

Mp3 Frank Ferrel - Fiddledance



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Frank Ferrel, fiddle, joins with Peter Barnes, John McGann and Joe Derrane for a great session of New England contra fiddle music. 14 MP3 Songs FOLK: Traditional Folk, WORLD: Celtic Details:

FIDDLEDANCE with Frank Ferrel Friends ----- Wherever there are great fiddlers, you will find Frank Ferrel. Truly one of Americas top fiddlers, here you have him with his long time playmates, Peter Barnes, John McGann and Joe Derrane. He offers a vibrant, deeply pleasurable, and thoroughly convincing musical essay on Yankee fiddling, its range, roots and aesthetics. It is also music for Contra dancing, which remains the beating heart of the New England style.

----- Frank Ferrel fiddle, concertina (tracks 3 14) Peter Barnes piano, electronic keyboard John McGann guitar, mandolin, octave mandolin, lap steel (tracks 7, 8, 14) Joe Derrane button accordion -----

===== Fiddledance with Frank Ferrel Friends By Scott Alarik - Boston, Massachusetts - 2004 Is there any such thing as a Yankee fiddle style? Some scholars believe that New Englands folk traditions have been intermingled with contemporary musical influences for so long that anything indigenous has been lost. Frank Ferrel knows better. He is among this countrys most respected fiddlers and experts on the many ways it is played in different regions. Over his long, rich career, he has authored two Mel Bay books on traditional fiddling and founded the fabled Festival of American Fiddle Tunes in Washington State. The Library of Congress placed his Yankee Dreams on its Select List of 25 Recordings of American Folk Music. He is also music director of the NPR show Says You. Here, he offers a vibrant, deeply pleasurable, and thoroughly convincing musical essay on Yankee fiddling, its range, roots, and aesthetics. It is also, by design, music for contra dancing, which remains the beating heart of the New England style. He is joined by his regular

partners-in-dance on the New England contra circuit. Remarkably fluid guitarist John McGann and toe-tapping, cider-crisp keyboardist Peter Barnes form the core of Ferrels Says You house band, The Dactyls. When joined at dances by legendary Irish button accordionist Joe Derrane, they perform as the Copley Ceili Band. Derrane is the only New England Irish musician to ever receive the National Endowment for the Arts vaunted National Heritage Fellowship Award. But on this CD, he is Contra to the core. The quartet performs here as Fiddledance, specifically focusing on the kind of music heard at New England contra dances today. Ferrel firmly believes this music is not only an authentic, living folk tradition, but that its very ancientness is what fools some folklorists into believing it is something else. For one thing, the instrumentation allowed in this style has never been set in stone. Cornets, clarinets, tubas, and other wind instruments have long been heard among the fiddles and pianos that are the staple contra instruments. The rhythm and melody are the thing, Ferrel says; how theyre rendered is less important. It has always been a social, utilitarian genre. What was supremely important in the tradition was to involve everyone who wished to be involved. Where the discipline is firm is how the music is played. And that is why Ferrel fell in love with Yankee fiddling, also called the Northern style. There is an austere, straight-backed, purely expressed melodicism that differentiates this genre from the sliding, shuffle-bowed, double-stopping, ornamental techniques common to southern fiddle styles. Because these were dance bands, Ferrel says, there wasnt a lot of room for intricacies. Thats part of what New England fiddling comes out of, I think; taking those great tunes from Ireland, Scotland, and England; the lilt you get from the French influence and that sticking-to-the-notes Yankee austerity. When you do it right, you get a real crisp, punchy sound. Ferrel is always thinking about what he calls the architecture of the dance, assembling sets that give a dramatic build, almost a narrative, to each dance. Listen to the fierce valuing of the one-beat in Tripping to the Well, intended to get dancers off to a flying start and to the thrilling crescendo as Brodie Kierics Jig announces the climax of The Kelfenora Set. Ferrel instructed his fellow players to play it like we do at dances, and dont be too careful. He sees this playfulness as an ancient and defining trait of Yankee fiddling; drolly displayed on his own Sassy Set, and the dizzy, careening Bob and Ray Two Steps. If youre taking it too seriously, that rhythm of fun goes out; it becomes stiff and mannered, Ferrel says. The whole purpose of this music is to get peoples feet moving; the whole purpose is to have fun. Sometimes Ill play at festivals with a lot of hotshot, flash fiddlers. Ill feel kind of bare-naked with my austere New England melodies. But its like what a conductor once said about Mozart, that his

music is so hard to play because its so simple. You have to make sure every note has the right weight; that every note has meaning.

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