate folk process, specifically through the face-to-face oral transmission of folk poetry and stories that demonstrate continuity between past and present (traditional poetry and 'yarns'), evolution (demonstrated by the sharing of participant-composed poetry) and community selection (choice of well-known material).

Poet's Breakfasts are remarkably similar in function and format throughout Australia. Essentially, the Poet's Breakfast is an event in which participants take turns to perform – either reciting from memory or reading – and listen to traditional and contemporary Australian bush poetry (and occasionally 'yarns' or tall-tales). Bush poetry is defined by the Australian Bush Poets Association (ABPA Inc.) as "metred and rhymed poetry about Australia, Australians and/or the Australian way of life" (<http://abpa.org>, accessed 14/03/16). This can include traditional Australian ballads or songs, or contemporary and

original poetry. Although less common, occasionally Poet's Breakfast participants will recite other forms of poetry such as limericks, blank or free verse, which is acceptable as long as the content still speaks to "Australia, Australians and/or the Australian way of life"¹⁰⁶. Many bush poets are also keen 'yarn spinners' and the recitation of traditional or contemporary tall stories or humorous anecdotes is common at Poet's Breakfasts, as they represent a considerable aspect of the oral folk tradition in Australia¹⁰⁷.

Drawing primarily on a case study of an archetypal Poet's Breakfast and its participants representative of a number of Poet's Breakfasts I attended during the course of my fieldwork¹⁰⁸, in this chapter I examine the technology of the event (see Handelman, 1998: 7) to see how elements of timing, location, event progression, the participants themselves and their performance style, are integrally related to performance *content* in creating an 'event-that-mirrors', reflecting a romantic view of the Australian character and lifestyle. The *structure* of the event emphasises *oral communication of folk*, enabling folk process, while the *content* presented is the *product* of folk process. Finally, I argue that the inclusion of the Poet's Breakfast in the event landscape of an Australian folk festival facilitates an overall sense or atmosphere of 'folkiness' which has a typically Australian flavour or character.

Poet's Breakfast: Logics of Design and the Production of a Folk Atmosphere

Poet's Breakfast events are generally held on the morning of a full day of a festival (Saturday, Sunday or both), scheduled between 8am and 11am. Usually the 'breakfast' aspect of the event is provided by the consumption of breakfast foods either brought by participants or purchased at or nearby the location, although the term 'Poet's Breakfast' is used even when food is not available. It could be argued that by being the first event of the day, it functions to break the 'fast' of events that has occurred overnight, when no events are programmed.

¹⁰⁶ Although this definition does not exclude the experience of either First Nations Australians, or the multicultural experience more broadly, in practice most of the 'traditional' bush poetry presented speaks to the experience of white Australians, and especially references a historically colonialist narrative. This is not reflective, however, of a prejudice against indigenous or non-white voices, and in my experience, there was a significant amount of contemporary poetry shared at Poet's Breakfasts that referenced a more nuanced view of "Australian, Australians and the Australian way of life" than is represented in 'traditional' colonialist notions of Australia and/or the Australian Legend.

¹⁰⁷ See Davey and Seal (2003: 276) on yarns in Australian folklore. For an overview of oral poetry traditions in Australia, see McKenry (1993: 144-153).

¹⁰⁸ I attended at least one Poet's Breakfast or other spoken word/oral tradition event at each festival during my fieldwork.

The Poet's Breakfast event is generally held in small, peripheral or informal venue spaces set aside for activities such as blackboard concerts, sessions or workshops rather than large concert venues, demonstrating its peripherality in the hierarchy of festival events, but also reflecting the practicalities of providing a venue characterised as a place for informal participation rather than spectacle or display.



Figure 9.1: Poet's Breakfast at Tamar Valley Folk Festival, 2012

The focus on participation rather than display is reflected also by the lack of a raised (or separate) stage area, meaning that performers remain on the same level as their audience. While reciters generally stand to the front of the audience, occasionally performers will remain seated, especially when participants' chairs are arranged in a circle. The lack of separation between performer and audience demonstrates that the event is structured primarily as a participatory event, in which a spirit of egalitarian performance prevails. Audiences are often small, comprised in large part of poets and reciters, who will frequently outnumber casual spectators. The intimacy offered by the limited numbers facilitates both an atmosphere of casual friendliness and removes any structural division between performer and audience, by not significantly elevating (as on a stage) or separating participants, whilst also maximising the opportunity to share folk in a face-to-face communicative relationship.

Levels of audience participation during performances also varies; a well-recited ballad may be heard in attentive silence, while a humorous or satirical poem or yarn may generate laughter and audience interjections. Recited bush songs with recurring choruses may result in an audience participating in a kind of call-and-response, thus becoming part of the performance themselves, further blurring the separation between audience and performer.

Although the event is highly structured, it could be considered akin to a folk music session, in that the event is replicated in broadly the same format across many festivals and similar events, yet is perceived by participants as informal, wherein the inherent structures are only enforced in a casual way through the facilitation of a host or MC¹⁰⁹ (often a recognised bush poet) who will generally direct proceedings to ensure all participants have an opportunity to perform.

Reciters take turns to (usually stand and) perform/recite a piece of bush poetry or spin a yarn. Order of precedence of reciters is determined by the host, who may have organised participants by chatting to attendees prior to the start of proceedings. In addition to a prepared list, the host may non-verbally communicate with audience members who indicate their willingness to recite (via eye contact, nods and hand gestures), or they will overtly call for volunteers from the floor. Usually a host will use a combination of all three methods. When attendees are arranged in a circle (rather than facing a 'stage' area), participants will take turns one by one around the circle, electing to 'pass' if unwilling or unable to recite.

Reciters (poets and yarners) perform either from memory or with the assistance of notes and books as *aides-memoire*. Unaided rehearsed recitation clearly enunciated with appropriate intonation, emphasis and inflection though is the ideal; the oral transmission of bush poetry is considered by participants as an important part of Australian folk tradition and fundamental to the folk process. Though much material is sourced from published texts, many performers will learn pieces from other performers, either person-to-person or via recordings; with greater accessibility to recording technology, many of these oral-tradition folkies sell or share cds and dvds of themselves performing. The festival setting provides an opportunity to share poetry with and learn from other poets, thereby facilitating folk process.

¹⁰⁹ The terms 'facilitator', 'MC', 'leader' (as in, "the poet's breakfast will be *led* by the acclaimed bush poet...") and 'host' are often used interchangeably.

A Typical Poet's Breakfast

This case study focuses on an archetypal Poet's Breakfast event, a composite of a number of remarkably similar events I attended throughout my fieldwork, in order to avoid identifying specific attendees. This archetypal event is held on the Saturday morning of a three-day (Friday to Sunday) folk festival, one of many small folk festivals situated between north eastern Victoria and south eastern New South Wales, a geographic area stretching between Mt Beauty and Wangaratta in the south west, Wagga Wagga in the north and encompassing Kosciuszko and Namadgi National Parks¹¹⁰. Scheduled between 9am and 10:30am, it is the first event programmed for the day. Most of the participants are regulars on the bush poetry and folk festival circuits, and I have seen many of the performers and audience members at multiple festivals.

I will begin by relating how the event unfolded, describing the various attendees of the Poet's Breakfast and how their often fluid individual roles as active participants – performers and audience members – direct the flow and social dynamics of the Poet's Breakfast. I will then discuss how issues of time and place impact, and are impacted by, the event through scheduling and performance content. Finally, I will discuss the performances of individual participants, to demonstrate how a reciter's performance technique impacts on audience participation and the overall atmosphere of the event. I will show how the logics of design of the event, in conjunction with folk content, intersect with and celebrate specific ideals of Australianness (including a romanticisation of the bush or outback landscape, and the celebration of the common man vis-à-vis Ward's [1958] Australian Legend) and the Australian character (exemplified by stoic laconicism, irreverence for authority, egalitarianism and good humour)¹¹¹.

How the Poet's Breakfast Unfolded

The Poet's Breakfast begins ten minutes later than the scheduled start time, but those present don't seem to mind, underlining the general sense that this event is casual. The

¹¹⁰ With many historic townships associated with the goldrush era as well as specific bushrangers and bush poets, this region hosts the largest concentration not just of folk festivals, but bush poetry gatherings, competitions and festivals in a calendar year in Australia.

¹¹¹ See Ramm (1989) for an analysis of Australian folk songs that celebrate the myth of the Australian Legend and the Australian character, not only as irreverent, good humoured and hardworking, but also fundamentally male, young and white. The Australian Legend is a political figure, as well as a mythological one. In my experience of Poet's Breakfasts, however, there were both indigenous poets and some poetry referencing First Nations people in a positive manner, as well as many female poets and reciters, indicating that attitudes at least among the folk community are more accepting and inclusive than the content of some older Australian folk songs reflects.

host/MC (Jan) introduces herself and welcomes participants, but gives no explanation as to her role or how the event is to proceed – (according to my informants) she is an experienced and well-known bush poet. Acknowledging many of those present by name, she evidently knows nearly everyone present, and thus assumes most participants present are familiar with the usual format of Poet's Breakfasts. Jan then proceeds to recite. The quiet conversation amongst the attendees ceases at this point, as the audience politely turns their attention to Jan, who delivers her original poem in the consistent rhyme and meter expected of traditional Australian bush poetry.

The small audience is generally quiet during Jan's poem (which takes around five minutes). Upon conclusion, Jan is treated to a round of polite applause. In choosing to recite the first poem of the morning, Jan provides an example to other attendees of the style of performance and material that can be expected at the event, and provides encouragement to others.

She then looks around the audience to identify the next performer. Having arrived at the venue slightly late and this being the first Poet's Breakfast of the festival, Jan has had no opportunity to prepare a programme of willing performers beforehand, and relies on volunteers from the floor to allow the event to progress effectively. By looking around the gathering, Jan signals that a volunteer is needed; however, amongst the audience, there is general silence with downcast eyes; no one overtly acknowledges her. The silence extends for a moment and participants look sideways at one another, suggesting an unwillingness on the behalf of participants to volunteer to perform first, possibly due to shyness but more likely (according to a later conversation with Jan) because each participant wants to allow the others to have the chance to perform; no one wants to be seen as monopolising the limelight. This reflects the characteristic common in the folk ethos, whereby folk performers are reluctant (or must at least seem reluctant) to boast or brag about their performance or creative abilities¹¹². Eventually, an older man (who is acknowledged by Jan as 'Rob') gruffly announces that he'll "have a go", and Jan sits down at the front of the venue, apparently relieved that things are progressing, while Rob slowly shuffles to the front and begins reciting his poem.

The audience increases somewhat during Rob's recitation, with six or seven people wandering over to the lean-to area after purchasing their breakfast bacon and egg roll or coffee. Much like those who've been at the event from the beginning, the newcomers are generally of an older demographic, with a fairly even mix of men and women¹¹³. One of the newcomers stands out though. A boy, approximately twelve or thirteen years old, dressed in a well-worn Driza-Bone coat and Akubra hat (giving the appearance of having just walked off the family farm), enters the space quietly and finds a seat to the side of the lean-to, looking decidedly out-of-place amongst a group mostly consisting of much older participants.

Once the newcomers are seated, Jan welcomes the late arrivals, joking about how people must have needed a sleep-in due to their "late night partying". She singles out 'Fred', who salutes her with his coffee-mug and comments "you're all just lucky I decided to grace you with my presence". Jan laughs at this sally, understanding that the seemingly boastful comment was in fact a joke, since, as she later explained to me, Fred is well-known for his casual and self-deprecating manner (see Handelman and Kapferer, 1972). This style of

¹¹² See the discussion on authenticity in folk in Chapter 2, and the discussion of stage talk in Chapter 7.

