

Reviews/Comptes-rendus

Books

Craig Mishler. *The Crooked Stovepipe: Athapaskan Fiddle Music and Square Dancing in Northeast Alaska and Northwest Canada*. Urbana: U Illinois P, 1993.

This will not, unfortunately, be a proper review, for which I simply don't have time this season. However, I felt that readers should be alerted to the existence of this useful book, which covers ground of interest to Canadianists of various sorts, both academic and nonacademic.

Mishler offers here both a fascinating portrait of a specific tradition of dancing and instrumental music and an account of the dynamics of the culture of First Nations people, which deserves to be better known for its flexibility than is too often

the case. In *The Crooked Stovepipe*, we see the Native People of the Subarctic adopt the fiddle after the arrival of the Europeans, then go through a variety of conservative and innovative moves as the role of fiddling and dancing evolves throughout the rest of North America.

Not all readers will find Mishler's theory of cultural convergence useful, but he presents it well, and it does not seem to get in the way of his ethnography, as sometimes happens when scholars have a theory to defend.

Recordings

Jean-Pierre Joyal. *Danses d'ici. Musique traditionnelle du Québec*. [Montréal] Association Québécoise des «Loisirs folkloriques» et Jean-Pierre Joyal, ©1994, 125.' cassette, Montréal, Association québécoise des «Loisirs folkloriques» et Saint-Charles-sur-Richelieu, Amérix—Studio Marc Labelle, ©1993, PML 0025.

L'ethnomusicologue québécois Jean-Pierre Joyal nous offre une recueil et une cassette de musique de danse québécoise. Cet ouvrage marie danse et musique, une équation trop souvent délaissée.

La première partie du recueil contient la notation musicale de quelques vingt-six mélodies, des classiques de la tradition folklorique québécoise, qui sont précédées d'une analyse ethnomusicologique bien documentée quant à l'origine de la mélodie, au rythme, à l'interprétation, aux ornements et aux principaux interprètes sur disque. Ces notations musicales sont spécifiquement conçues pour l'interprètes sur disque. On y retrouve des parties de quadrille, des reels, des gigue et des valse des plus grands interprètes du Québec comme Joseph Allard, Joseph Bouchard, Isidore Soucy, Fortunat Malouin, Alfred Montmarquette, Jules Verret et Jean-Marie Verret.

La seconde partie ramène les mêmes mélodies jumelées à un accompagnement pur piano, guitare ou contrebasse. Pour accompagner le recueil, Jean-Pierre a produit une cassette où il interprète au violon 24 des 26 mélodies avec Luc Lavallée au piano et Bernard Deschamps à la contrebasse.

Il s'agit d'un ouvrage bien fait, bien documenté, d'utilisation facile et de présentation soignée, comme on en trouve peu sur le marché des partitions musicales. L'interprétation des pièces instrumentales est juste, claire et précise, quoique parfois trop rapide. L'enregistrement est de bonne qualité, malgré quelques légers problèmes d'écho et de balance de son entre le violon et le piano. Non obstant ces inconvénients mineurs, il s'agit de l'oeuvre d'un analyste autant que d'un praticien de la musique et ce, pour le plus grand plaisir des musiciens, des danseurs et des musicologues.

Le recueil et la cassette des *Danses d'ici* de Jean-Pierre Joyal est un ouvrage précieux qui, nous l'espérons, sera suivi d'autres. On peut se les procurer, ensemble ou séparément, à l'Association québécoise des «Loisirs folkloriques», 4545 avenue Pierre-De Coubertin, Casier postal 1000, Succursale «M», Montréal (Québec), H1C 3R2.

*-Donald Deschênes, directeur général
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Sudbury, Ontario*

Tickle Harbor. *The Brule Boys in Paris*. PIP7325CD. Pigeon Inlet Productions, P.O. Box 1202, St. John's, Newfoundland A1C 5M9. 44:15 min.

Back in the 1970s, one of the great pleasures in traditional Celtic music was listening to the duo of accordion virtuoso Jackie Daly and his equally talented partner, fiddler Seamus Creagh. Daly went on to fame (or at least much fame as there is in this field) for his recordings with De Dannan, Arcady, Kevin Burke and the like, as well as for his solo playing, but Creagh appeared to disappear from the face of the earth.

Which was a great disappointment to people such as myself who'd enjoyed the handful of recordings he'd made with Daly. A couple of years ago the mystery was solved, at least insofar as I was concerned. Others might have known of his whereabouts, but my chancing upon a recording by Newfoundland's Tickle Harbour was the first I'd heard of Creagh since those aforementioned recordings with Daly. I bring all of this up to

share my delight at rediscovering this talented fiddler's playing.

