THE ARCHIVES OF THE CANADIAN SOCIETY FOR MUSICAL TRADITIONS
AND THE FOLK MUSIC COLLECTIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY LIBRARY

by William A. S. Sarjeant

Several years have gone by since the executive of what was then the Canadian Folk Music Society/Société Canadienne de Musique Folklorique decided to lodge the Society minute books, correspondence and other records in the archival collections of the University of Calgary Library. The initial donation was substantial enough, filling five standard-file boxes. Since then, however, with the accession of the considerable amount of documentary material accumulated during Tim Rogers' Presidency and the addition of letters and papers concerning the work done by his two successors, John Leeder and myself, our Society's archives have now grown to thirty-five boxes.

The collection is in the charge of Mrs. Apollonia Steele and may be consulted upon application to her, during library hours, by any member of the Society or the public at large. It forms a substantial resource for anyone interested in the history of folk music in Canada. Even so, we are aware that many letters and documents relating to the Society's history—and, in particular, to its early history—must still be in private hands. We would be most grateful if any members who hold such items would donate them to the Society, either directly to Mrs. Steele or via the writer of this article, as preferred. (For addresses, see end of article).

1980 saw the establishment of a Canadian Music Center at the University of Calgary. This is one of several centers across Canada which serve as lending libraries for published or manuscript scores of music by Canadian composers; the Calgary Center deals in particular with writers and performers from Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Records are not loaned; however, they may be enjoyed in the Center's listening facilities or, in many instances, purchased at the desk, where promotional material is available for distribution. Though the stress is on contemporary developments from classical music, the compositions of such contemporary writers in the folk music field as Don Freed and John Leeder also form a part of the Center's concerns.

During the last few years, there has been a growing interest in ethnomusicology in the Department of Music of the University of Calgary; and, as a consequence, a substantial collection of folk music records have been accumulated. On the basis of the most recent catalogue, this comprises some 800 records—a very considerable resource. However, the bulk of the collection relates to the music of central and eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In the areas that are our Society's particular concern, the collection is not nearly so strong.

Canadian folk music, exclusive of native Indian music, amounts to some 66 records, of which 15 are from Quebec; in addition, there are perhaps 30–40 recordings of singers of contemporary folk song
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in the "Popular Music" section of the record library. The holdings of native Indian music of North America amount to some 50 records; mostly these are of U.S. native peoples, only a relatively low number treating with Canadian native music. Records of white and Negro music from the U.S.A. number, respectively, 57 and 22.

It should be noted that the Library has also a magnificent collection of jazz and blues records -- very largely the donation of Calgary resident William Salt and amounting to more than 3,500 records. However, this focuses primarily on the period from 1950 to the present and is much less strong on earlier styles in jazz and blues.

Nor are the holdings of folk music from other English- and French-speaking countries at all strong. There are 21 LP records of Irish folk music, 17 of French, 13 of Scottish, 6 of Welsh and none at all of English folk music in the most recent list (though subsequent donations have modified this picture). Of 9 records from Australia, 6 are of aboriginal music, while 2 of the 3 records of New Zealand folksong are of Maori singing traditions. Until recently, the Library holdings have reflected a similar bias.

However, the Department of Music -- and, in particular, Prof. Lois Choksy and Dr. Richard Johnston -- has been very much interested in developing the collection. A consequence was that, during the fall of 1989 and in the last weeks of my Presidency of the Society, I was invited to Calgary to discuss with Chief Librarian Alan MacDonald a stronger collaboration between C.F.M.W. and the University. I was shown the existing archival resources by Apollonia Steele and the musical resources by Music Librarian William Sgrazzutti, also holding discussions with Prof. Choksy and Dr. Johnston. We agreed that we should jointly strive to develop, in the University of Calgary, a major Center for studies of Canadian folk song and music. This decision was endorsed, at the Annual Meeting in Winnipeg, 1989, by the Executive of what was there renamed the Canadian Society for Musical Traditions/Societe Canadienne des Traditions Musicales.