¹¹³ Across all the festivals I attended, Poet's Breakfasts were distinguished by the consistency in their appeal to older festival participants. None of my informants ever gave a reason for this; it is possible that bush poetry was perceived as more "old-fashioned" than other aspects of the festival – though whether this was part of the appeal for the Poet's Breakfast participants, or whether it was a barrier to participation by younger participants, is unknown. Further, the early morning scheduling of the Poet's Breakfast event may have been an additional barrier to younger festival-goers who may have been "partying" late into the night. When I asked younger participants why they didn't attend Poet's Breakfasts, they usually simply replied that it didn't interest them or it was too early.

joking represents a kind of category-routinised joking and humour that is often present in folk festival events, wherein participants actively downplay any personal or ego-driven performance in favour of democratic performance.

Jan then calls proceedings back to order by reading a short poem from a slim volume of bush verse before handing the microphone on to a much older woman (Mary) who, during the short break between performances, has arranged with Jan to perform next, thus avoiding the embarrassed silence that preceded Rob's recitation. This is the only occasion on which Jan acknowledges latecomers, or indeed, takes the floor in any significant way; the audience is from now on allowed to come and go without remark, and Jan's role transitions from active performer/host (speaking and performing directly) to smooth facilitator, directing and organising reciters.

During Mary's performance, Jan makes eye contact with various members of the audience, who silently communicate with her (by catching her eye, nodding their head or subtly gesturing with a hand) that they are willing to perform, allowing Jan to easily pass the microphone from Mary to the next performer, Pete.

Following Pete, Jan passes the microphone from performer to performer, smoothly directing the flow of the Poet's Breakfast with very little direct interference in the process. Jan is the only participant who performs more than once, allowing scope for participation by all those who wish to recite, speaking to an attitude of sharing and egalitarianism.

Due to deft handling by Jan, Scott (the youngest participant) follows a particularly engaging performance by Fred, a well-known and well-liked performer. Jan capitalises on the attentive atmosphere amongst the audience that is produced by Fred's performance to provide the nervous young performer with the best conditions possible in which to recite, and his performance is marked by quiet and consideration on behalf of the onlookers. When Scott concludes his performance, he attempts to quickly return to his seat. His progress is impeded however by several of the older, experienced bush poets, who stand and grasp his hand or pat him on the back. As several of the older participants mentioned to me afterwards, they consider Scott as the next generation, ready to carry on the tradition of bush poetry, and as a result, they heartily congratulate him on his performance, encouraging him to continue writing and performing bush poetry, an example of inter-generational sharing (and encouragement) of folk practice as part of folk process.

Immediately following Scott's performance, much of the energy of the event leading up to and including Scott's performance significantly dwindles, and the remaining performers lack the personal charisma or performance dynamism required to seize the attention of audience members now engaged in looking at festival programmes, scrunching up serviettes and the detritus of breakfast, chatting openly to each other about their plans for the morning, generally moving around or leaving the venue.

At around 10:25, Jan takes the microphone and thanks everyone for attending the Poet's Breakfast, especially those who shared their poetry, and reminds the audience that there is another Poet's Breakfast scheduled on Sunday morning at the same time and place. She adds that if people want other opportunities to perform, there will be an informal poetry and yarnning session hosted by Rob at his campsite later that evening, and she encourages people to put their names down for blackboard spots during the festival, so they "can share the joys of bush poetry with all these people who just think folk festivals are about the bands".

(adapted from field notes, multiple festivals)

Structuring Performances: The Role of the Host/MC

Jan conducts the Poet's Breakfast in a relaxed, casual manner, ensuring all those who want to participate are provided the opportunity. The style of management was laid back and broadly inclusive. The smooth operation of the event would not be possible, however, without the compliance of the performers and audience, who themselves facilitate the process by volunteering and indicating to Jan their willingness to perform¹¹⁴.

As an experienced bush poet and Poet's Breakfast MC/facilitator, Jan manages the overall trajectory of the event without ever properly explicating the purpose of the Poet's Breakfast or how it should proceed. Having arrived late, she opens the event with a brief introduction only, then reads her own poem, putting herself and her skills as a poet and performer on display in order to encourage participation from the group. She hands over the floor to the first volunteer Rob, then proceeds to communicate (silently through eye contact and nods) with other members of the gathering to determine the next performer. While Rob delivers a skilful performance, he benefits from the small and engaged audience, the majority of whom have deliberately risen early in order to attend and participate in this event.

In directing the order of performances, Jan does not merely assign precedence on a 'first-come first-served' basis. The silent acknowledgement of known volunteer-performers between and during performances gives her some slight flexibility to arrange performances according to other factors, such as the fluctuating size and attentiveness of the audience. With the influx of keen participants following Rob's skilful performance, Jan is welcoming and expansive, to the effect that the event process almost starts anew – Jan interacts with the newcomers by making jokes and connections between herself and the new arrivals, and again reads a poem herself; this time, instead of acting as a tool of encouragement to perform, it is a signal that the audience should redirect their attention to the business at hand, that is, the performance of bush poetry. With audience attention redirected to the performer, Jan takes the opportunity to present the less skilled though clearly well-regarded Mary to a receptive audience. As the audience size and attentiveness changes throughout the morning (such as when more casual observers gather or more people

¹¹⁴ While this example of a Poet's Breakfast is fairly typical, I have attended Poet's Breakfasts in which the attendees – through a combination of MC inexperience and mismanagement and bashfulness or lack of preparedness by attendees – have prevented the Poet's Breakfast from operating successfully through a general unwillingness to participate.

engage in eating or checking festival programmes), Jan attempts to manage the crowd through her choice of performer, for example, by opting to position serious performers between those likely to perform humorous material, or in her decision to call up the nervous and very young performer Scott immediately after Fred, who has engaged the audience and created an expectant atmosphere in the venue. This ensures that Scott is provided with the most attentive audience possible, an audience much less likely to interrupt with conversation or movement. Jan's role is not just to manage the flow of the event, but to provide support and encouragement to performers.

Setting the Stage: Locating Poetry in Place and Time

To better understand the logics of design of the Poet's Breakfast, and to understand how the Poet's Breakfast is situated within the event landscape of the festival, it is important to discuss how time and place are used to structure the event. Fundamentally, the impact of the event in mirroring underlying assumptions about Australian-ness and Australian character within the folk scene and presenting these assumptions as part of the folk process is reliant on how the Poet's Breakfast event is situated in the overall festival schedule and in the geographical landscape of the festival site. The situating of the Poet's Breakfast event in similar time and place across multiple folk festival sites across Australia speaks to the use of Poet's Breakfasts in creating certain expectations of how folk should be practiced at Australian folk festivals, and contributes therefore to the ongoing folk process in Australia.

The logics of design of the Poet's Breakfast facilitate a sharing of folk content that is itself shaped by ideas of time and place that speak to ideas about Australian-ness. In this section, I consider how the organisational structures of the event work *in concert* with folk themes to create a particular folk experience for participants.

The Role of Temporality

Time is experienced and significant in the context of the Poet's Breakfast in two ways. The first relates to the logics of design of the event, the *scheduling* that separates the Poet's Breakfast from other events in the festival landscape. This timing has implications for how folk as poetry is experienced by participants, and the kind of atmosphere that develops as a result.

The significance of time is also reflected in the *content* of the poetry recited. As discussed in Chapter 7, the content of folk performance conveys ideas and ideals of what folk is. Themes of temporality including nostalgia for a romanticised past are embedded in the material presented at Poet's Breakfasts, and shape notions of folk for participants.

The scheduling of the Poet's Breakfast is significant. Most spoken word events, much like the concerts, workshops, sessions, and other activities and events that comprise a folk festival, can be scheduled or arise organically at any time depending upon the exigencies of programming and opportunity. Poet's Breakfasts, however, must by their very title and purpose (events which begin the festival day after the overnight break, and at which breakfast may be consumed), be scheduled early in the morning, generally as the first event of the day¹¹⁵.

Scheduling a festival event to begin at nine o'clock in the morning, following an eventful Friday night involving much socialising, late night concerts and sessions which continue through to the early hours of the morning, ensures that the Poet's Breakfast is temporally marginalised. Whereas the late morning to early evening is the peak period for families, and early evening to late night the prime time for headline acts and party bands, events scheduled for the early morning are guaranteed limited attendances, and are not considered 'drawcard' events. The initial attendees who gather at this Poet's Breakfast are the (self-described) "determined folkies", those who arise early to participate in what is generally considered a more marginal aspect of the festival. That is not to say they consider themselves the only "genuine" folkies at the festival, and none of those I spoke to judged those who didn't attend as less committed to folk activities than themselves; merely, while they considered spoken word events like Poet's Breakfasts to be important in maintaining and continuing folk practice in Australia, they understood that many folk festival attendees are more interested in other aspects of the festival, or simply value their opportunity to sleep late in order to attend concerts and sessions late into the night. As Fred expressed to me:

A lot of people don't see bush poetry as important. They're here to party or play in sessions. That's fine. It's only us mad buggers who get up early to do this [laughs]. We're the committed ones – or the ones who should be committed! But poetry should always be at folk festivals – it might not be sexy, *but these bush poems and songs tell us what it means to be Australian*; we should celebrate it. It's our history. Poet's Breakfasts might not sell festival tickets, but we should keep doing them anyway. And you never

¹¹⁵ As discussed in Chapter 5, a festival will occasionally offer morning yoga or other 'wellness'-oriented workshops in the morning. These are located in separate venues and may run concurrently with a Poet's Breakfast, but rarely precede it.

know, people who've just come for the music might discover something new. And that can only be a good thing.

The early start time does however ensure that the event is generally populated only by those who have camped at or stayed near the festival site, excluding almost all casual day attendees. It may also be partially responsible for ensuring that the majority of participants are of a more sober demographic – either older attendees or very young poets like Scott – attendees for whom the appeal of late nights dancing in crowded venues has waned or is (so far at least, in the case of Scott) outside their experience.

Sensorially, the experience of the festival landscape during the early morning is remarkable for its tranquillity and stillness. The festival site is generally quiet; sound engineers in nearby venues are setting up their stages in a desultory way, murmuring “one-two one-two” as they ‘tune’ their venues prior to setting up the first performer. The general somnolence of the site adds to the atmosphere of the Poet’s Breakfast, creating a space that is more gentle and reflective, while the sounds of the sound engineers preparing their venues, combined the sounds and smells of coffee and breakfast being prepared, give a sense that the site, and the festival as a whole, is just waking up. The quietude of the morning enables spoken word (often unamplified) performance – a performance type that can often be ‘lost’ when the festival landscape becomes louder, more active and busy.

The second aspect of temporality, in regards to content rather than design, communicates meaning to participants, especially with regard to themes of nostalgia, a wistful longing for what was or might have been – for the freedoms or hardships of life as it was in the bush, for youth, for people long gone. A vast portion of the content presented at the Poet’s Breakfast speaks to a romanticised view of the past, of an Australia and Australian lifestyle in which a connection to the Australian outback, and the working men of the land, is highly valued. This romanticisation of the past and the common or working man has been a characteristic of folk from the earliest revivals (see Chapter 2) and is reproduced in the nostalgic content of the poetry performed.

