

## Tradition bearers as educators: A multi-case study of the teaching behaviors and beliefs of three old-time musicians

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### **Abstract:**

The purpose of this study was to examine the teaching behaviors and beliefs of three “tradition bearers” of old-time music: Alice Gerrard, Tom Sauber, and Lightnin’ Wells. The three teachers were selected based on their extensive careers as performers of old-time and folk music, and their reputations as teachers of old-time and folk music. Data were collected at the Swannanoa Gathering at Warren Wilson College in Asheville, North Carolina, and included 18 hours of video data, personal interviews, and field notes. Coding of the video revealed three main themes in the tradition bearers’ teaching: (1) Demonstration: use of recordings, teacher performance at tempo, teacher performance at reduced tempo, and co-verbal demonstration, (2) Verbal Instruction: verbal explanation, discussion, feedback, and story telling and (3) Group Play: whole group macro, whole group micro, and isolated play. Throughout the interviews, the tradition bearers shared their beliefs about teaching old-time music, the differences between they way they teach compared to how they learned, their goals for students, and their opinions about the role of tradition bearers in the education of old-time musicians.

**Keywords:** old-time music | folk music | teaching behaviors | tradition | oral tradition

### **Article:**

Every summer, fiddlers, banjo players, and participants in the old-time music, folk, and dance traditions of the United States attend camps to advance and expand their traditional repertoire. Participants attend group classes on musical technique, style, and tradition. The instructors at these camps are performers of old-time music and dance, and most do not have formal training in music education. Instructor responsibilities range from teaching basics of instrumental technique to sophisticated stylistic features of old-time music. While studies exist that examine the structure of these traditional music camps (Dabczynski, 1994; Waldron, 2009), the ways that “tradition bearers” teach and their beliefs about teaching have not been examined.

The purpose of this study was to examine the teaching behaviors and beliefs of three “tradition bearers” of old-time music. The three teachers were selected based on their extensive careers as performers of old-time and folk music, and their reputations as teachers of old-time and folk music. By creating an in-depth portrait of old-time musicians as educators, we hoped to illuminate the teaching methods and styles associated with oral tradition and transmission in the 21st century.

## **Related Literature and Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study was built upon knowledge gained from published research in ethnomusicology, music education, and folklore, as well as the musical experiences of the three researchers. Old-time music was selected because it is representative of music that is learned through oral tradition, and few music education researchers have investigated the transmission of technical and cultural knowledge through oral tradition. Historically, the goals, processes, and environments in which the teaching and learning of old-time music occur are different from those found in formal settings (Turino, 2008).

Mike Seeger, old-time performer, tradition-bearer and Smithsonian Folkways consultant, describes old-time music in the following way:

Old-time music is the main foundation for bluegrass music ... It is the old unaccompanied English ballads like Barbara Allen, new American songs like Wild Bill Jones, old fiddle tunes like Devil's Dream, and newer banjo tunes like Cumberland Gap. It's a rich and varied heritage of music - as rich as the roots music of any country. It was played through rural America but was extra strong and distinctive in the Southeast, especially in the mountains. It is sung and played on a variety of acoustic instruments including the guitar and mandolin, which were newcomers to it in the early twentieth century. It used to be played by African Americans as well as Anglo, French and Scotch-Irish, etc Americans. It nearly died out in mid-century but has found new life and is being played, mostly informally, by people all over the country.

<http://mikeseeger.info/music.html>

Understanding the beliefs and values of old-time musicians is essential when interpreting the data collected from participants. For instance, old-time music is centered on community and participatory music making. Turino (2008) defines participatory music performance as a “... type of artistic practice in which there are no artist-audience distinctions, only participants and potential participants performing different roles, and the primary goal is to involve the maximum number of people in some performance role” (p. 26). Building and sustaining community is a fundamental goal for those who engage in old-time music (Dabczynski, 1994; Turino, 2008). For younger players, building relationships with older more experienced players is one way to learn

new tunes; for older players, welcoming in younger players ensures that the music and community will live on. Although Cope's (2005) study of adult learners of traditional music focuses on fiddlers in the Shetland tradition, participants all noted that music making was a social activity.

The music festival scene is another way to build community. Blaustein (1993) notes, "... these events not only serve to bolster the musical tradition itself but they also recreate the atmosphere of the family reunions, communal labor events, and the other traditional rural social institutions at which old-time fiddling played such an important role in the past" (p. 262). Recently, researchers have begun to investigate ways in which these communities are sustained through the Internet and technology (Dabback & Waldron, 2012).

