(a powwow social song, sung and danced by youths after midnight). There are three traditional Cree children’s songs, about the dragonfly, the nighthawk and the Rolling Head legend, and numerous offerings in Cree by contemporary singers such as Winston Wuttunee and Bill Ballantyne. The collection also includes prairie native songs selected from the early 20th-century collections of France Densmore (Chippewa, Sioux), Natalie Curtis and Alice Fletcher.

French songs can be heard in small communities across the prairies, many of them derived from the ubiquitous series La Bonne Chanson. Several of the well-loved but not too common songs from this series have been included in the present collection. Many individuals, from Duck Lake and St-Louis in northern Saskatchewan to Willow Bunch and Bellegarde in southern Saskatchewan, contributed songs. However, there remain many, many communities in which the music resources have not yet been tapped. Archives have provided a rich supply of French song. The Saskatchewan Archive holds a number of good collections with material suitable for children. Unfortunately, many of the songs in the Manitoba archives contain no indication of the tunes, but the Létourneau archives contain no indication of the tunes, but the Létourneau collection, as mentioned earlier, in the St. Boniface Historical Society archives contains a wealth of old French song.

And as for contemporary popular song in the folk idiom, the list is endless and we have included several by artists such as Jacques Chauvin of Calgary which are performable by children.

At this time, the prairie song collection is in the initial stages of publication, and will not be available until early 1990, but if you wish information on any of the other song sources mentioned, or even on the "mature" songs which will not be published, you may contact:

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THE VICTORIA "FOLK":
SOMETHING OF A TRADITION
by
Denis Donnelly

It’s 8:00, the lights go down in the little hall, and the hubbub of talk and activity begins to diminish. After some welcoming words by the evening’s host, a rag-tag group gets up on stage. There is some banter, and then somebody launches into the first song of the evening, and immediately almost everyone in the hall jumps in on the chorus. On any given evening that song could be the Copper Family anthem “Country Life”, or any one of the extensive chorus-song repertoire built up over the years. Such shanties as “John Kanaka”, “The Alabama” or “Hog-Eye Man” are often sung. Also there are spirituals such as “Down in the Valley to Pray” or “Lighthouse”, sea songs like “The Mingalay Boat Song”, or more modern composed songs such as “Where the Coho Flash Silver” or some of the somewhat irreverent Pete Seeger-inspired verses to “Old Time Religion”.

This, then, is how the Victoria Folk Music Society has been starting its Sunday folk coffeehouse evenings since their beginning in 1973. In that time “The Folk”, as it is affectionately known, has established itself as central to much of the folk and acoustic music activity in and around Victoria, and has a reputation as a “must visit” with many travelling musicians when they are coming through. Attendance is good, with enthusiastic audiences of between 50 and 100, which is the capacity.

But that was then, and there wasn’t much general acceptance of folk music. Since then things seem to have turned around, and our folk club, like many others, is thriving again.

The format of the evening has developed over the years, and now is pretty well set, and seems to work well. The evening begins with a 10- or 15-minute “Ad Hoc”, which gets everyone into it with a few chorus
songs. Anyone is invited up to the Ad Hoc. The running joke is that the intent some nights is to have the entire audience on stage.

Following the Ad Hoc, there is a series of “three songs or ten minutes” spots, on the basis of first-come-first-served sign-up. After this there is a break, at about 9:30. Following the break there is the second set, which is either more open stage or, as happens about two out of three evenings, a “Feature” of 45 minutes to an hour. Features are either local musicians or visiting performers, who are paid expenses.

Over the years there have been many memorable Features. A few that come to mind are Utah Phillips, Faith Petric, Danny Carnahan and Robin Petrie, James Gordon, and Seattle’s Copperfield. The Features also have the advantage of promoting local musicians and giving them a chance to develop their own music in front of a warm and forgiving audience. Overall, the standard is pretty high. There are some good musicians in this area.

Stylistically, The Folk accepts all types. On any given evening there is generally a healthy mix of trad-Brit, singer-songwriter, old-timey, fiddle tunes, a cappella, accompanied, and whatever else. The audience are user-friendly and are noted for their chorus singing.

When it started, The Folk happened every second Sunday, but now there is enough support to have it every Sunday, as it has been for about three years. It runs all summer, unlike other clubs, and the only times we close are for Christmas and the Seattle Folklife Festival weekend (American Memorial Day weekend in May), when virtually the whole Victoria folk scene migrates south for that wonderful festival.

The Victoria Folk Music Society is actually (and incredibly) a registered society. In practice, however, it is consciously anarchistic. The philosophy is centered on consensus decision-making in situations where decisions are necessary, and the centering of any such power on a given individual is actively avoided. The only ongoing tasks assigned to individuals areasurer and feature co-ordinator. Volunteer co-ordinator is a rotating position dedicated to organizing volunteers for the necessary coffeehouse evening tasks such as kitchen help, door, host, and bakers.

We don’t often have concerts apart from The Folk, except if somebody wants to organize either a formal concert or a house concert for a visiting performer. Over the past few years we’ve done that for such musicians as Eric Bogle, Archie Fisher, Linda Waterfall, Garnet Rogers, and Brian Bowers. The society usually backs the concert and guarantees the finances.

One interesting recent development is the production, through our local cable television station, of a series of folk music shows that featured the Ad Hoc as well as some of the “regulars”. It turned out well and was very well received, and did a lot to publicize The Folk to local audiences. The cable station was very receptive to the idea and did all the technical end of it. They’d like to see it become a regular feature.

So if you are ever in Victoria, try to organize your visit to stay over on a Sunday evening and visit us at Norway House (we rent it on an ongoing basis) at 1110 Hillside Ave. If you are a performer and from out of town, let the host know and we’ll try and get you on. See you!

TUNES FROM PRESENT-DAY TUNESMITHS

by Anne Lederman

The art of the tunesmith appears to be alive and well in Canada. The number of people writing tunes in the old forms (more or less) attests to the continued vitality of dance music traditions. For the next couple of issues we are going to feature some of the original tunes I have been sent or have stumbled across in my travels. Most of the composers presented here have written dozens of tunes (hundreds, in some cases) and of course there are many, many more people out there actively writing and playing original tunes in various styles. I will offer samples of whatever I can, and I encourage everyone to send me more.

Tunes in the Canadian tradition are not played as written, of course, and it cannot be stressed often enough that one must develop a playing style by ear before printed tunes are useful. How the tunes sound in the hands of any particular player will depend completely on the tradition which that player comes from. However, some general pointers:
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