

## Comptes rendus / Reviews

## Book

Louise McDiarmid and Irene Aubrey (eds.) *Share a Tale: Canadian Stories to Tell to Children and Young Adults*. Ottawa: Canadian Library Association, 1995. 222pp.

What happens when two professional storytellers based in Ottawa set out to compile a volume of stories that are found in Canada's rich and vastly diverse history, literature and folklore, past and present? The happy and successful result is *Share a Tale*, a companion volume to two previous collections designed specifically for children: *Storyteller's Encore* and *Storyteller's Rendezvous*; in the case of *Share a Tale*, however, although the stories are ostensibly designed for children, they can be enjoyed by young adults and older adults as well.

What makes a story Canadian in content and character is specifically defined by McDiarmid and Aubrey in their introduction. A story is Canadian if it is told by a Canadian, takes place in Canada or was collected within Canada itself, whether it comes from Canada or another country, or from any of Canada's First Nations. By this definition, the 100 narratives all qualify as stories from the Canadian historical and folkloric tradition. For this anthology, numerous public and private printed and archival collections were consulted, including some of the most eminent authorities and folklore scholars, living and deceased, such as Edith Fowke, Helen Creighton, Robert Klymasz, Carole Carpenter, André Elbaz and Magnus Einarsson, among others.

For purposes of the collection, McDiarmid and Aubrey have grouped the stories under seven major headings: tall tales and anecdotes, poetry, stories of the supernatural, modern tales, true tales, traditional folk stories and tales from the First Nations. Some tales, such as those of Joe Montferrand, also known as "Joe Mufferaw," have been placed in several sections, such as tall tales and true tales. Each story is accompanied by extensive and precise citations, both as to the tale's original source, whether told or narrated as a folk story or printed in an archival source, and as to where McDiarmid and Aubrey found the tale in their own researches. Any translations, adaptations, editing and excerpting are mentioned as well. There is also information as to the time it takes to tell the tale, as well as its suitability for use in performances for school audiences. A good many of the tales are under 10 minutes in length, many are less than 5 minutes and, with one or two exceptions, none take over 15 minutes. Another plus for the collection is that the stories were designed for storytellers of all varieties and competency levels, from the beginner to the advanced teller. Or, as McDiarmid and Aubrey succinctly put it in their introduction, these stories beg to be not only heard and learned, but shared and told to others, in the very best traditional manner of good storytelling.

As to the tales themselves, the variety, diversity and scope of the stories included is what makes the anthology the success it is. Whether a tall tale from Alberta, a ghost story from New-

foundland, a modern retelling of an old folktale, a stirring story from Canada's history, a centuries-old folk story still told in Canada or a Tsimchian, Tlingit, Cree or Abenaki creation myth, Canada's cultural mosaic, its many ethnic groups and traditions and its historical and literary past and present come to the fore in these narrative retellings. The section on traditional tales is quite instructive. Here the reader will find tales from such diverse traditions as those of Quebec, Iceland, Scotland, China and the West Indies. Contributions from some of the very best storytellers currently on the Canadian scene can be found in this section: Mary Alice Downey, Kate Stevens, Rita Cox and Ray Gordesky, just to mention a few. The section on tales of the supernatural covers a variety of tales from locales from the Maritimes to British Columbia, including tales of the *loup-garoux* and *chasse-galerie*, ghost stories, yarns of black magic and sorcery, even bizarre urban legends contributed by Edmonton storyteller and teacher Gale de Vos from her extensive research into this modern folklore phenomenon.

The section on true tales is particularly instructive: it proves once again that history itself need not be as dull as watching paint dry or grass grow, but, through the use of storytelling, can become a subject indeed worth learning. It is pleasant to see that McDiarmid and Aubrey have included a number of exciting narratives in which women play prominent roles: Marguerite Roberval and her incredible three-year exile and isolation on an island in the St. Lawrence River in the early 1540s; Laura Secord, whose heroics helped save the Niagara Peninsula from American invasion and capture during the War of 1812; Marie-Anne Lagimodière, wife of a Hudson's Bay Company trapper, trader and explorer, who braved the dangers and hardships of the Canadian West in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century and was the grandmother of the Métis hero and leader, Louis Riel. Other tales tell of heroic prospectors in the Yukon, Canadians fighting for Black emancipation and equality, and the bravery of Canadians in overseas conflicts.