Several teaching and learning processes in folk and traditional music have been identified through previous studies in music education and ethnomusicology. Bayard (1956) and Burman-Hall (1974) described the learning processes of folk fiddlers. Most fiddlers could not recall how they were taught. "Undoubtedly, many young players watched and tried to imitate older players, who were certainly their teachers to some extent, but always in the most casual and informal manner" (Bayard, 1956, p. 17). Historically, learning fiddle, banjo, and other old-time instruments did not involve formal lessons, studies, or scales; rather, people learned the music informally (Folkestad, 2006; Jenkins, 2011) from being around the music, understanding the music aurally and culturally before acquiring any technical skills. Learners developed a repertoire of regional tunes before being invited to participate in playing for dances or parties. The use of music notation was not common.

The present study investigated teacher behaviors at an old-time music camp. We acknowledge that teaching and learning in summer camps is different from historical practice (Feintuch, 1983). The process is more formalized than a traditional jam session. Jam sessions are for playing where classes are for explicit teaching and learning. In music camp settings, the students' desire to learn tunes influences the format of the classes (Cope, 2005; Frisch, 1987; Veblen, 1994; Waldron, 2009). Emphasis on learning orally is still prevalent in traditional music camp settings (Cope, 2005; Frisch, 1987; Waldron, 2009), although music notation sometimes is used (Veblen, 1994; Waldron, 2009; Forsyth, 2011). The use of call and response and repetition by teachers is common across camp settings (Frisch, 1987; Veblen, 1994; Waldron, 2009). Summer camps provide an excellent immersion environment for participants, and include the sense of community integral to learning music in the oral tradition (Forsyth, 2011; Waldron & Veblen, 2009).

Our musical experiences also played a key role in developing the conceptual framework for this study. One of us was enculturated in a family that plays old-time and folk music. Another was raised around Western Art music by classically trained music educators, came to old-time music as an adult. One remains an "outsider" to the old-time music culture. We are all experienced music educators. Our variety of teaching experiences, and differing levels of familiarity with old-time culture, provided the opportunity for comparisons, discussions and

interpretations of the data with the rigor necessary for effective qualitative research (Creswell, 2007).

Research in music education was used to identify a process by which we could examine the teaching behaviors of the three tradition bearers. Observational coding has been employed by a number of researchers to investigate the teaching behaviors of public and private school teachers (Colpritt, 2000; Duke, 1999; Duke & Simmons, 2006; MacLeod, 2010; Madsen & Madsen, 1998). Duke and Simmons' (2006) study on the teaching behaviors of "artist-teachers" is particularly relevant to our study. The "artist-teachers" in their study were primarily trained as performers, not music educators. The researchers identified 19 effective teaching traits from observing the lessons of three artist-teachers. We have adopted some of the research strategies used by Duke and Simmons, but also recognize that questions exist as to how to include traditional musicians in school music settings, including the new role of the teacher and the appropriateness of traditional teaching and learning techniques (Shiobara, 2011).

The purpose of this multiple case study was to observe and describe the teaching behaviors and beliefs of three old-time musicians at the Swannanoa Gathering in North Carolina. We suggest that by creating an in-depth portrait of old-time musicians as educators, the teaching methods and styles associated with oral tradition and transmission in the 21st century will be better understood.

## **Methodology**

We utilized a multiple case study approach to conduct this research. Case study as defined by Creswell (2007), "... is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system[s], (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection ..." (p. 97). This type of qualitative approach was selected because it required data collection from various sources, including video recording, interview data, and field notes. This approach allowed the researchers to examine the tradition bearers' teaching from multiple perspectives, including actions as well as personal beliefs and values.

### **Site of Research and Participants**

We selected the Swannanoa Gathering as the site for data collection. Hosted at Warren Wilson College in Asheville, North Carolina since 1991, Swannanoa has garnered regional, national, and international acclaim for providing weeklong immersion camps in various folk music styles. Certain weeks also focus on specific instrumental traditions, such as fiddle, banjo, and mandolin. Teachers at the Swannanoa Gathering are notable performers of folk music. Three of these acclaimed tradition bearers were invited and agreed to participate in this study: Alice Gerrard, Tom Sauber, and Lightnin' Wells.