Rob, the first volunteer performer at this event, recites Banjo Paterson’s *The Old Australian Ways*, which laments the loss of the ways of (romanticised) Australian stockmen and their connection to the outback (as opposed to a stereotypical city businessman):

*The city folk go to and fro
Behind a prison's bars,*

*They never feel the breezes blow
And never see the stars;
They never hear in blossomed trees
The music low and sweet
Of wild birds making melodies,
Nor catch the little laughing breeze
That whispers in the wheat.*

*Our fathers came of roving stock
That could not fixed abide:
And we have followed field and flock
Since e'er we learnt to ride;
By miner's camp and shearing shed,
In land of heat and drought,
We followed where our fortunes led,
With fortune always on ahead
And always further out.*

A.B. 'Banjo' Paterson (1995a: 151)

This aspect of longing for an idealised past, a sense of nostalgia related to the 'Australian Legend' of Ward's (1958) description within the content of some of the bush poetry recited, connects past and present for the Poet's Breakfast participants¹¹⁶. Such a connection establishes the poetry event as part of an ongoing oral folk tradition, and the regular recounting of bush poems with similar themes of memory and longing for an imagined past is an important aspect of folk process within the folk festival.

Place to Recite/Reciting Place

Like temporality, place contributes to the experience of folk at the Poet's Breakfast through both logics of design and performance content. The location of the event reflects the notions of Australian-ness that are expressed through the content of the poems recited, and the two aspects of place work together to establish an experience of Australian folk in which landscape and connection to the land are prominent.

The festival venue allocated for this Poet's Breakfast is a tin-roofed lean-to attached to the football oval canteen/tuck shop. It is a small space set away from the main performance venues and is, in many ways, an undefined venue space; during the weekend it acts as almost a spill-over site, where small workshops are programmed that can't be accommodated in any more formal venue spaces, but which is officially unoccupied through most of the festival, used mainly as a sheltered casual seating area or a space for informal music sessions when not required for Poet's Breakfasts or workshops. Although this argues for the peripherality of the event in comparison to the broader taskscape of the

¹¹⁶ See Chapter 2 for further discussion of the Australian Legend and its role in the Australian folk process.

festival, at this time of the morning, it becomes the primary folk event and the centre of the festival.

Covered by a tin roof, with one solid wall adjoining the canteen, and rear and side barrier 'walls' provided by tarpaulins set up by the festival site volunteers, the lean-to provides only limited protection from the elements. It is surrounded by mown grass, while the floor under the permanent tin roof is hard-packed dirt, trampled over time by the locals who use the space as a temporary refuge from the rain or the sun while eating sausages on bread during the football and cricket seasons. A cool morning breeze penetrates the space forcing attendees to hunch their shoulders against the cold.

The openness of the venue, and its location, in many ways speak to a preoccupation with the natural Australian landscape, which is important in Ward's (1958) concept of the Australian Legend, and which both reflects and gives added piquancy to the content of the bush poetry recited. The lean-to's permeability exposes Poet's Breakfast participants to the sensuality of the festival site at this particular time of the morning: the audibleness of early morning bird calls in the surrounding trees in concert with the sounds of sizzling bacon from the nearby grill, the smell of the cooked breakfast overlaying the fresh aromas of wet grass and eucalypt, the changing light conditions as the sun rises, the feel of the breeze and the cool temperature. It is hard to imagine a more typically Australian setting in which to read and recite Australian poetry than a tin-roofed lean-to attached to a small country town community oval canteen in which volunteers are busy preparing a cooked breakfast¹¹⁷.

¹¹⁷ A number of Poet's Breakfast events I attended throughout my fieldwork period were located in similarly open- (or nearly) open-air settings. Several were situated in enclosed venues which could also be considered particularly Australian: CWA (Country Women's Association) or RSL (Returned and Services League) halls and rooms.



Figure 9.2: Poet's Breakfast event at Music at the Creek, 2011

The Australian 'feel' or atmosphere of the Poet's Breakfast place is thus established by its openness and informality, and the preoccupation with the Australian landscape which underpins much of the bush poetry performed (the very title of this poetry form – *bush* – reflects this preoccupation). The poems performed this morning are diverse, ranging from serious ballads or humorous verse by the classic bush poets, to readings from contemporary poets, or original verse written by the performers. There are poems about drinking, shearing and droving, the outback, suburbia, the contemporary political landscape – all themes that speak to a particular understanding of the Australian character expressed by the Australian Legend concept – characterised by a laconic stoicism, a rejection of authority and a sense of egalitarianism. In almost all cases, this character is informed, or even forged, by the Australian connection to the natural environment. This deep connection is possibly best epitomised by the second verse of Dorothea MacKellar's *My Country*, a poem I occasionally heard at poetry events, which is still included in Australian high school curriculums and which many Australians are able to recite:

*I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping plains,
Of ragged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains.
I love her far horizons,*

*I love her jewel-sea,
Her beauty and her terror -
The wide brown land for me!*

Dorothea Mackellar, *My Country* (1967: title page)

Weather and landscape are thus recurring themes in bush poetry, inextricably linked, and for many who maintain the bush poetry tradition, an abiding love for the Australian environment represents a fundamental aspect of the Australian character. Traditional Australian bush ballads are typically action-oriented, often relating tales of heroism, courage and adventure¹¹⁸, and the setting in which these feats occur is an important, often pivotal, aspect of the story. Possibly the best-known exemplar of this is Banjo Paterson's *The Man from Snowy River*, still sometimes heard at Poet's Breakfasts¹¹⁹:

*When they reached the mountain's summit, even Clancy took a pull,
It well might make the boldest hold their breath,
The wild hop scrub grew thickly, and the hidden ground was full
Of wombat holes, and any slip was death.
But the man from Snowy River let the pony have his head,
And he swung his stockwhip round and gave a cheer,
And he raced him down the mountain like a torrent down its bed,
While the others stood and watched in very fear.*

*He sent the flint stones flying, but the pony kept his feet,
He cleared the fallen timber in his stride,
And the man from Snowy River never shifted in his seat -
It was grand to see that mountain horseman ride.
Through the stringybarks and saplings, on the rough and broken ground,
Down the hillside at a racing pace he went;
And he never drew the bridle till he landed safe and sound,
At the bottom of that terrible descent.*

A.B. 'Banjo' Paterson (1995b: 5)

The importance of place at this morning's Poet's Breakfast is thus reflected in its logics of design, exhibited through the open-air, rural Australian community oval setting of the lean-to, which could be considered akin to a gathering around a bush campfire, with the informal seating and shared performance opportunities; and through the folk content, specifically the imagery of the poetry recited, which is underpinned by tropes of the Australian landscape. The Poet's Breakfast is, for most of its duration, the only event of the festival. Furthermore, its general location is sought out by hungry festival-goers seeking breakfast. It becomes then, for a short time during the morning, not just a place for sharing poetry, but the folk performance heart of the festival – a heart which is epitomised

¹¹⁸ For a useful overview of this material, see Stewart and Keesing (1955).

¹¹⁹ One informant suggested to me that this poem was somewhat "passé", or perhaps a little too "common", more likely to be recited by inexperienced Poet's Breakfast performers than established poets. I include it as I did hear it recited during my fieldwork.

by a folk tradition that unapologetically celebrates a particular understanding (linked to romantic notions of the Australian landscape) of what it means to be Australian.

Poetry, Performance and Atmosphere

*He'll fill his pipe, and good and well, and all aglow within
We'll hear the news he has to tell, the yarns he has to spin;
Yarns-yes, and super-yarns, forsooth, to set the eyes agog,
And freeze the blood of trusting youth around the boree log.*

John O'Brien, Around the Boree Log (1973 [n.d.]).

John O'Brien's "Around the Boree Log" is a poem frequently heard at Poet's Breakfasts (the audience will often join in the refrain), nostalgically celebrating the sharing of hospitality and stories (yarns) around the boree log fire. The yarns and tall-tales of the stranger "freeze the blood of trusting youth", evoke specific reactions from his auditors as he shares the comfort of the fire. The stranger's skill in storytelling, in conjunction with the sensory effects of a shared fire sheltered from the elements, elicits a physical response from the audience. As with the stranger in John O'Brien's poem, the skilful performance of a Poet's Breakfast poet can help to create a sense of suspenseful anticipation, or shared camaraderie, whereas a less skilled performance can result in a 'flat' atmosphere or boredom amongst participants.

As discussed previously, factors such as the effective management of the event and participants by the MC and the compliance or otherwise of participants and audiences, can influence the level of success and general vibe of the Poet's Breakfast. The skill of the reciters is also a definitive and integral factor in influencing the overall atmosphere of the event. The quality and style of individual performances or recitals of poems and yarns (in conjunction with choice of content) is also integral to the overall success of the event, determining the response of the general audience (interactive, attentive, non-attentive, non-participatory etc) and can evoke (like the stranger in John O'Brien's poem) specific physical and sensory responses from audience members, whilst also establishing and maintaining the event as overtly and uniquely 'Australian'. This section will describe various individual performances by participants at this Poet's Breakfast, illustrating how performance skill and poetry content influence the overall 'feel', or atmosphere, of the Poet's Breakfast, and by extension, the broader festival. Performance style and choice of content creates atmospheres which evoke feelings of connection to Australia, and reinforces the qualities of Australian-ness that are valued by Poet's Breakfast participants.

Rob, the first reciter following Jan's introductory performance, eschews a microphone. Breathing deeply, he stands for a moment looking down, appearing to gather his thoughts. Exhaling, he lifts his head, and gazing into the middle distance, begins to perform the Banjo Paterson poem "The Old Australian Ways" from memory. He recites slowly, his deep bass voice caressing each line and verse, investing it with feeling. His voice seems to envelop the audience who watch and listen with rapt attention, all sitting slightly straighter now, and his broad hand gestures serve to emphasise the majestic themes of the poem:

*"[...] The wind is in the barley-grass,
The wattles are in bloom;
The breezes greet us as they pass
With honey-sweet perfume;
The parakeets go screaming by
With flash of golden wing,
And from the swamp the wild-ducks cry
Their long-drawn note of revelry,
Rejoicing at the Spring.*

*So throw the weary pen aside
And let the papers rest,
For we must saddle up and ride
Towards the blue hill's breast;
And we must travel far and fast
Across their rugged maze,
To find the Spring of Youth at last,
And call back from the buried past
The old Australian ways."*

A.B. 'Banjo' Paterson (1995a: 151)

The celebration of the Australian bush is appropriate in this setting of a make-shift performance space surrounded by sparse grass and native eucalypts. The content of the poem speaks to a nostalgic longing for freedom and connection to the land, but it is Rob's performance that truly invests the poem with meaning for the audience. He modulates his voice through increases and decreases in speed and volume in such a way that the words spoken effectively carry to all members of the audience, and his vocal styling is almost a slow drawl emphasised by the use of an almost hyper-Australian ('strine') accent. One attendee later describes how the slow, almost droning delivery evokes a visceral response, a sensation of goosebumps and a tightening of the chest. For this attendee, these physical sensations were linked with a feeling of pride, of being directly connected to a pastoral ideal of colonial and frontier Australia with its wild and untamed landscapes. The attention of the audience is completely focused on Rob, transporting his auditors collectively to a place of myth and memory. As he finishes the performance, he stands still for a moment in silence, his hands dropped to his sides, before the spell is broken by

enthusiastic applause from an audience that has swelled somewhat during his delivery of the poem.