This collection of stories that should make Canadians sit up and take notice of how wide, diverse and richly colourful their history, literature and folklore really are. It brings together storytelling, history, tradition, culture and literary excellence, and the result is a definite plus for what being a Canadian is really all about. In *Share a Tale*, Louise McDiarmid and Irene Aubrey have given us a wonderful glimpse of the literary, historical and folkloric meaning of Canada; Canadian or not, we are all richer for this volume of storytellers' Canada at its very best.

-Robert Rodriguez  
NYC

## Book/Recording

Paul Cranford. *Lighthouse Collection of Newly Composed Fiddle Tunes (Cape Breton Musical Heritage Series)*.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Lighthouse: Cape Breton Fiddle Music by Lighthousekeeper Paul Cranford and Friends*. CPR-4CD. Both available from Cranford Publications, Box 42, RR#1, Englishtown, Nova Scotia B0C 1H0; <psc@nbnet.nb.ca>

This 1996 collection is compiled by composer Paul Cranford, a lighthouse keeper since 1975, who gains inspiration for many of the tunes he writes by walking the shores, listening to the sounds of the wind and waves. Many of the tunes in the collection are his own, the rest collected from musical friends. The tune types include marches, strathspeys, reels, hornpipes, jigs, and waltzes, and a very well produced CD of a large number of the tunes accompanies the book, as well as being available separately. On the back cover is a detailed list of the tunes featured on the recording, and at the front of the book is an excellent index, with all selections listed in their respective keys.

The CD makes for enjoyable listening as well as learning—I thought the best way to approach writing about such a book would be to sit down and learn a few of the tunes. Being particularly drawn to several of the reels, I chose "Union Street Session" and "Aoife's Come to Dublin," two of Paul Cranford's. The reels are all played fairly slowly, with a lot of emphasis on phrasing and timing, and with a lot of feeling, which can be lost

if the tunes are played too quickly! I found with "Union Street Session" that I relied more on the CD than on the notation to get the feel of the tune. "Aoife's" was more straightforward for me. There is a very nice waltz, "The Rocky Shore", also by Cranford, which I have enjoyed playing—it has a great deal of feeling as well as being very musical.

I would say this book is a must for anyone of intermediate and upwards ability wanting to add some dynamic new tunes to their repertoire. It would be even better if accompaniment chords had been added, and an index of the ornamentation symbols for those not familiar with the language.

It has certainly been an enjoyable experience browsing through the contents of the collection and listening to the tunes. Playing them has been quite magical; perhaps it's the feeling of being transported to such an idyllic setting and capturing the feel of the music. Thanks to Paul and friends!

-Mavis Hutchings  
Calgary, Alberta

## Recordings

Seanachie. *Telling Tales*. SEAN0001. Seanachie, Box 61154, Kensington Postal Outlet, Calgary, Alberta T2N 4S6

This self-produced debut CD by Calgary-based Seanachie (not to be confused with the Scottish band of the same name) shows some fine potential. A *seanachie* is a Scottish Gaelic story-teller, and the band has its roots in the Scottish/Cape Breton traditions. Seanachie have a couple of strong assets: sparkling Highland piping from Annie Gray and great singing from Gordon McCulloch, who has also written five songs for the album. McCulloch's themes range from labour struggles in Scotland to love songs—one for a person and one for whisky (a true Scot!). The ode to whisky, "Te Bheag," is lovely, with mellow singing from McCulloch enhanced by a harmony line sung by Jackie Bell.

Seanachie aren't yet making the most of their strengths. McCulloch and Bell have very different singing styles. When they blend, as in "Te Bheag" and "Keir Hardie," they work well together. But when they alternate the lead, the contrast in styles gives the impression of a compilation CD. For instance, a very

dramatic song (rather melodramatic for my taste, actually), "The Hangman and the Papist," driven by McCulloch, is immediately followed by "You are My Love," sung in a languid, jazzy style by Bell. If these songs had been separated by an instrumental track, their differences would have been less jarring. There are some problems with the instrumentals, too. Gray's powerful piping is not helped by some relentless guitar and plodding bass lines, which, far from driving the tunes forward, actually weigh them down.