## Tradition Bearers

Alice Gerrard, instructor of Southern Harmony, has performed on more than twenty recordings since the 1960s. She has produced or written liner notes for a dozen more, and she has co-produced and appeared in two documentary films about Appalachian music. Her honors include a Virginia Arts Commission Award, the North Carolina Folklore Society's Tommy Jarrell Award, and an Indie Award. In 1987, Alice founded The Old-Time Herald magazine. In 2010, Alice was awarded the Swannanoa Gathering's Master Music Maker Award for lifetime achievement.

Tom Sauber, instructor of Advanced Banjo and Southern Harmony is widely recognized as one of the master musicians of his generation. Equally at ease on banjo, fiddle, guitar, and mandolin, he has performed and recorded old-time music with older generations of musicians, as well as contemporaries. Tom has taught numerous classes at music camps and workshops throughout the US and abroad.

Lightnin' Wells, instructor of Piedmont Blues Guitar, focuses on the vintage tunes of the 1920s and depression-era America. A self-taught multi-instrumentalist, he has presented acoustic blues throughout North Carolina, the US, and Europe. Lightnin' is a life-long student and devotee of the pioneering performers in the Carolina Piedmont blues tradition. Lightnin' has taught blues guitar at blues festivals and traditional music camps around the country. He is included in the latest North Carolina Arts Council's Touring Artist Roster as well as the American Traditions National Roster through the Southern Arts Federation.

## Data Sources and Data Collection Procedures

Two of us have attended the Swannanoa Gathering as students, and one was enrolled in the three tradition bearers' courses. We were given permission to video record the teaching of the three tradition bearers during Old-Time Music and Dance Week. Four days of teaching were video recorded for each of the three teachers, resulting in approximately 18 hours of video data. Tradition bearers also were interviewed to gain perspective on their experiences with and beliefs about learning and teaching traditional music. Interview questions included:

1. Describe your approach to teaching folk and traditional music.
2. What are the things that you most want students to take away from your teaching?
3. Describe the approaches to teaching folk and traditional music that you experienced as a student.
4. How would you define a "tradition bearer"? Do you consider yourself a tradition bearer? Why or why not?
5. In your opinion, what role should tradition bearers play in the education of the next generation of folk and traditional musicians?

6. Our observations and notes served as an additional source of data, and classes were video recorded for coding purposes. Supporting materials were also gathered using historical resources that placed the teacher in the folk tradition. These materials included published and broadcast interviews and documentary footage.

## **Data Analysis**

The recordings of each tradition bearer were viewed independently to identify possible themes in teacher behaviors. After independently identifying and coding behaviors, we compared and discussed themes in these behaviors collaboratively. We identified the behaviors seen most frequently for each tradition bearer, and patterns of teaching behaviors that were unique to each. Operational definitions were then created for each teacher behavior so that we had a common language for what we were observing. SCRIBE 4.2 software (Duke & Farra, 1997) was used to code (25%) the instruction to determine the inter-coder reliability for the identified teacher behaviors. In each case, the behaviors identified by the independent observers were positively correlated and demonstrated high inter-coder reliability ( $r = .95$ ). Interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded for themes related to the tradition bearer's role in education and teaching behaviors valued by tradition bearers. Researchers also compared the tradition bearers' observed teaching behaviors with interview statements.

## **Results and Discussion**

The use of SCRIBE facilitated calculation of the amount of time that each behavior was observed, the percentage of lesson time spent on specific concepts, and patterns of behaviors that were used across the lessons. Independent coding of the video recorded lessons resulted in the emergence of three main themes: (1) Demonstration, (2) Verbal Instruction, and (3) Group Play. Within the "Demonstration" theme, four specific behaviors were pinpointed: use of recordings, teacher performance at tempo, teacher performance at reduced tempo, and co-verbal demonstration. "Verbal Instruction" included four pinpointed behaviors: verbal explanation, discussion, feedback, and story telling. "Group Play" consisted of three pinpointed behaviors: whole group macro, whole group micro, and isolated play (see Table 1).

Co-verbal demonstration and group play were the most consistently used behaviors. While all of the instructors utilized each of the behaviors, they each used combinations and sequences of behaviors that they felt were best suited for their class. Tom and Lightnin', both instrumental instructors, seemed to prefer teaching tunes phrase by phrase and then creating longer strains of tunes. Thus, these two teachers had much higher occurrences of co-verbal and micro patterns in their teaching. They would introduce a phrase or "lick" while explaining what their hands were doing, repeat it, and then have students loop the phrase. Phrases were strung together, usually increasing in tempo through repetitions.