Following Rob, Mary reads a long poem in a halting style, sometimes struggling to read the printed page and stumbling over words. Her thin, reedy voice lacks the emphasis and musicality of either Jan or Rob, and although the audience is polite, she is unable to command the rapt attentiveness shown to Rob. The delivery – halting, uncertain – means that the content of the poem is lost, hard to follow. This impacts on the general atmosphere, as Mary is unable to produce an affective connection between herself and the audience, unable to evoke the kind of sensory response of Rob in response to the themes of her poem. There does, though, seem to be a general affection for Mary from those gathered, with much of the audience smiling throughout, and her performance is acknowledged by enthusiastic, encouraging applause. Mary's performance technique is comparatively inferior, her vocal pitch and inflection and inability to confidently recite her material limits her capacity to really move her audience. The goodwill shown towards her, however, demonstrates the folk ethos of participation and egalitarian performance obtaining at the Poet's Breakfast; participation is valued, even when performance skill is comparatively poor.

Pete's performance significantly differs from Rob's dramatic recital and Mary's inexperienced one. He stands and acknowledges various interjections and jests from several audience members, and looking very serious, begins to recite a long original poem full of humour and innuendo. His deadpan delivery, in conjunction with the humorous content, results in explosions of laughter throughout the audience. At times he pauses his performance to ensure that the laughter has subsided enough to allow him to continue and he glares chidingly at the audience for interrupting him, and this active interaction between poet and audience distinguishes Pete's performance. Like Rob, he successfully manages the audience's mood and skilfully orchestrates their reaction to his performance through the use of gestures and vocal modulation – the slow, droning 'strine' and serious oratorical gesturing – but the somewhat cheeky content of the poetry inverts the emotional response of the audience, resulting in noisy hilarity rather than the haunting nostalgia that characterised Rob's performance. The humour of the poem, and the deadpan delivery, reinforce and reflect ideas of Australian-ness characterised by an innate irreverence. The noise and the laughter make the audience seem larger and broader than the actual number of people present, and the noise spills out of the lean-to area, attracting casual passers-by

(accidental audiences who may be experiencing bush poetry for the first time) and people seeking breakfast who pause on the periphery, creating a wall of onlookers enclosing the original participants.

When Fred is given the opportunity to perform, he takes the microphone and stands at the front of the performance space, with his computer tablet held before him (as opposed to a book or piece of paper like other participants). While preparing himself, he laughs off suggestions from the audience that he is a “techno-folkie”, responding that at least he “isn’t stuck in the technological dark ages” like everyone else. The group appreciates the riposte, demonstrating that the joke is understood by a self-deprecating audience who are able to laugh at themselves and their predilection for bush poetry and recitation, a pastime considered somewhat anachronistic amongst the broader Australian community. Fred then reads an original poem he has written in the style of a traditional bush ballad about living in Canberra, and having to deal with the large population of politicians that overruns the city when parliament is sitting. While his poem has serious themes, ranging from the treatment of indigenous people and refugees to economic issues, it ends on a humorous note, poking fun at elected officials and public servants, an irreverence or even disrespect with regard to authority that is present in much folk revivalism, especially in Australia. His performance is punctuated by various cheers and agreement from those seated, and ends in laughter from the entire audience. Fred bows extravagantly before passing the microphone back to Jan and making his way back to his seat, laughing and interacting with various audience members on his way.

The interaction between Fred and the audience during his performance, and the content of his poem with its anti-establishment humour, establishes a palpable atmosphere of jovial bonhomie, even a slight rowdiness, amongst the event’s participants. Humour, as demonstrated by both Pete and Fred’s performance, is an important aspect of Poet’s Breakfasts generally, and reflects the importance of humour – especially self-deprecating humour – as a desirable Australian characteristic. Through humour, those ranged around the outside of proceedings are transformed from passive on-lookers to engaged insiders, complicit in the production of a sense of vibrancy, through their attentive body language (especially as they awaited punch-lines) and shared laughter, nodding, and smiling.

The tangible engagement of the audience was maintained following Fred’s departure from the ‘stage’, with those who had hitherto only paid slight attention to the poetry and

performers now eagerly awaiting the next performance, hoping for further entertainment. Jan takes advantage of this, and calls up Scott, the boy in the Akubra hat, who has been sitting quietly by himself for most of the event. He rises and takes the microphone from her, looking nervous and clutching a piece of paper. The rowdiness of the small crowd settles as participants recognise the youthfulness of the young man about to perform, and audience members smile at him encouragingly. Scott begins by quietly and haltingly explaining that he will read a poem he has written about life on his farm. He struggles initially with his microphone technique, holding it too far away from his mouth, and Jan quietly explains that he needs to speak more directly into the microphone. He clears his throat, and despite a shaky start, begins reciting his poem with similar rhythm and emphasis as the experienced bush poets, though slightly fast, due perhaps to nerves. The audience remains silent throughout his performance, no one shifting position or moving away, the attendees encouraging Scott's participation through their respectful attention and the largest round of applause so far upon the conclusion of his poem.

The respect and encouragement shown to each performer, even though their individual style and quality of poetry recital varies significantly, demonstrates an egalitarianism evident amongst folk performers and audiences, wherein participation, often regardless of performance experience, skill, technique or sometimes even talent, is valued in the folk community. This egalitarianism in many ways is reflected in the qualities of 'Australian-ness' and the Australian way of life vis-à-vis Ward's Australian Legend. While it may be argued that participation and inclusiveness are valued in folk communities around the world, the particular quality of Australian-ness, as it relates to nostalgia about the Australian Legend and in the content of the bush poetry recited at Poet's Breakfasts, means that the Poet's Breakfast, as the first event in the daily festival programme, imbues the Australian folk festival right from the beginning of the day with an Australian flavour in which participation, 'mateship', shared experience, amateur performance and fairness are valued aspects of the folk process.

Conclusion: Sharing "Australian-ness" – Oral Traditions at Folk Festivals

Spoken word events are situated at the periphery of the festival event-landscape, mostly programmed early in the morning with few participants. Nevertheless, 'Poet's Breakfast' events are important expressions of Australian identity within the folk movement, and help to communicate 'Australian-ness' through the folk process. They are events-that-present, reflecting organisers' adherence to Australian folk festival norms which allocate space for

bush poetry in an event that is broadly replicable across multiple festivals, and which reflect participants' ideas and ideals about the Australian character or way of life.



Figure 9.3: Stock Camp venue at National Folk Festival, 2012

Opportunities for Australian oral tradition to be practiced, participated in and shared, Poet's Breakfasts involve few onlookers, and audiences generally consist of performers. Poetry may encompass 'traditional' bush ballad forms or original compositions, but usually *says something* about the Australian landscape, history or way of life. Poet's Breakfasts often reference the colonialist construct of the Australian Legend (see Ward, 1958), a narrative of nostalgic Australian identity in which the outback (and its workers) is idealised, a feature of the earliest Australian folk revival. Participants take turns to recite in an example of democratic performance and participation which echoes the often-egalitarian sentiments of the poetry itself, sometimes expressed through category-routinised joking and humour (see Handelman & Kapferer, 1972: 497). Both the logics of design of the event (situating the event at a place and time that emphasise the importance of Australian landscape, and structured to ensure egalitarian participation), and the content of the poetry presented, work together to not only facilitate folk process through oral communication, community selection and continuity between past and present (reflected both by the recitation of traditional poems but also by the general encouragement of the older poets towards the next generation), but also to establish atmospheres of folk

characterised by their general supportiveness of and encouragement for performers, reflected in Australian values of fairness and equality of opportunity.

Through reference to a single representative Poet's Breakfast event, I have explored how Poet's Breakfasts reflect (*mirror*) organisers' adherence to Australian folk festival norms and performance traditions and the characteristics of 'Australian Legend'-style Australian-ness expressed at Poet's Breakfasts through performance technique and the audience/performer relationship forms an important part of the oral tradition aspect of folk process. The active encouragement of young performers such as Scott demonstrates the importance of continuing tradition for participants, who see the Poet's Breakfast as an important element of folk performance in Australia, that needs to be included in festival programmes despite being of only marginal interest to many festival participants who attend the festival primarily for the concert events.

PART FOUR

Sharing Folk – Participation & Meaning

Chapter 10: Revisiting Rosie - Shaping Folk Experience Through Participation

Introduction

In Chapter 4 of this thesis, I began my ethnographic analysis of the eventmental landscape of folk festivals by introducing Rosie, an archetypal folk festival participant, describing how she ‘walked the festival’, exploring folk and the festival through her feet, over the period of only a few hours. In that chapter, I explored how folk meaning could be created in the festival landscape through participant movement. However, festival participation is also fundamentally interactive and social, as participants actively engage with festival events, and with each other, creating and processing folk together. In this penultimate chapter, I revisit Rosie in a series of four vignettes as she moves through the festival landscape, this time over the course of a day rather than mere hours, in order to show how festival logics of design facilitate flexibility and sociability within the event-scape. These vignettes, depicting just some of the events Rosie engages with through the course of one day, demonstrate that festival logics of design and participant interaction work to co-structure a folk experience. This account reflects how Rosie’s folk experience (and the logics of design of individual event-types, such as the concerts discussed in Chapter 7) is shaped by her folk participation within the festival, and her face-to-face interaction with other festival participants. Here, she moves between both planned and unplanned modes of participation, and by being actively involved in the festival landscape both structures and shapes not only her own festival experience, but that of other festival participants.

In this thesis, I have examined the logics of design that create a festival event-scape, and an atmospheric landscape for participants, but have shown that participants’ unique movements within and interaction with these structures co-creates an intersubjective folk experience. While festival structures provide space for participation, folk festival attendees not only create their own experience of folk by their engagement in folk events (either as audiences, volunteers, musicians, dancers, poets and so on), but they shape other festival-goers’ folk experience through such participation. Active participation is itself part of the logics of design of the folk festival (through the deliberate structuring of eventmental landscapes that enable and encourage attendee participation in the festival and folk process, and through the logics of design of specific events, such as Poet’s Breakfasts and morris dance workshops), and is an imperative and ideal of folk. Therefore, it is in the process of practicing folk together, that folk meaning is established. Rosie does not

experience the folk festival in a vacuum, as a lone figure in the festival landscape. It is her interaction with others, as they too negotiate the structures of the festival event-scape, that ultimately determines her folk experience, and her role in the folk process.

A Day in the Life: Rosie's Festival in Four Parts

Morning...

Rosie arrived at the beginner's ukulele workshop, instrument in hand, just prior to the start time of 10am. This was a workshop she had planned to attend since first opening the festival programme. Although Rosie has some experience with the ukulele, able to play some basic chords and even sometimes join in with sessions when tunes she knows are being played, she tries to attend all uke workshops, no matter how basic, to improve her skills, and possibly learn some tips and tricks that might help her playing.

Maybe twenty people were gathered, several children and teenagers, but mostly adults of varying ages, many with their own instruments, or for those without, there was a selection of brightly coloured ukuleles for use during the workshop (and available for purchase later). When everyone was seated with their ukuleles, the workshop began, with the workshop host introducing himself and explaining that anyone can play the uke, regardless of whether a person has ever played an instrument previously.

Rosie had heard this kind of spiel before, having attended many such workshops in the past. As the workshop progressed, they were taught simple chord structures – C, F and G7 – and basic strumming techniques. Rosie strummed along with the rest of the group, practicing her technique in an environment in which she didn't feel like she had to prove her prowess. With this foundation of three basic chords and up/down strumming technique, they were told, there were thousands of songs they could play.

Photocopied sets of papers were then distributed amongst participants, containing several songs. The first sheet contained the lyrics and chords (F and C only) for the song 'Tom Dooley'. The workshop host encouraged everyone to sing along with the well-known song lyrics, and demonstrated how to play in time with the lyrics, and eventually everyone in the workshop was strumming and singing, with the host interrupting every so often to call out the chord change.

