program. If you have a place for such an appeal in your publication, I would very much appreciate your help. CDs, albums, quality cassettes, even reel-to-reel tapes would be welcome. Nashville is obviously fertile ground for songwriters and players, so perhaps your readers would appreciate the exposure. Any submissions by artists should be sent to the address above. Thanks for any help you might be able to give the program.

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Michael Pollock replies that he agrees, but vibrato is used so much these days even in playing purporting to be traditional that he felt it was worth commenting on. -- J.L.

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I appreciate the review of my tape [26:2, p. 14]. I wish the reviewer had made a distinction between the production and the playing (although I did both!!); however, I feel the critique was fair, perhaps with the exception of "broad vibrato", which is not as strong a part of traditional playing. Anyway, keep up the good work.

Thanks for your kind words about Rika and me [Cumulative Table of Contents 1982-89, Introduction, 25:4, p. 31]. A small point: Canada Folk Bulletin was never a "free-enterprise" magazine, in the generally accepted sense of the word. It was published by the Vancouver Folk Song Society (as was its predecessor, Come All Ye), and no-one was ever paid a penny—yet another of Canadian folk music’s volunteer-run publications.

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Reviews/Comptes-rendus


Il s’agit d’un recueil de pièces de musique instrumentale composées par des musiciens contemporains. Les 24 premières pages sont consacrées à un survol rapide de l’histoire de la musique traditionnelle pour violon en Europe et en Amérique du nord, y compris quelques mots sur l’origine du violon, les genres et les auteurs des pièces que l’on trouve dans le livre. La partie centrale qui est la plus importante comprend les transcriptions musicales, et à la fin, les index des compositeurs et de leurs pièces, les index par titres, une bibliographie et une discographie permettent une utilisation facile du livre et sont une bonne source de références.

Il s’agit là d’une des publications les plus étendues sur le répertoire de musique instrumentale créé par des compositeurs canadiens contemporains, les recueils de ce genre portant, pour la plupart, sur les compositions de musiciens comme Don Messer ou Andy Dejarlis par exemple ou sur les pièces du répertoire de musiciens traditionnels parmi lesquelles on trouve des compositions personnelles comme La musique traditionnelle pour accordéon diatonique: Philippe Bruneau. Ce livre s’adresse à un large public et offre des textes et des transcriptions musicales accessibles à tous.

Ce livre a toutefois les qualité de ses défauts. Les transcriptions musicales sont d’une écriture
simple mais dénuée des éléments caractéristiques du style, soient les ornements, les variations, les coups d'archet. L'auteur nous avertit (p.16) que la musique qui apparaît dans ce livre peut sembler différente de celle soumise par le musicien-compositeur et que les modifications apportées ont pour but de normaliser la présentation des pièces. Dès lors, on peut se demander à juste titre comment se présentait la pièce avant ce travail d'édition. Il est évident que l'auteur et ses collaborateurs se sont peu soucis d'authenticité, considérant comme des erreurs et non des caractéristiques locales, régionales ou autres, le fait que certains musiciens jouent de manière peu académique, sans compter les temps d'une mesure par exemple.

Il aurait été intéressant d'avoir quelques explications sur les transcriptions elles-mêmes, par exemple, pourquoi les reels ne sont-ils pas tous écrits sur un rythme identique, certains sont en 2/4, d'autres en 4/4 ou en C barré, ou bien, on aurait aimé connaître, par exemple, quelle est la logique de l'écriture du reel Happy Time de Ned Landry (p.65) où, tout en voulant simplifier la lecture du rythme on arrive à créer l'effet contraire.

Ceci dit, tous les ethnomusicologues conviennent que quelle qu'en soit la précision, il restera toujours une partie de l'interprétation qui échappera à la transcription, et qui n'est transmissible que d'une personne à une autre. L'auteur quant à lui fait confiance à l'interprète, disant que celui-ci fera les arrangements qui lui conviendront (p.16). Si on considère la pièce créée par un compositeur-interprète non seulement comme une mélodie, mais celle-ci formant un tout avec ce qui vient s'y greffer, ornements, dynamique, tempo, rythme, etc., on est en droit de se demander si E. Whitcomb rencontre le but qu'il recherche en publiant ce livre. N'est-il pas contradictoire de se donner comme objectif de communiquer la connaissance du répertoire et de livrer des œuvres dont l'intégrité n'est pas toujours respectée?

Nombre de publications bien connues dans le domaine de la musique traditionnelle n'offrent autre chose qu'une ligne mélodique dénudée des éléments qui définissent l'esthétique propre à chaque musicien, et connaissent une popularité dont témoignent les multiples ré-éditions dont ils sont l'objet: le fameux recueil One Thousand Fiddle Tunes publié chez M.M. Cole en est un bon exemple. Ces recueils servent d'aide mémoire et, en cela, ils excellent. Ce livre rencontre ce but et procure aux compositeurs un moyen de faire reconnaître leur droit d'auteur. Le nombre de nouvelles compositions soumises à l'auteur du livre témoigne également de la vigueur de la tradition musicale instrumentale canadienne.