**Table 1.** Teaching Behaviors, Sub-categories, and Examples

Teaching Behavior Themes	Teaching Behavior Sub-Categories	Examples
1. Demonstration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Use of Recordings</li> <li>b. Teacher Performance - At Tempo</li> <li>c. Teacher Performance-Reduced Tempo</li> <li>d. Co-Verbal Demonstration</li> </ul>	<p>Alice Gerrard brought CDs to class every day to play original source recordings for the class.</p> <p>Lightnin’ Wells performed “One Way Gal” at temp for the class before teaching the song.</p> <p>Tom Sauber performed “Willow Garden: at a reduced temp before teaching the song.</p> <p>Tom Sauber demonstrated the clawhammer stroke while verbally explaining the stroke.</p>
2. Verbal Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Verbal Explanation</li> <li>b. Discussion</li> <li>c. Feedback</li> <li>d. Story-Telling</li> </ul>	<p>Tom Sauber verbally explained how to shape the right hand to get the “clicking” sound in the index finger on a banjo down-stroke</p> <p>Alice Gerrard discussed how to get proper vocal tone when singing harmony</p> <p>Alice Gerrard recommends that partners in harmony singing face each other after watching a pair perform.</p> <p>Lightnin’ Wells recounts a story in which Blind Boy Fuller made alcohol from a sterno can.</p>
3. Group Play	a. Whole Group	The entire advanced banjo

	Play-Macro b. Whole Group Play-Micro c. Isolated Play	class plays “Sally Ann”.  Lightnin’ Wells isolates a phrase of One Way Gal and the whole class “loops” it.  Harmony partners perform for Alice Gerrard, Tom Sauber, and the class.
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Alice taught harmony singing and favored using whole group-macro and isolated play patterns. Through whole group singing of tunes and songs, harmonies can be tried by different people in the class. After the whole group sings through a song, partners rehearse together and perform, receiving feedback from Alice. Interview data were helpful in understanding Alice's motivations for using these techniques. Whole group harmony singing provides what Turino (2008) calls the “cloaking function” for participants, where individual mistakes or uncertainty is less noticeable because many people are participating. Alice was conscious of differing ability levels in her classes and how that affected the way she structured her class. By using the whole group macro teaching approach, Alice ensured that students could participate without fear. When Alice used isolated play as a teaching technique, that “cloaking function” was removed, so she used co-verbal, feedback, and demonstration behaviors to help students get the desirable tone for harmony singing.

### Relating Behaviors to Beliefs

The themes that emerged from the interview data regarding the tradition bearers’ beliefs about teaching and learning were compared to the teacher behaviors that were observed. In-depth portraits of each teacher were then created to illuminate the teaching and learning process used by the three tradition bearers. The following themes emerged from the analysis of the interviews.

### Listening/Learning by Ear

The three tradition bearers used and valued oral teaching and learning skills in their classes. With the exception of tabbed-out chord shapes on blackboards and printed lyrics, no printed music notation was used. The tradition bearers commented on the importance of encouraging listening and learning by ear in their teaching. Both Alice and Tom rationalized learning by ear by pointing to historical references. Alice commented, “You know, because that's how this music was learned originally - by ear. And people would hear it around them and they absorb it. And then they ... internalize it and that's really what it's all about.” Alice believes using notation systems for teaching old-time music can be helpful, but it cannot teach you



everything. “Notation or tablature, there really has never been a system devised that explores all the subtleties of this kind of music. You can't put it down on paper.”

Tom noted that there can be a tendency to “spoon-feed” the students at camps like Swannanoa, and that it would be easy for him to take that approach. He says, however, that learning the music begins with listening. Tom's definition of “the old way” is consistent with Bayard (1956), Burman-Hall (1974), Feintuch's (1983) research, “The best way is the old way, where you know what you want to play and you start listening to it a lot and then when you start to actually try to play it ... you have that feeling whether you are doing something right or wrong.”