Perhaps some of these weaknesses could have been overcome by having an outside producer, to bring a set of detached ears to the venture. It's difficult to produce a cohesive CD when several musicians with strong traditional styles, McCulloch and Gray, team up with people from other backgrounds. Seanachie have the ability to do this—they're just not quite there yet.

—Nan Colledge  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Diamond Joe White. *Honestly*. MMMCD007. Malahat Mountain Music, Box 10034, 2064 Comox Avenue, Comox, British Columbia V9M 1S5

Welcome back, Diamond Joe White! It's been a decade and a bit since we heard from this great singer/songwriter/performer. The old band is back together, with some of the music that made this Juno-nominated Canadian quite popular in the local honky-tonks out west. Doug Cox helps out, displaying some smooth

moves on the dobro, and also produces this live-in-studio CD.

There's a great feel to the 64-minute collection of music, very relaxed, very comfortable listening. Along with the old songs, there are some new arrangements and some poetry celebrating the working class.

Diamond Joe has his wife Penny sing on the CD, adding to the fullness of the music. Take a listen to "Where's the Reason?!" After that, cue up "High Rider," a classic if there ever was one. John Ware was taken out of the history books and forever enshrined in our proud history. "The Ballad of Louis Riel" provides another example of Diamond Joe's authenticity. The newer songs, like "Honestly," show the softer side of this blue-collar hero, and do a good job of tugging at the heartstrings.

Moira Cameron. *Lilies Among the Bushes*. Compact Disc only WRC 8-7163. 4505 School Draw Avenue, Yellowknife, Northwest Territories X1A 2K3

*To find a treasure brings riches; to share it with others brings joy.* (Traditional Turkish proverb)

It never ceases to amaze me, even after all these years of serious involvement in traditional music: I still have that special feeling of wonder and gratitude when I discover a new and talented musician or singer and realize just what true artistry and musical excellence are all about. That is how I first felt several years ago when I accidentally came across the work of Moira Cameron. This feeling of wonder has been mightily increased by repeated listenings to her new solo recording, *Lilies Among the Bushes*.

It should come as no surprise that Cameron is no stranger to the world of traditional music and balladry. Legend says that when she was but a wee lassie of three, she graced the stage of the now-defunct Fiddler's Green Folk Club in Toronto and gave those in attendance a twenty-verse Scottish ballad. A wise journalist once remarked that too many good stories are ruined by over-verification, or as the great Irish storyteller Eddie Lennihan once said, even if it never happened, it's always true. Moira's father, the late Stewart Cameron of Sudbury, was by all accounts one of North America's finest raconteurs and ballad singers, especially those of his own Scottish heritage. For many years, he was a regular performer at the annual Toronto Festival of Storytelling, and according to Winnipeg folklorist and storyteller Kay Stone, few if any in North America could tell a Scottish wonder tale or sing a classic Scottish ballad better than he could. I never had the good fortune to hear any of his tales or ballads, but from all accounts, he was a master. The talents run in the family, for Moira's younger brother Duncan is an excellent member in good standing of the Toronto musical aggregation known as the Ballad Project (which I hope will be chronicled in a future issue of the *Bulletin*).

Except for two instrumentals (the traditional medley "Jenny Lind Polka/Halting March" and the composed "Grit's Tune"—let's all guess who did that one!) and one original song ("Martha," composed by members of Yellowknife's musical group, the Gumboots), this recording is entirely traditional and overwhelmingly ballads. If you like story songs of the good old type, filled with murder, betrayal, seduction, corporeal dismemberment, gruesome endings, and lots more besides, then this is what the ballad doctor ordered. Even the contemporary "Martha" has a most chilling (no pun intended) feeling about its tragic tale of a woman who becomes lost in a blizzard in a remote northern community and finally perishes. (In many ways, this song is a

I really enjoyed the poetry that was spaced through the CD, three tracks, to be exact. You could almost hear a touch of Utah Phillips there. If you enjoy listening to some fine tunes while having a frosty cool one after tugging at pipe wrenches all day, like I do, this is the CD.... HONESTLY!!!

—Terry St. James  
Montreal, Quebec

stark reminder of the many homeless who have no place to go, especially in the winter, and whose names will never be known to the general public that seems to give little if any thought to the less fortunate among us.)