They learned three other songs following this method. Rosie enjoyed the process, having no problem playing along with the simple two or three chord songs, and sang along with gusto. She enjoyed feeling competent (even advanced) with her instrument, and singing with others always felt joyful. Everyone appeared to be happy, even those struggling with their technique, and the host went out of his way to encourage everyone.

Towards the end of the workshop, one of the participants asked the host about playing the ukulele in traditional music sessions. She said that she would like to play, but found it hard to learn to play the trad tunes when everyone in the session played so fast. The workshop host asked if anyone else experienced the same difficulty, and several hands went up. He then proposed to host a session, later that night, just for uke players, to practice playing trad session tunes in a non-confronting way. Rosie had often felt out of depth and not confident enough to join in sessions properly, so she was keen to participate, even though the proposed session clashed with a concert she had planned to attend. She made a note about the session in her programme before thanking the host for an enjoyable workshop.

Midday...

Rosie sat by the side of the stage, watching the solo uilleann piper playing his set of traditional tunes. He was nearing the end of his concert, so Rosie looked over her programme notes, noting both the printed performer précis of the upcoming band and her own handwritten notes, a result of her meeting with the band a few minutes earlier in the 'green room' (the space behind the stage). She looked out at the audience. At the beginning of the concert there was only a scattering of people, but the audience had grown throughout the concert to a respectable size.

The piper finished and thanked the audience. As he moved from the stage, the sound engineer gave Rosie the 'thumbs up', signalling that the microphone on the side of the stage was 'live'. Rosie jumped up and spoke into the microphone, thanking the piper, and looking at her notes, announced that although his pipe workshop had been held that morning, there would be another opportunity to see him perform in a different venue later that afternoon. She entreated the audience to buy some raffle tickets to support the festival, and then moved away from the stage, allowing the sound engineer to prepare for the next act.

Rosie wasn't supposed to be MCing on this stage. Earlier that day, as she wandered around the festival after returning her ukulele to her campervan, she had run into the Programme Director, who appeared frazzled. Knowing the Director well, Rosie enquired as to the reason, and was told that one of the MCs was now unavailable for their shift, due to start in half an hour. Rosie had quickly considered what she had planned to attend over the next few hours, realised there was nothing she would be devastated to miss, and promptly offered her services as a fill-in MC. The Programme Director had jumped at the offer, and that was how Rosie found herself in her current role.

Rosie went backstage to thank the piper, while the four-piece bluegrass band set up on stage, before returning to her position on the side of the stage, checking her watch as she waited for the soundcheck to be completed. The changeover and soundcheck was taking longer than expected, as the soundie struggled with feedback. Eventually she was given the signal, and she rose to introduce the band, mentioning where they were from, but otherwise keeping her remarks short in an attempt to get the timetable back on track.

Rosie spent four hours MCing. She introduced and thanked four different acts during that period, not leaving the marquee at all. She split her time between watching the act on stage (keeping a close eye on her watch to ensure they kept to their allotted time) and speaking to upcoming performers to see if there was anything they wanted mentioned about their performance. She took her role as timekeeper seriously, making sure she gave performers a signal when they only had five minutes left, ensuring the next performers were ready in time. She also watched the audience, taking note of how many were in the audience and observing the ebb and flow of people coming and going. It wasn't always obvious why the audience grew or shrank at different times, whether this movement was related to the performance on stage, or whether it was a result of the rhythms of the rest of the festival, as other concerts began or ended.

Her unexpected stint as an MC meant that Rosie missed several concerts she had vaguely planned to attend, however, it gave her the opportunity to properly experience four concerts, a couple of which she enjoyed immensely and which she hadn't previously planned to see. She also learnt a great deal about the performers and their music, both as a result of being present for all of their stage talk, and because she was responsible for including additional commentary during her introductory and concluding remarks.

Toward the end of the final concert, a man approached her and introduced himself as the next MC. She relinquished her role to him, leaving him to thank the current performer, and left the marquee, happy to stretch her legs.

Afternoon...

Rosie finished eating her gozleme (the spinach and feta filled flatbread that was for Rosie an indispensable festival treat) while watching circus performers entertaining crowds with their hula hoop tricks and juggling. Throwing away the detritus of her meal, Rosie wandered off, casually strolling through the festival streets, eventually ending up at the Instrument Makers display. Rosie always visited the Instrument Makers display at festivals. Looking at the beautifully hand-crafted instruments always made her wish she was a more competent musician, and she envied the people that could properly appreciate such instruments through their playing.

As she walked along the aisles of the display, Rosie looked at the many instruments for sale, cigar-box guitars alongside standard acoustic guitars and mandolins, button accordions and banjos, djembes and ocarinas. As she passed each display, she nodded and said hello to the instrument sellers, but didn't engage in conversation, feeling their time would be better spent with people more likely to purchase their wares. She admired all the instruments, and even considered buying herself something small, such as rosewood 'bones' or a kalimba, more as a souvenir than anything else, something she could play with during and after the festival.

Rosie paused in front of a display of ukuleles. There were some very attractive instruments ranging in size (from soprano to baritone), and mostly costing between \$100 and \$500. When the salesperson asked her if she played, Rosie explained that she played a bit, and had a beginner-level soprano Mahalo ukulele. He encouraged her to try out a few of the instruments on the table, then left her to it, ready to answer any questions, but not pressuring her in any way.

Rosie tried several of the cheaper ukuleles, playing basic chord progressions and comparing the sounds. Out of interest, she tried a \$400 tenor-sized instrument, to see if there was a significant difference in the sound and feel of the instruments in the higher price range. She was astounded by the difference. She seemed to sound and play so much better on the higher-priced instrument. She reluctantly put it down and tried a few more modestly priced ukes, but she didn't like – or feel a connection to – any as she did with the expensive tenor. The instrument was far outside the budget she had set herself for this festival though, so looking wistfully at the uke, she moved away from the table.

Rosie walked on, surveying the instruments around her, but continuing to think about how comfortable she had felt with that tenor uke, and how much it seemed to improve her playing. Retracing her steps to the uke table, she made a split decision – she would buy it. Rosie was not a confident player, and this ukulele made her feel much more competent. Handing over her credit card, Rosie rationalised the impulsive purchase. With a beautifully-sounding instrument Rosie would feel less nervous about playing in front of people, and would feel far more confident playing in sessions and workshops.

Rosie's stroll through the Instrument Makers display turned out to be an unexpectedly expensive exercise. It would, however, better facilitate her participation in other festival events. Buying a decent instrument, that she could play well, not only made her feel like she would better appreciate and be better able to participate in the broader festival experience, but gave her the feeling that she had engaged with the Instrument Makers display as any other musician would, and she left the display area, uke in hand, feeling extremely pleased with herself.

Evening...

Rosie rushed to the ukulele 'session' that had been organised that morning, in the area behind the session bar, concerned she was running late after staying until the end of the concert she was watching. As it was, everyone else had arrived already in the vacant, unused space. Someone had managed to find some chairs and bring them over, and so the

workshop host from the ukulele workshop that morning (now session host), along with a friend of his who was an experienced ukulele player (and an official festival performer), was seated in a circle with six other people from the workshop. Rosie joined them as they pulled out their ukes, tuned their instruments and waited to begin.

Being in such an out-of-the-way location (behind a building), only those who had been told about the 'session' were present – there were no casual passers-by or other musicians keen to watch or join in. This was an invitation-only event, designed to give those present some experience and confidence in playing traditional session tunes. None of those present were complete beginners – they were all familiar with multiple chord shapes and were able to play basic progressions, but were unused to playing the kinds of tunes that commonly featured in sessions.

When everyone was ready and waiting, the host explained that the best way to learn how to play in sessions was simply to do it, and that this was an opportunity to practice in a non-confronting way. He would tell them all the name of the tune, what key it was in, and the chords that featured, but other than that, they should just play along, and change chords when he called them.

The host and his friend began playing, and the more confident players in the group joined in immediately. Several waited a few bars to get familiar with the rhythm, and some simply played a single strum on every chord change, trying to get a feel for the shapes of the chords. Rosie carefully watched the experienced host and his friend, watching their fingers as they moved around the necks of their ukes. She initially just played downward strums while she got comfortable with the chord progression, then as she grew in competence, strummed up and down with the rhythm of each bar of music. By the time the tune came to an end after repeating three or four times, Rosie was playing the tune confidently. When it came to its conclusion, everyone in the group had been playing along at least at a basic level, and they all smiled at each other, some applauding each other in appreciation of their group accomplishment.

After congratulating everyone, the session host immediately moved on to the next tune, again calling out each chord change and repeating the tune multiple times to give all players a chance to get the hang of the chord progression and rhythm. Again, when the tune ended, everyone smiled and congratulated one another.

As the 'session' continued, and everyone grew more confident, the host began joining tunes together, as would happen in a normal session. He would start with one tune, play it through three or four times, then transition into another tune, and eventually return to the first tune. By the end, from the outside, the group looked and sounded like a 'normal' trad session, rather than a 'lesson' in how to play. Eventually, after about an hour, the host called the session to a close.

While packing up, Rosie chatted to the other participants with whom she now felt a sense of camaraderie, commenting on the session and agreeing with the others that she felt far more confident, and expressing how nice it was to play with others of a similar standard. Saying goodbye and leaving to attend a concert in the main marquee, Rosie decided to hold on to her uke rather than return it to her van. Between having the new uke that gave her so much more pleasure to play, and the practice session, she felt a lot more positive about potentially joining in a session later, capable of playing with the more experienced musicians, and confident there would be some of her new friends also participating. She felt extremely grateful that the workshop host had that morning offered, on the spur of the moment and with great generosity, to give up his time to hold the practice 'session'. She expected many of the sessions to be held over the festival would now include ukulele players. Rosie was excited to be one of them.

(adapted from field notes, various festivals)



Figure 10.1: Ukulele workshop at Frances Folk Gathering, 2012

Planned and Unplanned: Serendipity and Structuring Festival Experience

Rosie began her day at the festival with a basic plan based on her prior reading of the festival programme, which although vague, provided an expectation of how her day might unfold. The first event she attended, the ukulele workshop, was one of the non-negotiable events in Rosie's plan. She prepared for it by arising early, carrying her ukulele with her, and arriving prior to the start time to ensure she could find a seat and get her instrument out and tuned, before the workshop began. She made an effort to attend ukulele workshops at all the festivals she attended, and as the only ukulele workshop in this festival programme, although it was pitched at beginners and therefore somewhat below her level of playing competence, she attended because it gave her extra experience playing ukulele with other people, and provided an opportunity to learn additional 'tips and tricks' that might assist her future playing. The event unfolded broadly as Rosie expected it would, familiar as she was with the common logics of design of a beginner's ukulele workshop at a festival – the host welcoming everyone and reassuring them that the ukulele was an easy instrument to learn to play, the subsequent teaching of several basic chord shapes, instruction in how to strum, and then the collective learning of several well-known songs, leading to all the workshop participants playing music together.

Although the ukulele workshop was just one of the events which Rosie planned to attend that day, her experience in and attendance at the workshop ended up, in some respects, influencing the overall structure of her day, and her level of participation in festival events. Although Rosie had marked (in her programme) concerts which she had hoped to attend that evening, she decided to forgo these when the workshop host unexpectedly offered to hold a ukulele session, designed to help give confidence and experience in playing traditional session tunes to the more competent ukulele players that attended the workshop (see Wilks & Quinn, 2016: 32). Rosie had originally structured her day based around the concerts she planned to attend – now she altered the plan, marking her programme accordingly, in order to attend an event that would in itself be far more participatory, but which would also furnish her with the skills to more actively participate in other aspects of both this and future festivals.