Alice's and Lightnin's use of recordings in classes further encourages listening. While recordings are used in large group school music instruction, the regularity with which Alice and Lightnin' played recordings was unique. Classes listen to source material, and these recordings often start class discussions about other resources they can find. Alice specifically creates CDs and play lists for in-class listening, saying, “I really believe in playing source material for people so they [students] hear some of the ... different harmony people singing harmony.” She used recordings of source material to demonstrate desirable tone, and historical selections. Lightnin's use of recorded source material in class reflects the importance of listening in his own learning. “In high school, we'd take trips to New York City ... I came home with ... a Blind Lemon Jefferson reissue, Uncle Dave Macon and Doc Boggs; it was exciting.” In his teaching, Lightnin' uses a specific sequence of behaviors (teacher performance at tempo, whole group micro, whole group macro, use of recordings) culminating in the class listening to source material, with Lightnin' recounting stories about the performers or the history of the tune.

### How they Teach and how they Learned

Each of the three tradition bearers were clear that no one “taught” them how to play or participate in old-time music and dance. They emphasized listening as an important part of their learning process, as well as the social aspects and personal relationships that made learning the music enjoyable. Lightnin' noted that the summer camp context for learning was not an option when he was learning. “I didn't have anything like this [Swannanoa].... I lived in a small town and nobody was showing me nothin'. I didn't have anybody.” As a student at UNC-Chapel Hill, he encountered a vibrant blues scene in that region.

I'd go to a little bar and Guitar Shorty would be playing there, and uh, Peg Leg Sam. You kind of took it for granted. I thought, ‘Well, boy, this'll be going on forever.’ And then [those] guys started dying and it's like, it was just one window in time, and I was lucky to be there.

Tom and Alice's experiences learning old-time music were similar to each other. Tom stated:

I didn't have any teachers, nobody really showed me anything. There were these small handful of guys, older guys who were living at home out there near Los Angeles that I knew I wanted to play like. I had easier access to those fiddlers to play with either on guitar or banjo. It gave me a chance to play that, play their music and experience their music and just kind of start absorbing it.

Alice also tied her learning experiences to social factors, saying that she felt “fortunate” to get to “hang out” with those from whom she learned, stating, “I just learned by listening to people, and fortunately they were around for me to hang out with and listen to. But that's how people learned this music anyway.” When asked about what these players did to teach her, Alice responded:

Basically, they just played. I tried one time asking Tommy [Jarrell] if he could slow something down. And he was very sweet and he did, but then he bowed it entirely differently than he did when he did it. You just have to catch it on the fly as much as possible.

In the experience of the two of us who play old-time music, the concept of “catch[ing] it on the fly” is a learning technique found in jam sessions, where tunes or songs are not slowed down for the purposes of learning. Tom recounted a similar instance of older players not being able to slow tunes down or demonstrate techniques:

... this is why you've heard any number of times how the old-timers, when you ask them to slow something down, they couldn't do it. Or more likely, they could play something, they could play whatever it was, they could play it slowly, but it would be noticeably different; they would be doing a different thing.

In this respect, the ways that Tom and Alice learned to play old-time music differ from the way they teach. Tom advocated “the old way” of learning, but both he and Alice recognized that the summer camp format could not always accommodate the more traditional ways that they learned old-time music.

Tom: “But really the best I think, if possible, the best thing possible would be to just play and encourage people to recognize things that they are not getting and then I think it would be very natural.

Alice: The ideal thing is to have people go in pairs [in Southern Harmony class] and try to work that out, but we have a week. You know, an hour and fifteen minutes a day, you know, and ... so you just kind of touch the surface of things.”

The ways in which these tradition bearers, most notably Lightnin' Wells, learned old-time music is reminiscent of the learning techniques of popular musicians, as outlined by Green (2002). Their learning was holistic. They were not shown specific techniques separated from the music itself in a sequential manner outlined by a teacher. They relied on imitation of performers and recordings. Their learning processes also reflects Bayard's (1956) research in that all three tradition bearers built relationships with older musicians "... who were certainly their teachers to some extent, but always in the most casual and informal manner" (Bayard, 1956, p. 17).

#### Applying what you Learn and Enjoying what you Do

All three tradition bearers touched on the importance of interpersonal relationships, enjoyment, and ownership to continued learning and participation in the old-time community. They all indicated that they wanted to provide students with tools that would help them to continue their participation in the old-time community when their experiences at Swannanoa came to an end. Lightnin' structured his classes so his students would see similarities and repetition in blues songs and forms.

I come in and we'll spend a day doing songs in the same key. Like, 'This is C day.' But then, start with something simple, then do another one, and you can see similarities. 'Hey, this same lick is recurring again in this song that was in the last one.'

