

## Lettres/Letters

Your references in the *Canadian Folk Music Bulletin* Volume 30, Nos. 2 (p.16, column 2) and 3 (p.2, column 1) to problems in obtaining photographs of Alan Mills from the National Archives of Canada, and your expression of disappointment in Volume 30, No. 3 (p.2, column 1) "that earlier decades of Canadians did not bother to document their own culture" have come to our attention at the Music Division of the National Library of Canada. We believe that we can help you on both issues.

Had you turned to that most indispensable of music reference tools, *The Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), and perused the entry on Alan Mills on P.857, you would have seen that "his library and papers were deposited at the National Library of Canada." The enclosed photocopy of the relevant page from our published *Catalogue of Archival Fonds and Collections of the Music Division* (Ottawa: National Library of Canada, 1994) mentions over two-and-a-half linear metres of textual records and over 100 photographs in the Alan Mills archival *fonds*.\* There is a wealth of information and documentation on Alan Mills here at the National Library and we would have been pleased to share some of the photographs or other documents with you for your special issue, "Alan Mills Remembered."

Permit me to tell you that the National Library of Canada holds the single largest collection of musical Canadiana in existence. This collection comprises more than 170,000 sound recordings, over 35,000 photographs of Canadian musicians and musical ensembles, 70,000 Canadian concert programmes, 40,000 musical monographs and scores, 1,7000 music periodical titles (some dating back to the early 1800s), 20,000 pieces of historical Canadian sheet music, and several hundred archival *fonds* and collections from Canada's most renowned musicians and organizations, including those of Glenn Gould, Oscar Peterson, Sir Ernest MacMillan, The Travellers and the Canadian Music Council, to name but a handful. I am enclosing a photocopy of an article entitled "Preserving Canada's Musical Heritage," about the Music Division's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary; it was published in the Winter 1995 issue of *Classical Music Magazine* and gives a good overview of who we are and what we do. The enclosed brochure entitled *Music Collection* gives more information on our collections and services, including numbers and addresses where we can be reached.

You and your readers can rest assured that there is an institution in Canada which is preserving Canada's cultural docu-

ments and that the Alan Mills archive is in good hands. With all good wishes, I remain,

Yours truly,  
Dr. S. Timothy Maloney  
Director, Music Division  
National Library of Canada  
Research and Information Services  
395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, Canada  
K1A 0N4

*We are pleased to be called to account, and we will be surprised if we do not have occasion to use the services of the Music Division before long. We might note that although we did not consult the Encyclopedia on Alan Mills, it is an essential resource in the creation of many issues of the Bulletin. —GWL*

*\* In "Preserving Canada's Musical Heritage," Dr. Maloney defined fonds as "...the complete group of records or documents which an individual organically brings together in the course of his or her career, and is distinguished from a collection, which can be build haphazardly or arbitrarily." The Mills fonds contains, blush, 129 photographs.*

Regarding the "Canadian content" blues question [30:2, pp. 4, 47], I agree that all too often Canadian blues songwriters write about American cities, rivers, etc., in their (our) songs. Perhaps a better way of saying that is that Canadian cities, rivers and experiences show up in our songs too infrequently. I think it valid and natural to write about experiences writers have in the places of origin of their music. Just as a Canadian who plays music in a Celtic tradition is going to be affected by a trip to Scotland and perhaps write of experiences there, a blues musician is going to be affected by a trip to the birthplace of the music he/she loves. Often this can be an awakening to a new direction in songwriting as the writer branches out from songs of relationships and realizes that there are places in their hearts, too. All of this takes time as we grow and develop as songwriters.

I think that most blues writers come to the music as musicians first and develop writing later. Often they have played folk or country or more likely rock before embracing the blues, and often they write in these other traditions as well. I really

believe—based on the number of young blues musicians in Canada now—we are going to see a lot of good Canadian blues songs in years to come. I can think of a couple of songs off the top of my head that are distinctly Canadian—The Nationals' "Bo in Ontario" and Ken Hamm's "Intertidal Zone"—and I'm sure there are lots more. Even if Canadian blues songwriters don't incorporate local places in their songs, there will be Canadian thoughts and opinions expressed in this adopted music. My stereo often plays Morgan Davis, Chris and Ken Whiteley, Colin Linden and lots of other excellent blues players.

Rick Fines  
Peterborough, Ontario

*Thanks for the thoughtful response. It's easy enough to stick Canadian place names into standard blues messages, less simple to express Canadian experiences in this essentially imported form, but even more subtle to identify truly Canadian sentiments expressed within the blues idiom. We're still open to suggestion as to examples!*

*And I think Rick makes a telling comment on Canadian (North American? English-language?) music today in assuming that "songs of relationships" are the norm from which people occasionally branch out. GWL's comments last issue (p. 3) concerning the term "novelty song" are very applicable. —JL*

I have recently begun my graduate studies in ethnomusicology at the University of Alberta... Do you have references for all your past publications? Specifically, I am searching for anything written about the music in the Yukon and musical convergence between Aboriginal societies and Euro-Canadian societies in general. Please let me know how I can access any of your back issues containing such information.

Chris Elbich  
10634 - 78 Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T6E 1P5



*I've been thinking about Edith Fowke, though I didn't know her terribly well; the thing that sticks in my mind (besides the fact that people talked about what a terrible driver she was—old ladies seem to have a special [over-worked] angel, scrambling to get things out of their way) is that she was so helpful to us folkies. More than a few (maybe a majority of) folklorists seem to believe that folk song collections are for comparative study only—God forbid that someone should sing any of them for money! For generosity and a genuine desire to help, she (and Ken Goldstein and Joe Hickerson) stand out and will always have a place in my memory.*

Michael Cooney



*Mother and Dad both enjoyed music. As a result, we had a variety of musical instruments in our home. The big moment came when the piano arrived from the East. This big purchase was made on the installment plan just prior to the hungry Thirties. Dad used to have Anne write letters to the company promising payment as soon as the pigs were sold. These Easterners must have thought pigs took an awfully long time to mature in the West, but eventually the last payment was made, and the piano was ours. Regardless of the hard times, we had many good times. Our house was a gathering place for young people for sing-songs, games, and dancing.*

Mary Johnson, *Wheatfields and Wildflowers* (Rycroft, Alberta)

*You can likely find our back issues in the University of Alberta library. Cumulative Tables of Contents for the Bulletin covering 1982 to 1995 are found in issues 25.4 (Winter 1991), 28.1 (March 1994) and 30.1 (March 1996). Otherwise, can any readers steer Chris onto an appropriate path? —JL*

I hope you can give me some help in my search of Lead Belly's Montreal visit (3 Weeks) in January 1947. I've read the newspapers which covered him, including the McGill Daily, and mention is made of Lead Belly appearing at the offices of the Canadian Federation of Artists. In another article, he is reported to have sung for the Federation of Canadian Musicians. Can you point me to contacts in Montreal who might know how to locate this (these) professional organizations, or the present day successor organizations?

Hope you like our last (September) LBLetter; I thought the 4 page index to all prior (6) years of LBL publication would be helpful to readers. I look to present a long (but not dry and dull) paper on Lead Belly in Montreal at the Folk Alliance February Conference in Toronto. Will you be attending? I just got back from Bosnia where I served as an election supervisor in September; I'm scheduled to go back in November.

Thanks for your help.

Sean Killeen  
Lead Belly Letter  
PO Box 6679  
Ithaca, New York  
USA 14851