Already a major expansion of the University of Calgary collections was beginning to take place, through the generosity of our long-serving Executive member and Journal Editor Dr. Edith Fowke. Her donations, sent annually over four years, have included material on both folk music and folklore. In addition to some 35 books and articles of which Dr. Fowke was author or coauthor, she has presented the library with some 150 other books, together with parts or complete runs of some 120 magazines; 8 records and 13 cassettes; 60 color transparencies relating to folklore and 5 postcards of folk musicians; and around 25 pamphlets or programmes of festivals and concerts. Not only the books and journals, but also these other materials, will be of great value to future scholars.

Since that time, I have myself donated to the University of Calgary some 150 long-playing records and partial or complete runs of some 50 other journals (largely in bound form), plus 64 books and
a dozen pamphlets or programmes. Some of these were acquired through the generosity of English folksingers Roy Harris and Christopher Roche and of Dr. Robyn Scott-Brindley, widow of my late and much-lamented friend David Scott-Brindley.

Already, then, the University of Calgary collections are expanding rapidly. Members of the Society may visit the Music Library at any time during opening hours, when they may listen to records and tapes from the collection in one of the eleven listening booths, each equipped with a turntable and cassette player. In addition, three compact-disc players are available for use. (It should be noted, however, that copyright regulations normally preclude any re-recording by visitors). The books and journals on folk music are likewise available for consultation upon request, there being "browsing access" to the shelves.

We are trusting that both the archive and the library of books and recordings will continue to develop. Dr. Fowke tells me that she is planning to continue her annual donations and our President, Dr. Gregg Brunskill, has promised to make his tapes of Innu music available for copying. In addition Dr. Isabelle Mills, of the Department of Music, University of Saskatchewan, has agreed to donate or bequeath to the Library and the Society the extensive collection of tape recordings made in the course of her "Ethnic Songs of Saskatchewan" project. (An earlier major collection of Saskatchewan recordings, made by the late Dr. Barbara Cass-Beggs, is lodged with Saskatchewan Archives in Regina).

For my own part, I am continuing to seek to enlarge the Music Library's holdings of folksong journals, concentrating in particular in obtaining those in the English and French languages, from Canada or elsewhere. Furthermore, I am planning shortly to donate a substantial number of records, plus further books and records, from my collection and have already bequeathed the residue of that collection to the University of Calgary.

Already the folk music collections being developed in the collaboration between the C.S.M.T. and University of Calgary contain a number of unique items, including runs of journals available nowhere else in North America. However, the collections remain weak in many areas. In particular, we would like to acquire a wider holding of the magazines and newsletters of Canadian folk music clubs and a more extensive collection of concert and festival programmes. (Although original material is preferred, photographic or Xerox copies are perfectly acceptable). Donations of records and of reel-to-reel or cassette tapes are also solicited. We would further welcome the opportunity to make copies or private tape recordings--some 40 of my own have been copied already--or of unpublished manuscripts and song-books. (If requested, access to these can be restricted according to the donor's wishes). Any documents or other materials relevant to folk traditions, song or music will also be welcomed.

Please give serious consideration to making a personal donation to the Society or directly to the University of Calgary. (Tax credits for donations to the University may be obtained upon request).
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Records, books and tapes should be addressed directly to the Music Librarian, William Sgrazzutti (address below). Journals, newsheets and other publications of like nature should be addressed to me in the first instance, for organization and possible binding, potential archival material could be sent either to me or to Mrs. Steele (addresses below).

As the collection in the University of Calgary Library continues to develop, it promises to become not only the finest in Canada but also one of the finest in the World. Why not help us to make it so?

Addresses:

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Dr. William A.S. Satjeant
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Dances in the wee schoolhouse were organized; with the desks taken out about twenty couples could dance comfortably, but what fun we had doing 'The Lambeth Walk', the square dances, and military schoti [sic]. No chicken dances in 1939 and 40!...When we had tried to hire a four piece orchestra in Castor, they laughed and simply refused to come out. They said that in no way could we make the $40.00 to pay them. I often wondered what they thought when they heard we had $100.00 for the children's Christmas, after expenses.

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(Contributed by George Lyon)