Over the Waves

Folk Routes is broadcast each Sunday afternoon from 3:30-5:30 across Alberta, and to the interiors of Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and Northern Montana. In 1994, the Alberta government relinquished support of the CKUA Radio Network and left the 68 year old station to find its support with the public. The station, which has a listening audience of 92,000, maintains offices and studios in both Edmonton and Calgary, and its programming features Jazz, Blues, Worldbeat, Classical, theatre. Folk Routes has been offered since February 1995.

Folk Routes host Tom Coxworth features traditional and contemporary music. The program draws from such contemporary artists as Richard Thompson, Loreena McKennitt, Ashley MacIsaac, Zachary Richard, and Bob Dylan, and such pioneers as Wade Hemsworth, Leadbelly, Woody Guthrie, Hank Williams, Ewan MacColl, and the Seeger Family.

The folk scene in Alberta is strong. Supportive patrons of music have assisted in the growth of a vibrant festival circuit, which includes the Edmonton, Calgary, Jasper, and Canmore Folk Festivals, Fort McLeod's South Country Fair, and the North Country Fair, as well as country, bluegrass, and old time music festivals. The program explores the traditions of the British Isles and the journeys the music has taken in the formation of the Acadian, cajun, zydeco, bluegrass, hillbilly, acoustic blues and country music.

Tom, a music reviewer and record collector, is one of the organizers of the Edmonton Folk Festival. From 1985 to 1992 he hosted a Celtic program called In the Tradition at the University of Alberta. The popularity of the program led to two trips to the UK to research and interview performers such as Dick Gaughan, June Tabor, and members of Fairport Convention. Folk Routes is a musical extention of In the Tradition that explores not only Celtic music but also the various styles that have created a truly unique North American sound.

As a member of the North American Folk Alliance, Tom is a strong supporter of folk music and Canadian artists. "Artists in Canada have so much to offer—and I ensure that their voices, music and stories are heard. At the recent Folk Alliance in Washington, DC (all nationalism aside—really), the Canadian artists were the most sought after because of the originality in tradition—with Mary Jane Lamond, Fred Eaglesmith, Mad Puddy and David Essig leading the charge.... I'm very pleased with audience support for Folk Routes and the acceptance of the balance between the variety of styles that may include a program with ornamented singing from the Isle of Barra, hillbilly music of Doc Watson, or the sweet sounds of Loreena McKennitt.

"It all fits together. The program is about connections in folk music and the history that fuels the many artists who are drawing on the traditions of history to create new music. I love turning a Celtic corner in a Bluegrass tune and then playing some early blues ballad, and then going back to an English traditional song.... That's the routes and roots of music."

The program is also available on satellite, and on the Internet. Thanks for listening. If you want to get in touch with Folk Routes, the address is 1007, 221 -6th Avenue SE, Calgary, Alberta T2G 4Z9. Voice 403-262-9020 Voice/Fax 403-261-8624 or e-mail to folkrts@cadvision.com

—Tom Coxworth

The Centrefold

According to a partial result of the survey conducted along with membership renewals (results which we’re continuing to tabulate for the rest of the year), over half of our members consider themselves to read reasonably fluently in French as a first or second language. So those of you who like to keep up with happenings in other parts of the country would do well to cast an eye at a couple of informative French-language newsletters.

One is Le billochet, organ of Le Centre franco-ontarien de folklore in Sudbury (of which our Associate Editor Donald Deschénes is Director General). The one copy I’ve seen so far includes a short article on a Breton folksong concerning the capture of a ship, "Le Foudroyant," in 1758. The ship shows up in songs in French Ontario as "Le Foudron," and the article draws some interesting parallels. There’s also a folk tale, "Les Voleurs de poules," a brief profile of sculptor Maurice Gaudreault, and updates on the Centre’s successful revival of traditional song-and-story sessions for the holidays La Sainte-Catherine and La Fête des Rois. (Donald told us in more detail about the latter at the paper session at last year’s Annual General Meeting of CSTM.) The newsletter lists recent acquisitions of publications by the Centre, recommends books on history and music available at the public library, mentions upcoming TV shows featuring franco-ontarien storytellers, and of course includes news of organizational doings, like all good newsletters.

Le billochet is available with membership, $20.00 per year. Its frequency is unspecified. The address is: Centre franco-ontarien de folklore, Maison d’Youville, 38, rue Xavier, Sudbury, Ontario P3C 2B9.

The CSTM’s meeting in Québec in 1987 was hosted by the group which later became Le Centre de valorisation du patrimoine vivant, so we’ve been receiving their Bulletin for years (but I have only one copy before me at present). As you’d expect in a milieu with many thriving organized folk music events, many festival reports, from throughout the province, are included in the newsletter. There’s also a column of other news