But Tickle Harbour isn't centered around the one man. As he did before, Creagh has surrounded himself with wonderful talent, while his own playing has simply gotten better. Tickle Harbour are a bit of rarity in that, like Altan, they're not jazzing up the music. Instead they play it straightforwardly—track after track of driving jigs and reels in the tradition of the Bothy Band's classic albums. Great ensemble playing, a nice mix of familiar tunes and those not quite so familiar, and arrangements that show both to their best advantage. The interplay of flute (Rob Murphy), whistles (Murphy and Gerry Strong) and fiddle (Creagh and Bob O'Donovan) are augmented by Scott Schillereff's tasty hammered dulcimer playing and that strong rhythmic accompaniment that makes the group's sound reminiscent of the Bothy Band. The latter comes courtesy of Don Walsh (guitar, bouzouki, synthesizer), Paddy Mackey (bodhran) and O'Donovan (bouzouki). O'Don-

ovan also does a turn on mandolin for one of the sweetest tunes on the disc, "St. John's Mazurka," penned by Walsh. My only disappointment is the inclusion of the one song, Creagh's unaccompanied rendition of "The Waterford Boys." It's a great song, and Creagh really makes it his own. But he's also recorded it at least twice before: on his Gael Linn duet album with Daly, and also on a live German Festival that the two were on, released in the late 1970s. At this point, I would've liked to have heard something different.

But that's a moot point—especially if you don't have either of those albums—and don't let it put you off picking up a copy of one of the best traditional Celtic ensemble albums in years, on this side of the Atlantic or the other. With the Bothy Band now long gone, only Altan are producing recordings that are as satisfying overall as *The Brule Boys in Paris*.

—Charles de Lint
Ottawa, Ontario

Moira Cameron. *One Evening as I Rambled*. MCK 3968. Moira Cameron, 617-5310-44th St., Yellowknife, N.W. X1A 1K3
Ceilidh Friends. *Yellowknife Evening*. MDS 2 (address not indicated, but presumably as above).

Hitherto, all the records I have heard of music from the Northwest Territories have been of aboriginal music—and that, of course, is perfectly appropriate. However, nowadays there are other inhabitants of that "vast and barren land," who can perform and enjoy music deriving from their own traditions. That such music can be of high quality, these two tapes make evident.

Moira Cameron is the daughter of an Ontario folk musician, Stuart Cameron, whose too-early death was a sad blow to his many friends in this Society. She is a highly competent performer on a variety of instruments, as this recording makes fully evident. In particular, though, she has an enchanting, indeed haunting, voice, and chooses songs—particularly from the British tradition—that allow it full expression. I liked especially "Shepherd's Song" (perhaps better known as "Shepherd of the Hills"), "Banks of Primroses", and "Banks of Airdrie-O", with its subtle chorus accompaniment by Steve and Dawn Lacey, Lorelei Andrew and Laryssa Wolansky. "Outlandish Knight" was marred for me by its curtailment—the episode of the parrot is strange, perhaps even incongruous, but it is part of the flavour of that particular Child ballad—and "Reynardine," though equally splendidly sung, by the echo-chamber effect. "Johnny Be Fair" was cheerful, but did not allow such full expression of Moira's particular vocal qualities—better suited, in my view, to the rare, the strange and the ancient.

Moira's instrumental abilities are amply displayed. On the "Ronde" and "Gavotte" that begin the recording and on the "Bransle de Champagne" that ends its first side, she plays bowed psaltery; she accompanies "Banks of Primroses" on Appalachian dulcimer and plays that instrument again, as well as recorder, tambourine and spoons, on the exit track, "Gathering Peascods"; and she plays recorders also on four other tracks, that instrument echoing very effectively the timbre of her voice.

Beyond doubt, however, the most memorable track is Moira's retelling of the splendid and macabre traditional story of "Mr. Fox"—excellently and effectively told. This tale is not well known, though it can be found also in a dramatically-set vocal version by Bob and Carol Pegg (on *The Gypsy*, Transatlantic LP TRA 236): indeed, they took the group name "Mr. Fox" from that song. (Carol told me afterwards that she thought it an ill-omened choice; that group, though one of the finest in folk rock, broke up all too soon, and with it her marriage to Bob.) This story alone would justify purchasing a tape that is altogether of high quality and interest.

Moira Cameron and Steve Goff constitute Ceilidh Friends, along with Steve and Dawn Lacey. On their record, mediaeval and folk tunes preponderate. These are played on a variety of instruments—those listed above, plus bells and rattle (Dawn), hurdygurdy and hammered dulcimer (Moira), electric bass (Steve Lacey), bodhran (Steve Goff, Moira and, on one track, Chris Philpotts) and even moose bones (Bill Gilday)! The result is music which, though less consistent in calibre than on the other record, is usually lively and always entertaining.