Rosie left the workshop, her evening schedule now altered (rescheduled and replanned) on the basis of what arose from the workshop (the planned event), and stowed her ukulele in her campervan, before returning to the main festival precinct to attend the mid-morning and afternoon concerts she had identified as possibilities in her original plan for the day. None of these were non-negotiable in the manner of the ukulele workshop, but rather represented the potentiality of Rosie's festival experience (see Chapter 5). This vague plan was, however, completely disrupted upon Rosie's unexpected meeting with the festival Programme Director. Rosie's altruistic offer to act as MC for a shift meant that she was unable to attend any of the events she had noted on her programme. Rosie's indefinitely structured and anticipated schedule as a passive audience member, wandering between and through events as she explored the event landscape (see de Certeau, 1984; and Ingold, 2010a), instead became a far more structured four hours of festival participation than she had foreseen. Rosie was transformed from a participant casually exploring the eventmental landscape of the festival, broadly structuring her day based on the logics of design of the festival timetable, to being not only an active player within the landscape, but in fact responsible for ensuring that the logics of design of a significant portion of a concert event were maintained.

Rosie spent much time looking at her watch during her shift as MC. This shift, unanticipated and unintended, bound Rosie to the festival programme in a way none of her other festival experiences did. With the exception of the ukulele workshop she attended

that morning, none of Rosie's festival experience to that point had confined her to a specific schedule. Acting as an MC, Rosie was responsible for maintaining a strict schedule on behalf of festival organisers (see Chapter 6: 117), ensuring that the logics of design regarding the concert timetable functioned (see Chapter 7). She had to manage performers who were running late, and compensate for sound checks that ran over time. This meant that she was hyper-aware of the time structures of the festival during the four hours of her shift as MC. Rosie's management of time in her marquee not only impacted on her own experience, but structured the time for the audience in the marquee, the performers and the sound engineer. However, despite her preoccupation with time during her shift, and the fact that she missed the events she had planned to attend, Rosie benefited from being unable to leave the marquee by more fully experiencing the concerts (including concerts she hadn't planned to attend), and therefore the folk content they communicated, than she may have if she were 'zapping' (Ronstrom, Malm & Lindberg, 2001: 60) between the potential events she had previously identified.

Upon relief from her duties as MC, Rosie didn't immediately return to her (originally) planned event-scape, but rather took time out for (a late) lunch, and to fulfil one of aspects of festival participation to which Rosie looked forward at all festivals – a wander around the Instrument Makers display. Although Rosie hadn't organised this element of her festival experience specifically (for that particular time or day), the disruption of her schedule by her unexpected stint as MC, and the accompanying heavy emphasis on time structures, led her to dismiss her vague plans, in order to meander without the restriction of strict event scheduling. This wandering eventually led to unexpected active participation in the Instrument Makers display, through the handling and subsequent impulsive purchase of a new instrument, which represented not only the development of a relationship between Rosie and the instrument seller, but between Rosie and the festival (through the purchase of a souvenir), and between Rosie and a folk instrument (a material demonstration of her folk participation) (see Bronner, 1982). This purchase would facilitate Rosie's more active engagement in future (planned and unplanned) events of the festival landscape, such as impromptu sessions.

Finally, Rosie attended the 'session workshop', the event that had only been added to the (unofficial) festival programme that morning. This session represented the capacity by the festival logics of design for incorporating unplanned and unexpected events within the landscape. The session was held in an unused area of the festival site, away from other

participants, and was only known to a small group of people. Scheduled (that morning) concurrently with other concert events that Rosie (and no doubt the other participants) planned to attend, it offered an alternative option for festival participation that only occurred as a result of a single question asked in a morning workshop. No one, not even the host of the session, had known the previous day that this event would occur, however Rosie, like the other participants, was able to take advantage of the opportunity for learning offered (by the goodwill of the workshop host), having come to the festival prepared for ukulele participation, by bringing a ukulele to the festival (and even subsequently purchasing one), ready to play should the opportunity arise.

For Rosie, the experience of the uke session, along with the confidence she gained from her new instrument, facilitated her active engagement with the festival generally, and with more participatory events such as sessions in which she could play folk music with other people, rather than simply watching people perform folk on stage. The unscheduled wander through the Instrument Makers display (the timing of which was determined by Rosie's unexpected shift as an MC, which occurred as a result of Rosie's directed walking), and participation in the unplanned session (which arose as a result of the planned workshop), demonstrates how movement of participants through both the planned and unplanned event-scape of the festival facilitates participation in folk activities, and therefore situates participants as active elements of the folk process as it plays out at festivals.

Sharing Experience: Folk Participation and Other People

Rosie's festival day not only illustrates how serendipitous participation arising from movement can structure a participant's experience, but it also demonstrates how interaction between festival participants can shape the festival, in this case not only for Rosie, but all those festival participants she encountered in the festival landscape. Participation in the festival, even by festival-goers attending the festival on their own, is never a solo experience. Rather, it is the relationships that develop through shared participation in festival events that can structure the experience of folk, and facilitate folk process.

Rosie's decision to participate in the ukulele workshop was driven not only by her desire to improve her playing, but because the workshop represented an opportunity to play music together with other people, and learn how to play in a person-to-person communication of folk. Rosie wasn't a confident musician – playing in a workshop enabled her to play music

at a level with which she was comfortable, without feeling out of place amongst much more accomplished musicians (see Wilks & Quinn, 2016: 35). She found the experience “joyful”, which indicated that Rosie found greater pleasure in playing and singing together with others, than she perhaps did when practicing on her own. Further, although the workshop was structured as a ‘lesson’, with the workshop host teaching the chords and techniques to the participants, the workshop was casual enough that participants felt comfortable to express their doubts and uncertainties about taking that knowledge and applying it to other festival contexts – in this case, traditional sessions (in which folk music is shared as part of folk process). This led to an engagement by a number of the participants, including Rosie and the workshop host, to meet later that evening, creating a private event just for those workshop participants who (were capable enough and) cared to reconvene to play together again.

After the workshop, Rosie’s festival plan fell into disarray following her chance meeting with the Programme Director. Rosie and the Programme Director knew each other from other folk contexts, including regular (non-festival) folk concerts as well as the volunteering Rosie had done for other festivals. It was this former acquaintance that enabled Rosie to enquire as to her friend’s apparent distress, and Rosie’s subsequent offer to fill in as an MC. This chance meeting, a coincidence of both Rosie and her friend walking through the same part of the festival landscape at the same time, completely upended Rosie’s plans, but led to a much more actively engaged level of participation in the festival.

During Rosie’s shift as MC, she was so focused on the time and managing performers that she didn’t always fully engage with the performance on stage. Her attention was split between her role and being an audience member. However, her stint as MC gave her a perspective on both the performance and the performers that she wouldn’t have had as a casual audience member. It provided the opportunity to meet the performers and learn about them as people, and in the process of gathering information required for her introductions, information about the folk performance was communicated directly to her, ready for her to then provide to the audience – positioning her as an important link in the chain of folk process. She became part of the communication of folk, both contextualising the performers (and their credentials as folk performers) and the types of music they were performing, for the audience (Bealle, 1993). Further, as the MC, Rosie in effect became a performer on stage herself, standing in front of audiences large and small, herself an

important part of the logics of design of concerts, framing performances as folk, and maintaining structures that distinguished and delimited one concert from another (see Chapter 7: 168-170).

Rosie's role as MC meant that she participated more fully in the concert experience, and the festival overall, by her benevolent and impulsive act of helping the Programme Director. Not only did she become part of the festival logics of design, helping to create the festival (see Chapter 7), she gained both folk knowledge (through talking with performers and hearing their stage talk) and social (folk) capital. Introducing herself in her role as MC to performers was an excellent method of meeting other folk participants. Being acquainted formally with these performers would facilitate other social opportunities, meaning that she could talk to them on other occasions informally, or play with them in sessions as an acquaintance rather than a stranger, enhancing her opportunities for richer participation in the festival in other contexts.

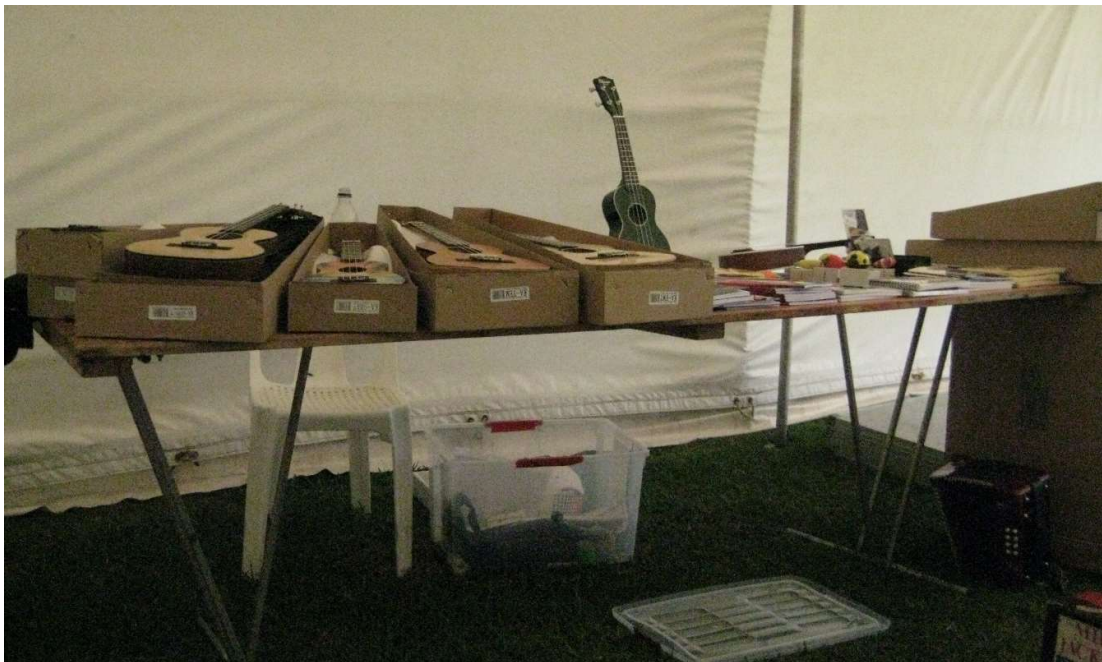


Figure 10.2: Ukuleles and ukulele songbooks for sale, Frances Folk Gathering, 2012

Although Rosie's impulsive purchase of a ukulele during her wander around the Instrument Makers display was not significantly impacted by other people (even the ukulele seller only had limited conversation with her, then left her to try instruments on her own), the motivation for purchasing the ukulele was driven by the confidence the higher-quality instrument gave Rosie when she played it. By sounding better, as she believed she did on the tenor uke, Rosie felt much more capable of engaging in festival activities, such

as sessions, than she did with her basic instrument (see Ingold [2010b: 94] on the agency of objects). The benefit of sounding and playing better, while making Rosie's personal uke experience more satisfying, would enable greater, more meaningful, participation in the folk landscape, and higher quality (folk) interactions with other festival-goers.

