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Published by Ronald Caplan on 1981/8/1

For a fiddler playing alone, this would be a tremendous advantage. It would stimulate dancers, to hear all this sound roaring out of the violin. When a violin is tuned in this scordatura tuning, it's just chucking out these extra notes all the time. All of these notes parallel to the harmony. Some of them are legitimate harmonies as we look on them now. A lot of them are clashing dissonances, like a bagpipe note that's held through, even though it doesn't fit sometimes. Those are all in there, and they're all part of the colour. To some extent, they're improvisational; that is, each player would change them slightly. To another extent they're handed down directly, these old settings and these old ways of playing. That's one way in which the tune would expand beyond the melodic. Today there's less emphasis on the high bass and all of that sort of thing--the piano accompaniment has really come up front, volume-wise. There's less reliance on the techniques that require more volume and more colour. Violin and piano are starting to become the Cape Breton sound. Another way is in the "cuts" that the bowing hand would put in. If you take a melody that has a lot of quarter notes or half notes, where the melody is simplistic, you can squeeze in an extra series of eighth notes on top of that. A player sort of puts them in at his discretion. Many people put them in at the beginning and end of a strathspey or reel, especially a strathspey because it's slower. And the good players can "double cut"--put two little sets of these "clusters" in on top of one of those notes if the melody is proceeding at a nice slow pace and there's room for them. This is really a typical part of Cape Breton playing. Instead of, say, holding a long note, you'd break that up into 2 or 3 notes. I suppose that's where the word "cutting" sort of comes from--instead of a sustained single note, you'd break that note up into a quick series of three. Apparently the best cuts are done from a loose wrist instead of from the shoulder. I was talking to Carl MacKenzie about it. He said he was trying in the beginning to hold the bow as he had read in the books, holding the frog a certain way with the fingernail in, and this is the way that the classical musicians got that beautiful flow. He kept thinking, "That's probably the best way for me." But Carl said, "I was wondering how Winston 'Scotty' Fitzgerald was getting those beautiful cuts in so distinct. So one day I examined how he was holding the bow, and it was completely contrary to classical technique. He was sort of supporting it with his thumb passing through the hole of the frog and his index finger just clamped above and the other three fingers just floating in the air, basically not doing anything--so that his hand passed back and forth very freely." Carl said, "If Scotty's doing that, and that's sort of the sound I want, I think I'll try it." So he abandoned the earlier training he had had, self-imposed or whatever, and he started trying Scotty's style of bowing. And he found that more effective to get the "cuts" in the Cape Breton style. It's a folk style of playing music, and here is a folk technique of holding the bow that actually increases your dexterity at doing the kind of things that are typically Cape Breton. I think that's a fascinating thing. Especially now, after some people have been trying to undo what a lot of old players have done--where they hold the bow, how



they support the violin-- we've gradually come to think that's old hat. on  
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