The recording begins with a "Calling-On Song," avowedly done in the style of Steeleye Span; this is followed briskly by three instrumentals, "The Redhaired Boy" ("Johnny Dhu" when sung), "The Battle of Aghrim," and "The Great Orange Whale." Steve Goff sings "Farewell to Tarwathie" and the last track, "Mingulay Boat Song," well enough, I suppose, but I'd rather have heard him singing the Cockney songs that have given me so much pleasure. Steve Lacey's "Yellowknife Evening" oozes Northern patriotism, and will appeal greatly to many listeners, if not to me. His wife Dawn has a voice almost of the quality of Moira's, though very different; I enjoyed her versions of Leon Rosselson's song of regret "The World Turned Upside Down", the traditional "She's Like the Swallow" and especially "The Female Drummer", with its neat guitar "exit." I liked also her splendid singing of Norman

Walker's triumphant paean to spring, "The Prairie Pagans" [*Bulletin*, 27:2, p. 2]—even if finding the latter a bit odd in a Yellowknife setting! The combination of Dawn's voice with Moira's in "The Cutty Wren" appealed rather less well, simply because it was sung too fast; and "Farewell to Canada," a parody of "Tarwathie," also did not much appeal, greatly though I agreed with the political sentiment expressed. The two a capella songs, "Daddy Fox" and "Catch Around the

The Irish Descendants. Look to the Sea. WEA CD94017

Look to the sea—in this day of the shrinking fisheries industry and the loss of jobs, one may ask, "Why look to the sea?" But perhaps this is all that is left.

This album from the Newfoundland group The Irish Descendants concentrates mainly on love songs of the sea: lost love—"Useta Love Her"; long distance love—"Go To Sea No More"; misfortune—"Peter Street"; and love denied—"Oh No Not I." There's also the plaintive cry of "Last of the Great Whales"; and longing for the old ways—"Fisherman's Song" and "Days of Yore."

The song "Lark in the Morning," with the line "here's a health to you ploughboys," doesn't seem to fit, but, as in the

Penny Lang. *Ain't Life Sweet*. Fleming Artists' Management, 5975 av. du Parc, Montréal, Québec, H2V 4H4

My first thought while listening to Panny Lang's CD, *Ain't Life Sweet*, was that I hoped she would come and play for us on Vancouver Island, at the Islands Folk Festival, some time. The driving blues and uptempo swing and country-folk rhythms of her original songs would be certain to bring the audience to their feet, especially at the evening concerts.

Don't expect to hear a nightingale singing here. You don't get to sing these sorts of gutsy songs without a touch of gravel in your voice!

Some of the songs reminded me a little of other artists I have enjoyed through the years, but Penny's songs in no way took second place. They simply added pleasure to pleasure.

The opening song, "Open Up Our Hearts to See" has a strong gospel feel and is both a warm, people song and a good Ad Hoc (audience participation opening) song for concerts. Immediately after this the album dives straight into a driving and funky blues followed by a McGarrigle-ish "On Again, Off Again."

Penny has very obviously "paid her dues"—nobody can write songs of this quality without a thorough understanding and deep-rooted appreciation for this genre as well as a competent musicianship.

"Ain't Life Sweet," the title track, is a steady-rhythm, John Prine-like, country folksong that talks about life without being preachy in any way. "Plumb Tuckered Out" is a jug band, ragtime blues whose only problem is that it is too short—as are a couple of other tracks; but that's a pretty small

Table" ("Let Mirth Abound"), were neatly done.

This is also a good tape, and the Northwest Territories Arts Council is to be praised for financing its production. If it appeals to me less than the first—well, that's because there's too little of Moira's voice; but it remains highly enjoyable and well worth acquiring.

—William A.S. Sarjeant
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

cover photo of the group with their backs to the sea, does it mean they're going to be heading inland for their next venture?

Two instrumental medleys balance the album nicely, and it's good to hear the lead vocals spread among the group, along with good harmonies.

It's also great to be able to understand the words, as the lyrics are not enclosed.

These are all good songs, and a fun listen—again and again.

—Dave Foster
Calgary, Alberta

criticism.

Amongst all this fine stuff—like "Stomp, Bop, Bop," which reminded me of Hot Tuna's first album—Penny gets to slip in some obviously very personal songs, such as "Spanish Moss."

She uses a variety of playing and picking styles on the recording as a whole, but her excellent ragtime-blues comes out especially well. On most of the tracks she is accompanied by other excellent musicians who appropriately complement the songs. Especially notable is the dobro, harmonica, &c, accompaniment for the country song, "Family Reunion."

Nevertheless, it is quite apparent that both this and the other songs, and Penny's singing and playing of them, are perfectly capable of standing by themselves.

The recording winds up much as it begins, with a gospel-like Martha Carson song, "I Can't Stand Up Alone." The twelve remaining songs were all written by Penny.

I noticed that the Canada Council assisted with the financial end of this recording. No doubt most of us have an unhappy tale or two to tell about the Canada Council, but if this is what it takes to get recognition for Penny Lang on the Canadian folk scene, then the money, this time, was well invested.

An excellent album.

—Mike Ballantyne
Cobble Hill, BC