Finally, we saw Rosie take part in a ukulele session in which only half a dozen or so players took part, all (except for the host's friend) drawn from the workshop that morning. It was an intimate event, held in an out of the way location, to ensure that casual passers-by didn't mistake it for an open session and join in. Seated in a circle, all those present could see the other participants and watch how they played their instruments, which could have been confronting for nervous players, but instead acted to create a sense of solidarity amongst those present, evidenced by the group applause, laughing and congratulations that were shared on the conclusion of each tune. It was a supportive environment which facilitated the sharing of music between participants, and the learning of traditional folk tunes, taught by the session host. These were tunes that were themselves the product of folk process, traditional reels and jigs that were commonly played in the face-to-face setting of the folk session, and were being shared and communicated to all the musicians present, as part of the process of folk, learned bodily through the process of actually playing (Ingold, 2011: 51-53). The experience of playing together and the group achievement of learning the folk tunes and how to participate in a session, not only functioned to give confidence to the participants that they would be able to engage with the 'normal' folk sessions that occur within the festival landscape, but created a sense of community. They had learned folk together, they had played folk together, and they would continue to do so in the context of the broader festival.

Conclusion

This chapter, the narrative of four events in which Rosie took part over the course of a festival day, demonstrates that festival participation is shaped by festival logics of design which accommodate both the strictly scheduled and timetabled festival taskscape outlined in the festival programme, and more fluid, spontaneous or impromptu events that arise from participant engagement and sociability within the event-scape. Participants move between both the scheduled and unscheduled, preparing for and attending (for them) non-negotiable events, but also altering plans on the basis of chance meetings and sometimes fleeting interactions. Importantly, the festival landscape is interactive – both in terms of the connections made between festival-goers as they participate in events (and thus become

part of the folk process at festivals), and in terms of the ability of participants to shape the festival for themselves and others.

This thesis has explored how festivals' overall logics of design, and the logics of design of specific events, provide structure for participants, who then shape their own experience through their movement within the festival event-scape. The account of Rosie's walking in Chapter 4 illustrated how the festival landscape could be explored through festival-goers' feet, as they negotiate both the physical and temporal landscape, the eventfulness of the festival. This chapter, which depicts Rosie not only moving between events, but engaging with them more intimately, illustrates that it is not only the individual's acceptance or rejection of festival structures that creates a festival experience, but that it is the relationships formed between participants that establishes a landscape that facilitates and processes folk. The International Folk Music Council in 1955 defined folk music as the product of oral transmission, suggesting that folk process is a result of continuity, evolution and selection *by the community*. Mackinnon (1993: 129-130) suggests that 'direct human interaction' is the dominant structural ethos of the folk movement. Making folk is a communal process. Folk festivals facilitate this process through logics of design that stimulate and help create festival atmospheres that are fundamentally connective, "linking people, places and things" (Bille, Bjerregaarde & Sørensen, 2015: 33) and which establish communities of folk through folk performance and participation. Whether this folk communion is accomplished through people playing a particular instrument together in workshops or sessions, learning how to play traditional music in a group setting, watching concerts as part of a bigger audience, or through volunteering as an MC at a concert, it is the act of experiencing, and *making*, folk together that creates folk meaning in the folk festival.

Chapter 11: Conclusion – Making Folk Together

This is possible because making music together occurs in a true face-to-face relationship inasmuch as the participants are sharing not only a section of time but also a sector of space. (Schutz, 1951: 95)

In this thesis, I have examined Australian folk festivals through the lens of Handelman's 'public events' – grounded phenomena in their own right, with internal structures of intentionality – which are opportunities for members of the 'folk community' to come together, and, to paraphrase Schutz, share time and space in a face-to-face relationship to 'make folk together'. I have argued that contemporary Australian folk festivals not only provide space and time for the presentation of folk events, but that they are the main site of, and enact, folk process. An exploration of the commonalities of festival organisation and structure demonstrates how festivals as public events function to produce intersubjective experiences for participants which then shape their understandings of folk performance and process.

Folk process is by no means a new concept. It has informed academic and popular discourse about the nature of 'folk' since the days of Cecil Sharp, and the International Folk Music Council's definition of folk in 1955, which established folk not as a product, but as a process of *oral transmission* in which continuity between past and present, variation or evolution by individuals or the community, and selection by the community are the salient characteristics. Schutz argues for a face-to-face relationship as a prerequisite to making music together; I suggest that it is the face-to-face, and body-to-body, participatory experience of folk festivals that represents a modern reading of *oral transmission* as part of the process of folk, wherein folk is made *together* by intentional bodies interacting in and with an eventmental festival landscape.

Although folk process occurs at events beyond the festival, such as sessions, folk club gatherings, pubs and house concerts, the *festival* is the pre-eminent site of folk process in Australia. The multitude of events that occur in the calendar of the folk enthusiast offers the committed 'folkie' regular and multiple opportunities to engage with others in the folk community, to play music, dance together and so on, in an ongoing and continuous fashion. The festival, on the other hand, is the primary opportunity in which the folk community can *display* – both itself as a community, and the folk practices it engages in – to a broader constituency of participants who do not regularly engage in folk activities. It is (broadly) a public event-that-mirrors, not only reflecting the intentions and

characteristics of the folk community (the organisers and supporters) who stage the event, but also folk as a product and a process. The purpose of the festival is not to merely provide a meeting place and occasion for folkies – or *integral* audiences – to come together to practice folk, but an opportunity to display the music, dance, poetry and other types of folk performance, to non-folkies – or *accidental* audiences (see Schechner, 1976). Through participation, a key part of the folk ideal, these accidental audiences may even be transformed into integral ones; thus, the festival is itself, as a public event, part of the process of folk.

In this thesis, I have attempted to show *how* the Australian folk festival functions as a public event, how the atmospheric landscapes it creates work to establish a place for folk, wherein bodies engage with folk in a meaningful way. To do this, I have drawn on the work of Don Handelman, for whom public events are “points of penetration into other social and cultural universes” (1998: 9). Handelman proposes an approach to events which focuses on their logics of design rather than performance, a ‘technology of events’, in which he differentiates between events-that-model (events that transform) and events-that-mirror (events that are designed to express or reflect). Drawing on this typology, I have argued that Australian folk festivals can be conceived of primarily as events-that-present (‘mirror’), and as such reflect the ideals, concepts and practices of the broader Australian folk music, dance and poetry community. Through their internal logics of design, I argue that folk festivals function to express and reproduce Australian ‘folk’ through the concept of ‘folk process’.

Utilising Handelman’s typology of public events has allowed me to situate my analysis of folk festivals as contemporary leisure events which communicate folk, rather than festival as ritual. Although Kapferer offers a definition of ritual as “a series of culturally recognized and specified events, the order of which is known in advance of their practice, and which are marked-off spatially and temporally from the routine of everyday life” (1984: 194), a definition which is theoretically compatible with Handelman’s use of public events, there are often religious and magical connotations in common use of the term (Moore & Myerhoff, 1977: 3), which I believe is at odds with the experience of the folk festival. Festival as public event, in which the internal logics of design can be identified and illuminate how the event acts to mirror and communicate ideas and ideals of folk, and through which folk process is facilitated, is a much more appropriate method of analysis.

By utilising a multi-sited methodology of active participant-observation (as a volunteer, performer, organiser, attendee and workshop participant) at fourteen festivals spanning three years and five Australian states and territories, including deep involvement with the organisation of one local festival, unique in scholarly approaches to Australian folk festivals (cf. Duffy, 2000; Garth, 2000; Begg, 2011; Lewis & Dowsey-Magog, 1993), I have identified and compared some of the internal technologies of these events and how internal structures generate folk atmospheres that affect participants' sensory experience of folk. Theorising folk festivals as events-that-mirror provides an innovative analysis of how folk festival structures operate on individual and community experience of folk practice in Australia and perform folk as a process. By conceptualising folk as a process rather than an object, I have shown how the "cluster of associations", the commitment to ideals of community, participation and authentic performance inherent in Australian ideals of folk (Smith & Brett, 1998: 5), is comprehended as something that people *do* together at festivals. Mobile participants like Rosie, along with festival organisers, co-create intersubjective atmospheric landscapes in which folk performance can be experienced and shared. Festivals are thus both the primary site of folk process, and the main facilitators of it.

Folk festivals are eventmental landscapes (see Casey, 2007; also Relph, 2008 [1976]; Olwig, 2007) structurally designed to deliver a specifically folk experience enabling folk participation. Festival landscapes are structured according to the logic of a sequence of spatio-temporal events (see Handelman, 2005: 23) which constitute the festival. These hierarchically-programmed events are governed by place and time, through the intentional allocation of venue-space and programming. In Part Two of this thesis, I began my analysis of how folk festival experiences are co-produced by participant engagement (particularly through movement) and organisational logics of design, and introduced Rosie, an archetypal festival participant based on my interactions with and observations of many folk festival attendees, and related how she moved and interacted with the landscape of the festival in a way that created a unique folk experience, but one which was shared and shareable intersubjectively by other participants. Rosie's travel story suggested that although the lived experience of folk festivals is informed by the structural design of festival place and time, and the deliberate staging of atmospheres by organisers, participants' interaction with the festival logics of design shaped their folk experience. Drawing on de Certeau's (1984) notion of 'walking the city', I introduce the idea that although organisers spatio-temporally structure the festival for attendees through maps,

signage and programmes, scheduling and placing performance to create a folk experience *designed for* the participant, through movement, participants *create their own* unique folk experience, by ‘walking the festival’.

Deliberately eschewing the formal spatio-temporal festival blueprint of the festival map, Rosie meandered between events, her pedestrian path weaving festival spaces together (de Certeau, 1984: 97). Wandering (see Ingold, 2010a: S130) *un-intentionally* to and through official venues and performance spaces, encountering different folk performances and sensory atmospheres, Rosie experienced a folk landscape, not “from a single vantage point, but rather by walking...” (Ingold, 2011: 45). Her journey was a unique series of encounters with folk events creating a festival landscape, events unfolding with her movement (see Gray, 1999), the experience of which informed her understanding of how an aesthetic of folk as inclusive, multivocal and fluid was performed and practiced within an Australian folk festival. However, by ‘zapping’ between festival events (Ronstrom, Malm & Lindberg, 2001), Rosie’s experience of folk at the festival was shaped not only by the events she observed and engaged with, but by those she missed, and therefore her personal journey was unique and unreproducible.

Despite the uniqueness of Rosie’s journey, I posit that the experience of moving between and through events as Rosie does is reflective of the type of movement engaged in by many festival attendees, who experience the festival through their feet, as a “tangled mass of lines” (Ingold, 2011). Although Rosie’s journey is unique to her, the structures that I explored in subsequent chapters, such as the deliberate hierarchical arrangement of performances and performance places, as well as the intentional staging of atmospheres in order to “play with the mood-states, the emotions and sentiments” (Handelman, 1998: 61) of participants, ensured that the festival atmosphere and landscape through which she wandered created a folk feel that was intersubjective.

The ‘tangled mass of lines’ or meshwork of participant wandering affects and reflects the inherent dynamism in the event landscape of the folk festival, as connections between varying folk practices (and folk places as they belong to lived bodies – see Casey, 2009: 327) are continually forged and re-forged by moving participants. Paraphrasing Ingold (2004: 333), the folk landscape of the festival – and thereby the folk process – is continuously woven into life through walking.

In the chapters following Rosie's story, I explored more forensically the logics of design that created the eventmental and atmospheric landscape that Rosie explores. In Chapter 5, through an examination of festival timetables and maps, I demonstrated that intentional festival design provides structure to the event landscape, providing general guidance to festival-goers as they explore the festival, but ultimately not defining their experience (rather their movement within the landscape structures their unique experience of the folk event-scape). Scheduled events of varying types (both spectacular and participatory) along with spontaneous and ad hoc folk and performative events, are 'gathered in' to create an eventmental landscape, and located in venues and at times that are reflective of organisers' hierarchical imperatives, balancing the need to create festivals that are not only 'folky' enough to satisfy the folk community, but viable economically to enable annual recurrence. Through boundary-making of both physical infrastructure, spatial demarcation and temporal location, these events constitute dedicated spaces in which folk is shared, selected, taught, continued and allowed to evolve as part of folk process.