In this way, students are able to recognize common "licks" and blues forms and figure out tunes after Swannanoa ends. Lightnin' commented that he would love to see a student return to Swannanoa and teach him a tune or song that they had learned by themselves. He recognized that personal enjoyment was a main motivating factor for his students. "I'd really love to see somebody, and it doesn't happen very often, come back next year and say, 'Hey, I learned that song! Let me play it for you.'"

Lightnin' emphasized that continued listening is a goal for students. He tied the importance of continued listening to student ownership, saying, "You hear one [recording] and you go, 'Well, I like this about that. I don't care for this other version, but wow this is great!' And you take what you like ... and you do it your own way."

Tom also was concerned with student ownership. He was openly wary of the idea that the things students learn at summer music camps become "gospel", and encouraged students to find their personal voice within the tradition.

I would always try and say, 'It would be really disappointing if we meet again in ten years or fifteen years and we're playing these things just exactly the way I taught you', because that's a real departure from old time traditional music ... You eventually have to find your own voice, figure out what works for you.

Alice again emphasized the importance of listening in continued learning after Swannanoa, but her students' personal enjoyment in making music was her primary goal.

I think for me the goal is for people to be able to enjoy what they're doing, to find some of that same joy that comes ... from singing with another person and getting that harmony buzz that you get. I would hope that they would sort of have a little bit better understanding of how they could maybe find a harmony. And then the knowledge that there are options, you know? It's not cut and dry. And that they can go home and find somebody that they like to sing with and keep, keep doing it, and enjoying it. Yeah. If you stop enjoying it, you might as well pack it in.

### Story Telling

While many of the behaviors evidenced by these tradition bearers can be found in more formalized music instruction settings, the story telling behavior stands out as unique. The story telling behavior serves a variety of functions for both the students and instructors. The stories told by tradition bearers at Swannanoa included first-hand accounts of interactions with older, pre-revival musicians. By telling stories about how they were brought into the old-time culture, the tradition bearers established their insider status. It is through the act of story telling that the instructors establish their knowledge of and experiences within the tradition.

Tradition bearers used story telling to rationalize their choice of repertoire, instructional techniques, and stylistic choices as performers. Lightnin' Wells would pair the use of source recordings with stories about the lives of Piedmont Blues musicians. By combining these two behaviors, he effectively painted a richer picture of the musicians for the students. Alice, working with Tom and fellow instructor Brad Leftwitch, demonstrated the types of harmony that they learned from older traditional musicians. Most importantly, the use of story telling invited the students at Swannanoa into the living history of the old-time music tradition. It is one of the important ways that tradition bearers enculturate outsiders, and bring them into the musical, historical, and social context of old-time music.

### Critique of Formal Music Education

Although it was not one of the interview questions, some of the tradition bearers' thoughts about formal music training were voiced in the interviews. Tom expressed concern that school music teachers are not familiar enough with the style and sound of old-time and folk music, but said that he as a tradition bearer was unsure how to work with school music educators. "I've sat through kids concerts with forty kids playing Turkey in the Straw and I'm going Oooohhhh, [laughter] Gggoooddd, ... this is awful. They just don't know, I mean the people in music authority."

Alice noted the fear that some of her students bring into harmony singing classes because of experiences in school music ensembles.

The other thing I'm very conscious of is, I don't know how many people have come up to me and said, 'You know, when I was ten years old this guy told me I couldn't sing, and I should just mouth the words in the chorus.' And they carry that with them for the rest of their lives.

Phil Jamison, program director for the Swannanoa Gathering's Old-Time Week, had strong opinions about school music education. He emphasized the lack of life-long learning and participation in music as a result of school music education, and notes that in his own experience, playing and learning old-time music was something he could do for the rest of his life. He drew a comparison to physical education, saying:

What is way more worthwhile is playing music that you can continue to play the rest of your life. Like that you can play on the back-porch or play with friends so I think, folk music basically, guitars, mandolins, banjos, fiddles, and so on ... The music programs in American schools should be designed for the rest of the kid's lives so they can carry on and play.

These tradition bearers are concerned with the same pressing issues that we face in music education every day. They value personal enjoyment and learning as a life-long journey. Their hope for students to continue playing and learning when they leave Swannanoa is the same hope teachers have for students in school music programs. Shiobara (2011) advocates relationship building between school music teachers and tradition bearers so that tradition bearers, within the context of the school music program, teach traditional music.