--Carmelle Bégin


What's a Ukrainian-Russian Canadian, born and raised in the automotive heart of Ontario, doing singing a love song to the land and the people of Torbay, Newfoundland? Got me. But I knew the minute I first heard it that I wanted to record it.

So says Len Wallace introducing Dermot O'Reilly's "West Country Lady" in the notes to his second cassette. Actually, Wallace's musical stew is more complicated than he notes here. Wallace is an unabashed political radical (I first learned about him via a review in a Yank magazine which applauded Wallace's accordion playing but seemed a bit embarrassed by his proud commitment), and I suspect he may have been a red-diaper baby. As readers of the Bulletin will recall from his spirited essay demanding appropriate recognition for his instrument, reprinted in our last issue, he has a strong sense of the cultural continuity of left-wing politics. His own performance blends this continuity with vigorous renditions of British dance and rebel tunes that will likely be familiar to many folkies, with a few of his own songs, and with the eastern European heritage that we anglo-Canadians ought to take to as openly as Wallace has taken to the British heritage.

Of his two recordings (I believe that Open the Doors is still available), readers will likely find the first to contain more familiar material. That collection had less of Wallace's own songwriting and more chestnuts from such luminaries as Stan Rogers, Eric Bogle, and Billy Bragg. It ended with a strong reading of "The Internationale" which ought to be placed beside Bragg's revisionist version in your tape box.
Wallace is right to suggest that the denigration of the accordion after World War Two was to a large measure a rejection of the ordinary working people who’d taken the instrument to their bosom as an orchestra in a box. Appropriately, Wallace favors a full, chordal sound, though he can also whip off a single-line melody with considerable speed and invention. I like the way he hears tunes.

There is, I should note, a square touch in virtually all of Wallace’s playing that I’ve heard. Unless he’s got a trick or two up his sleeve, I don’t think I’d want to hear him tackle “Volver, Volver,” “Laissez les Bon Ton Roulet,” or “No Woman, No Cry.” He doesn’t seem to have that kind of swing in him. But that’s not a criticism. Flaco Jimenez, the Chenier Family, and Rod Stradling can cover the African- and Latin- bases. Wallace works in an aesthetic that I think also has a right to be preserved and developed.

That European-North American esthetic, with its unforgotten 19th-century roots, was an esthetic of earnestness that will seem to many to be sentimental. Wallace’s own songs would seem more at home in the old People’s Songs Bulletin than in some more contemporary venues. The title cut from the new issue is a virtual manifesto, delivered to a lively rewrite of a well known renaissance French dance tune. (I said his music was square, but I didn’t mean it was dead or dumb! I’m especially fond of Wallace’s own march, “Mackenzie’s Foray,” which he wrote to imagine what the 1837 boys would have fifed on their way to that defeat.) To be suggesting at this point in the century that the United people really might ultimately triumph over defeat requires some courage, perhaps not for threats against one’s life in this country at this time, but certainly for the scorn that is so often (and both cheaply and thoughtlessly) delivered to those who take something seriously.

Wallace’s performance forms a seamless whole, convictions, choice of instrument, handling of rhythm, vocabulary, and vocal style. I don’t know how he records, but I wouldn’t be surprised to learn that he eschews overdubs—the vocals sound like a man lifting the weight of an accordion as he plays. He means what he says, he carries the tune, he’s got a pleasant voice, but he doesn’t have a lot of time for (or probably interest in) melisma, which is getting overdone in some quarters, anyway, to my taste. There are moments when a quaver enters his voice, one that sounds unplanned, as though he’s about to give out. But that’s rare.

Len Wallace offers a voice we need to hear.

--George W.Lyon

...continued from page 3.

And those young men went down in the mines every day
But old men came out, as their dreams slipped away;
Only a working man knows what it means;
To be living on three dollar dreams.

But dreams are for young men; they’re still dreaming yet,
While old men just take anything they can get;
And often a glass or two eases the pain,
Remembering three dollar dreams.

"Three Dollar Dreams" is found on Gallaher & Galbraith, Home to the Island (see review, 25:4, p.46). The liner notes tell us: "There was a time when the coal miners of Vancouver Island thought that if they could earn three dollars a day, it would be a fair wage. By the time they got it, as usual, it was a little too late. Unions were a natural result of these elusive dreams."

Bill tells me that the song is based on a book of the same title, an early history of coal mining on Vancouver Island, written by an Islander named Lynn Bowen. Bill recommends the book highly and notes: "Lynn’s title was too good to be restricted to a mere book, and songs, of course, are an excellent way of getting the information out to a wider audience. I also figured it was a good way to call attention to a fine book that should have a larger readership." J.L.