In addition to being eventmental spatio-temporal landscapes, I demonstrated in Chapter 6 that folk festivals are intersubjective sensory landscapes in which embodied experience and the sensory environment interact to create temporal folk atmospheres generating folk communion. This shared experience of folk is embodied by festival participants who inhabit and shape the festival place through their lived, intentional body (Casey, 1997).

The design of folk festivals structures, coordinates and plays with the moods and emotions of festival participants (see Handelman, 1998: 61) through the production of folk atmospheres, a distinct 'folk feel' which facilitates the folk process. Informants refer to the "folk feel" or "atmosphere" of festivals. I have tried to identify some of the elements that contribute to this 'folk feel', but capturing a feeling and committing it to paper has been one of the more challenging aspects of this thesis. In order to make sense of how this feeling or atmosphere is created and intersubjectively experienced, I have focused on festival *design* (Handelman, 1998: 61), which often intentionally provokes both a bodily and an emotional response in participants, a response which is then unquestionably connected to folk as a concept, and which may be intentionally staged by organisers (see Böhme, 2017). The interplay between participants' sensuous personal experience as they engage bodily with the festival landscape (see Howes, 2005: 7-8; also Bille, Bjerregaard & Sørensen, 2015: 32; Feld, 2005: 179; Casey, 1997: 18) and intersubjective festival

atmospheres and moods generated by both participants' occupation of festival spaces and the spatio-temporal landscape (Edensor, 2012; 2015), creates a sensual geography of the festival representing an active place-making relationship in which sensory phenomena is perceived by and *made sense of* by the participant (Rodaway, 1994: 26). Awareness of the sensual landscape of the folk festival is variable, ever changing, and dependent upon the movement of the person/body through and within the festival site (Sørensen, 2015; Ingold, 2011; Gray, 1999) and their diverse levels of conscious and unconscious sensory engagement with the events and activities in which they participate. Concepts of folk as communal and participatory practices are promoted through embodied experience and atmospheres of community.

The folk festival is a spatio-temporal, sensory landscape structured by a series of events-that-present. In Part Three of this thesis, I examined specific events that structure the folk festival landscape. By focusing on three categories of folk festival event in greater ethnographic depth, ranging from the central to the peripheral in terms of organisational hierarchy and participant engagement – concert events, dance events and poetry events – I identified how some of the inherent structures of the events function to communicate various forms and concepts of folk practice in Australia through shared performance.

I have argued that concert event programmes are hierarchised by organisers and general participants as the most significant aspects of folk performance at an Australian folk festival, and thus they are the structural centre of festival landscapes. Concert events are spatio-temporally hierarchised depending upon their significance to the festival (i.e. headline performances designed to draw audiences) and organisers' estimation of their folk significance, and are curated on the basis of organisers' understandings of 'what folk is'.

Concert performances at Australian folk festivals vary enormously, ranging from unaccompanied singer/songwriters to folk-rock party bands, and encompass a broad array of musical genres. During my fieldwork, I experienced hundreds of concerts across many festivals, and so finding a method by which I could examine such diverse and wide-ranging concert types was extremely challenging. In an attempt to overcome this, I compared three specific concerts held at the National Folk Festival: first, a concert by Canadian April Verch in which she performed traditional fiddle tunes, songs and step dances in the Ottawa Valley tradition; second, Australian singer/songwriter Fred Smith's *Dust of Uruzgan* concert, in which he performed original songs about his experience with

Australian troops in Afghanistan; and finally, a late night concert by Australian children's entertainer Peter Combe. Although these three concerts were representative of only a fraction of the different types of concert within a folk festival programme, the similarities in their logics of design – a single performer (the ego-centric locus) with a backing band, separated from the audience through the use of staging (an event that displays) – enabled me to examine the structures of performance that helped to communicate different ideas of folk, and demonstrated some of the different methods by which folk process is performed within the concert format. Performer-audience interaction – especially through performer's 'stage talk' (see Bealle, 1993) and the selective inattention of integral versus accidental audiences (Schechner, 1976) – were some of the elements in which intersubjective atmospheres which communicated different concepts of folk (as a traditional corpus of music and dance, as a form of social commentary, and as an exercise in nostalgia) were established and helped enact folk process.



Figure 11.1: Headline concert event, Port Fairy Folk Festival, 2012

Second (to concerts) in the structured (programmed) performance event hierarchy of the folk festival were dance events. Folk festivals feature many forms of dance, ranging from free-form, spontaneous dancing at concerts, to formalised colonial balls and energetic ceilidhs. Morris dancing, a form of English folk dancing, features in many Australian folk festivals, and provides an example of how dancing communicates folk tradition through

participation, presentation and pedagogy, whilst contributing to the atmospheric landscape of the festival.

Morris dancing occurs at Australian folk festivals through staged displays, workshops and a type of street performance known as massed morris. I followed a single archetypal morris side as they engaged with each event type. Staged displays allow individual morris sides to *display* their traditional dance in formalised, rehearsed performance. In Handelman's event typology, these are events-that-present, presenting folk dance as a product of folk process. Workshops are broadly participatory events in which the basics of morris dancing are taught to both (other morris) dancers and non-dancers; a pedagogical event-that-*models*, transforming non-dancers into dancers at least for the duration of the event, and *passing on* a folk dance tradition via embodied experience. The third event, massed morris, is a street display in which multiple morris dance sides and individual morris dancers participate in a more informal performance, *sharing* traditions with one another. These displays are *participatory* for morris dancers, and *spectacular* (see Handelman, 1997: 394) for onlookers, providing a mass of colour, sound and movement adding significantly to a festival's 'folk atmosphere'.

The third event type that I discussed was the Poet's Breakfast. Spoken word events are situated at the periphery of the festival event-landscape, mostly programmed early in the morning with few participants. Nevertheless, 'Poet's Breakfast' events are important expressions of Australian identity within the folk movement, and help to communicate 'Australian-ness' through the folk process.

Opportunities for Australian oral tradition to be practiced, participated in and shared, Poet's Breakfasts involve few onlookers, and audiences generally consist of performers. Poetry may encompass 'traditional' bush ballad forms or original compositions, but usually *says something* about the Australian landscape, history or way of life. Poet's Breakfasts often reference the colonialist construct of the Australian Legend (see Ward, 1958), a narrative of nostalgic Australian identity in which the outback and its workers is idealised; a feature of the earliest Australian folk revival. Participants take turns to recite in an example of democratic performance and participation which echoes the often-egalitarian sentiments of the poetry itself.

Through reference to a single representative Poet's Breakfast event, I explored how Poet's Breakfasts reflect (*mirror*) organisers' adherence to Australian folk festival norms and performance traditions. Although contemporary Australian folk festivals ostensibly celebrate multiculturalism, the characteristics of nationalistic Australian-ness expressed at Poet's Breakfasts forms an important part of the oral tradition aspect of folk process in Australia.



Figure 11.2: Late night session, Frances Folk Gathering, 2012

Regular attendees at folk festivals who read this thesis may question the apparent oversight in my lack of in-depth analysis of folk music sessions as a specific event type, especially as references to sessions and their importance to folk festivals are made throughout this thesis. Folk music sessions are an integral part of most Australian folk festivals, and are important occasions in which folk music (tunes and songs) is shared amongst folk practitioners, and which facilitate folk process of continuity, evolution and selection whilst also establishing atmospheres of community conducive to the establishment of intersubjective folk atmospheres. I have suggested throughout this thesis that sessions significantly impact on the atmosphere and sense of folk community at a festival, but due to considerations of brevity, did not examine the folk session in greater detail. There is some academic work available on the structure and practice of folk music sessions (the field diaries of Moya Kneafsey [2002] about the traditional Irish music session is of particular interest; see also MacKinnon [1993] for a discussion of music sessions at British folk festivals), however a deeper analysis of the logics of design of festival sessions would

be a valuable addition to the literature, and is certainly worthy of future academic discussion.

The event landscape of the folk festival is carefully structured by organisers, but the logics of design of the festival enable festival participation to evolve in unexpected ways, through the movement of festival-goers as they navigate the event-scape, and via serendipitous interaction with other participants. To demonstrate how festival attendees experience folk through and across both planned and unplanned events and via differing modes of participation, in Part Four of this thesis I revisited Rosie, this time drawing on her experience over the course of a full day, rather than a mere few hours. Through a series of four vignettes, I illustrated how a festival-goer engages with the festival, and with other festival attendees, based not only on their experience of festival events – such as workshops – that are carefully scheduled, but by embracing opportunities for active engagement with the festival through unexpected and unscheduled modes of participation. Rosie's festival experience emerged from (planned) participation in a (formally scheduled) ukulele workshop, leading to a spontaneous invitation to take part in (an informally scheduled) 'beginners' music session later that evening. Following the workshop, Rosie's intention (plan) was to attend various concerts as an audience member, however a chance encounter with an organiser during her walk through the festival site led to a more active (unplanned) mode of participation, acting as MC in a concert series. In this more 'official' role, Rosie was *responsible* for, and herself a part of, the logics of design of the concert event, maintaining strict scheduling and communicating folk context and information to folk audiences, and in so doing, gained a richer appreciation for the folk concerts she experienced. Following this concert event, Rosie engaged again (as in Chapter 4) in marginally intentional wandering, visiting the Instrument Makers display, where she participated in an (unexpected) economic exchange when she (spontaneously) purchased a new instrument.

Rosie's movement through the planned and unplanned, scheduled and spontaneous, and expected and unexpected event landscape of the festival informed, and was informed by, her interaction with other festival participants. It was ultimately this social interaction, enabled by festival logics of design that both accommodate serendipitous engagement, and which actively encourage participation (one of the key ideals of folk), that helped establish Rosie within the folk festival community (again, a key folk ideal). Whether learning to play an instrument in the workshop environment with others keen to learn (bodily

acquisition of folk), spontaneously enquiring as to an acquaintance's distress leading to Rosie becoming herself a key part of concert logics of design (and thus shaping the folk experience for other people), purchasing an instrument in a sensorial exchange which would enable her to better participate in future festival events (giving her more confidence to actively engage with folk), and by learning to play traditional folk tunes with other musicians of equally limited skill and experience (social and bodily folk engagement), Rosie's folk experience, and her understanding of and participation in the folk process, was shaped by her interaction with other folk festival attendees. Rosie became part of the folk festival community through her (bodily) engagement in festival events designed to facilitate group and individual participation, and by seizing opportunities for participation which provided a richer and deeper folk experience, in which she 'made' folk with other people.

In "Making Music Together" Schutz (1951) contends that the social relationship of making music is a process of communication requiring mutual 'tuning in'. By examining the folk festival as a public event, I have identified the structures of the folk festival event which enable and facilitate the mutual 'tuning in' required of participants in order to reflect and advance folk as concept and practice, and the folk festival as the process by which this happens.

Through mutual 'tuning in', attendees, organisers and performers at folk festivals engage with shared understandings of folk in terms of participation, tradition, authenticity and community. An examination of the logics of design of Australian folk festivals as public events enables us to understand how this 'tuning in' occurs to establish folk festivals as not only an exhibition of folk performance, but the process of it. Folk festivals are folk process. Paraphrasing Schutz, they allow us to make folk together.

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