### The Role of Tradition Bearers in Education

Lightnin', Tom, and Alice all agreed that tradition bearers should be involved in folk music education, and music education in general. However, they all admitted some hesitation about how best to include tradition bearers, who should teach folk and old-time music, and what musical materials should be taught. Lightnin' recognized that while people who are already old-time and folk music enthusiasts can benefit from summer camps like Swannanoa, exposing the music to more people in an authentic way is still important.

Alice agreed that tradition bearers should play a role in education, but expressed concern over stereotyping these tradition bearers. Her recommendation was to present tradition bearers in a relatable way to students and those not familiar with old-time music. She recounted the following story to illustrate this concept.

I remember at the Newport Folk Festival years ago, one of the things they did was they had famous people introduce and talk about the next act, which might be somebody like

Roscoe Holcomb or Doc Boggs or something like that. And that was so that people said, 'Oh, Bob Dylan thinks this guy's cool, I probably should think he's cool.' And so, you know, it worked really well.

Tom also emphasized authenticity in educating school music educators about old-time music and culture saying, "I think the best we could hope for is to try to expose the teachers to the real music ...". He recognized that a lot can be learned at camps like Swannanoa, but said, "... you can't expect to teach everybody what we're learning here. The best you can hope for is to inspire and expose them to great traditional musicians." Tom felt that the tradition bearers he learned from inspired him to want to learn to play and keep playing. This idea resonates strongly with our mission in music education to nurture life-long learners.

## **Conclusion**

As previously mentioned, summer immersion camps like the Swannanoa Gathering are not the only context for teaching and learning old-time and traditional music. Although the perception exists that teaching and learning old-time and traditional music is always informal, many of the teaching behaviors used by Lightnin', Tom, and Alice also are used in formal contexts (Folkestad, 2006; Jenkins, 2011). Waldron's study (2009) on the teaching and learning in a similar summer camp setting revealed that several participants felt that, "... if teachers gave out a lot of written tunes, it proved that they were 'good' instructors" (p. 61). Participants at summer camps all have experiences with what they perceive as "good teaching" based largely on formal teaching and learning contexts. People attend the Swannanoa Gathering for the express purpose of learning, and have expectations for what and how they will learn. In this sense, the more formal teaching behaviors used by Lightnin', Tom, and Alice are appropriate for the context of a summer camp, because these are behaviors that students associate with "teaching." Many of these more formal behaviors are consistent with other research findings (Cope, 2005; Forsyth, 2011; Frisch, 1987; Waldron, 2009).

Jam sessions are the informal extension of the teaching and learning process at the Swannanoa Gathering, though teaching and learning behaviors may be less obvious. These events are the social context in which tradition bearers like Tom and Alice learned the music, what Tom calls "the old way". When daily classes at the Gathering end, the jamming begins, and students continue learning, and potentially begin teaching. The informality of the jam session allows for personal enjoyment, ownership, and continued opportunities to build the community and personal relationships that are so important in old-time culture. As both Tom and Alice mentioned in their interviews, time is limited at Swannanoa, and the informal approaches that they experienced as students would not be practical in their classes. In this way, jam sessions are the practical application of classes, and will serve as the main context for teaching and learning when camp ends. As such, teaching and learning processes in the jam session context deserve further research.

The purpose of this study was to examine the teaching behaviors and beliefs of three tradition bearers of old-time music. While we as researchers feel that we have created an in-depth portrait of these three tradition bearers as educators, we stress that the results of this study are unique to these specific performers in the context of the Swannanoa Gathering. We cannot make broad generalizations about tradition bearers as educators. Additional research could isolate the preferred teaching behaviors of tradition bearers at different camps. We do hope that others will continue this line of research so that music educators can develop a better understanding of the culture of teaching and learning music outside of the Western art music canon. As our research dealt specifically with teaching in more formalized contexts, topics for future research could include: holistic learning experiences of old-time musicians, meaningful learning and peak experiences of old-time musicians, teaching and learning in jam session contexts, exploration of formal and informal elements of learning old-time music, family music making, and multi-generational music making.

Tradition bearers occupy a unique role in old-time and traditional music. They are performers, historians, advocates, and educators. Their goal is to inspire people to make music, enjoy making music, and keep making music. They are a link to the past and an insurance policy for the future of old-time and traditional music. The three tradition bearers in this study share many of the concerns and passions as university-trained school music educators. As tradition bearers and music educators begin to understand each other's teaching goals and processes, we can move forward together to cultivate musical knowledge and experiences for our students which may truly contribute to life-long learning and participation.

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