

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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interested in these festivals will know about them for future years and will be able to contact them directly 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 celebrations. 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
