Canadian Folk Festival Directory

Introduction

It's Festival Directory time again! This feature was born in 1982, spent a couple of years as part of the BULLETIN, was published as a separate booklet for a couple of years, then returned to the pages of the BULLETIN, where it has appeared most years since 1986, and has been perhaps our most popular and most requested feature. This year, because of changed budgetary constraints, we have to go with less of a "Cadillac" edition; nevertheless, we feel that content counts for more than style, and we hope that the information will prove useful.

How do we decide what to include in a Folk Festival Directory? In other words, what is a "folk festival"? To pose this question is to come perilously close to asking the dreaded "What is 'folk music'?". However, I'm resolutely keeping the door closed on that issue (see Zachary Murphy's letter at p. 35 of this issue.) For the purposes of this directory, a "folk festival" is: (1) any event which calls itself a "folk festival"; or (2) any event which we believe to have a significant folk music content. In the latter category, many festivals which do not call themselves "folk festivals" nevertheless deserve to be included in this directory: for example, Native pow-wows, Highland dance competitions, cowboy poetry gatherings, and multicultural festivals, to name only a few.

The information used in compiling this directory comes mostly from two kinds of sources: directly, from the festivals themselves; and indirectly, from provincial tourism departments. A couple of provinces steered us to umbrella organizations specializing in folk festivals, such as the Ontario Council of Folk Festivals. The advantage here is having information on a number of festivals under one roof, easily accessed and processed into the format of this directory. The drawback is that we receive no information on the sort of events which do not call themselves "folk festivals" but which nonetheless have significant folk music content. Ontario and British Columbia are particularly deficient in this regard, and we hope that in future years some means will be found for finding out about this second category of events.

Festivals marked with an asterisk are those about which information has come to us second hand, usually from provincial tourism departments. In such cases we are making the assumption that the event qualifies as a folk festival; in most cases this is obvious from the name. There may be events which should be included but are left out because whatever information we received was not clear enough to allow us make that assumption; in some cases events may be left out because we just plain were not told about them. We hope that in future years the system will be fine-tuned to make omissions negligible; at present we can only do our best with the sources available to us. And, of course, in many cases of second-hand information we have been able to include only incomplete descriptions of the events, depending on how much each individual province decides to include in its events listings. Again, we wish we could do more, but have to work with what we've got.

In some cases we included events even though we know that they will be over before this directory goes to print. We hope that folks

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August 14 to 16, 1992

INUMMARIT MUSIC FESTIVAL*
Arvait, Northwest Territories

Recreation Coordinator,
Hamlet of Arvait,

(819)-857-2841

Headlining talent from throughout the
Arctic and south.

YUKON TERRITORY

For further information:
Tourism Yukon, P.O. Box 2703,
Whitehorse, Y.T. Y1A 2C6

February 21 to 23, 1992

FROSTBITE MUSIC FESTIVAL*
Whitehorse, Yukon Territory

Frostbite Music Society

(403)-668-4921

"Two days of music workshops; concerts on
Friday and Saturday nights and family
concert and Kidsartfest on Sunday night.
Also one evening dance. Musicians and
entertainers from the Yukon, Canada and
the U.S."

July 3 to 5, 1992

YUKON INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF
STORYTELLING*
Whitehorse, Yukon Territory

P.O. Box 5029,
Whitehorse, Y.T.
Y1A 4S2

(403)—633-7552

July 17 to 19, 1992

DAWSON CITY MUSIC FESTIVAL*
Dawson City, Yukon Territory

Dawson City Music Festival Assn
Box 456,
Dawson City, Y.T.
Y0B 1G0

(403)—993-5584

Annual since 1988

"Entertainers and artists from Canada and
the U.S., featuring workshops, concerts,
dances and dinners. Tickets should be
purchased in advance."

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interested in these festivals will
know about them for future years and
will be able to contact them direct-
ly to obtain information.

A good complement to this
directory is the listing published
by Folklore Canada International; it
also includes events which do not
have a folk music presence. Their
address is: C.P. 9, suc. de Lorimer,
Montréal, QC H2H 2N6. Phone (514)—
524-8552; Fax (514)—524-0269.

Leafing through this directory
gives one a sense of the enormous
scope of folk festival activity in
Canada, in terms of both large
events organized by professionals
and grass-roots community celebra-
tions. The latter can be just as
much fun as the former and can open
a person to experiences which the
large festivals can only attempt to
capture by proxy; I hope people will
be able to use this directory to
discover folk music happening on a
smaller scale in their own region,
as well as available in the major musical events, referred to specifically as "folk festivals". Whatever your tastes in music, it's all enjoyable, and all an important part of Canada's cultural scene.

John Leeder
Guest editor

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Regarding an article in the CANADIAN FOLK MUSIC BULLETIN issue of December 1987 [21:4, p. 3], entitled "Toward a Unified Voice and a Clear Song", a paper presented by Lisa Ornstein at the Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Folk Music Society held in Quebec City, 31st October 1987:

I'd like to quote the gist of the article in paragraph 3: "A problem central to the clarification of the CFMS mandate is our nationwide confusion regarding what folk music is."

What I'd like to know is, did the CFMS pursue the issue? Has the CFMS adopted a "clear and concise definition of the term 'folk music'?" Did you give up? Is this issue yet unresolved?

As a resident of Seattle, which claims to have the biggest "folk festival" in the United States, this question has been burning me up. Also, as a traditional-style musician from the rural milieu of Idaho, I find myself at a loss as to containing my anger when "folk music" is used as a licentious label for failed pop music.

I've got my own definition of "folk music", but I'd sure like to see someone else's solution to the sophomoric question "What's folk music?"

Zachary Murphy

[At the time when the question was raised, opinion was strongly divided on whether there was a need for a definition, let alone what the definition would be. My own opinion, along with others, was to "let the field define itself". However, a number of responses were published in the 1988 issue of the CANADIAN FOLK MUSIC JOURNAL under the title "What is Folk Music?" (#16, p. 32). There was no obvious consensus, the original proponents of the question lost momentum, and then the issue was rendered less relevant by our merger with the Canadian ethnomusicologists' organization and the alteration of the name of the organization to the "Canadian Society for Musical Traditions".

[Personally, I can live with the fact that various groups apply the label "folk music" to various kinds of music, most of which I enjoy to one degree or other, although like you I favour the traditional end of the spectrum. —J.L.]

CORRIGENDUM

In the song "History of the Boots" (vol. 25, no. 4, p. 20), in the third verse, the sixth line was omitted; it reads:

"In the waltz and the do-si-do"

In the fifth verse, fifth line, "where tacked" should read "were tucked"; in the seventh line, "songs" should read "sons".