This is a ballad lover's feast, and Cameron delivers these musical narratives with both power and gentleness, as well as a sense of true love and reverence. Her influences and sources are many and varied, from her father, the late Peter Bellamy, and Ewan MacColl to such contemporary folk performers as Louis Killen, Hedy West, John Roberts and Tony Barrand, and perhaps her most important influence, Frankie Armstrong. Of course, she did have a particular advantage in this—before her 1990 move to the far northwest, she managed to make it down to Fiddler's Green many times and met many of the finest singers and musical interpreters from both Britain and North America.

Of the ballads she has included, nine come from the Child collection. These are sung *a cappella* or accompanied by a variety of instruments, including autoharp, various recorders, mountain and hammered dulcimers, just to mention a few.

It is no accident that many of the ballads Cameron sings are about women, their deeds, condition, and plight: here are tragic women, women betrayed, women who take vengeance upon their tormentors, bold women, resourceful women, women who are determined to gain whatever end they seek to accomplish. And these women are as varied as are the modes of the ballads themselves. There is humor and sheer delight in "The Crafty Maid's Policy," in which a determined female highwayman teaches a boorish gentleman a much-needed lesson in both humility and linguistics. There is determination in the heroine of "Tarry Trousers," who follows her lover to seek glory and adventure in foreign climes. There is the boldness of the heroine of "Jock O' Hazeldean," who, not wishing to succumb to a forced marriage, crosses the border with the fellow of her own choice. And so it goes, ballad after ballad, from "Love Henry," "Lady Diamond," and "Barbara Allan" to "The Elfin Knight," "The Daemon Lover," and "Willie of Winsbury," with the gruesome tragedies, ongoing hardships, and occasional happy ending as memorably recounted by Cameron in some of her favorite selections from a vast repertoire.

One ballad that deserves particular mention is "Well Below The Valley," an Irish variant of "The Maid and the Palmer," Child 21. Moira learned it from the Irish band Planxty, and its tale of incest, murder, and infanticide, with more than a hint of

the mystical and the other-worldly, is a strange and bizarre story even among the classic ballads. Assisted by her Ceilidh Friends chorus, Cameron gives this haunting tale a fresh and innovative rendering. The recording's title comes from a line found in this ballad.

This excellent recording leaves me with one overwhelming feeling: when all is said and done, the old songs are still the very best songs. The old ballads, the old stories, the old musical

André Marchand, Lisa Ornstein et Normand Miron. *Le Bruit court dans la ville*. Mille-Pattes, Collection Tradition du Québec MPCD-4444. Les Productions Mille-Pattes, 503, rue Archambault, Joliette, Québec J6E 2W6

Il y a quelques années, j'ai reçu d'André Marchand le disque qu'il avait fait avec Grey Larsen, *The Orange Tree*. À l'écoute de cette musique, j'ai, à ce moment-là, pris conscience du style très particulier de Marchand à la guitare et de son grand talent d'arrangeur. Sa musique est toute en nuances, presque aérienne, alerte et dense à la fois. Il sait imprégner de sa marque tous les disques auxquels il participe tant comme musicien que comme réalisateur.

J'ai connu Lisa Ornstein les premières années qu'elle est arrivée au Québec, qu'elle commençait à apprendre à jouer notre musique traditionnelle avec Pitou Boudreau. Aujourd'hui, je constate, heureux, la tenacité et la force de caractère de cette femme prouve qu'elle figure maintenant parmi les plus grandes. Même sobre, son jeu est envoûtant et prend aux trippes. Normand Miron, un vieux comparse, en apportant son dynamisme, sa musicalité et sa voix, complète on ne peut mieux ce trio.

On retrouve sur ce disque un répertoire de chansons et de musique instrumentale d'une rare richesse, des airs et des chansons souvent connues mais dans des versions nouvelles, diffé-

Lem Chaisson. *If We Could Find It In Our Hearts*.

\_\_\_\_. *High Time*. Both available from Lem Chaisson, RR#4, Souris, Prince Edward Island COA 2B0

When you think of the gems that Prince Edward Island has to offer the world, your thoughts might automatically lean towards red soil, sandy beaches and Anne of Green Gables, and you wouldn't be wrong. But you just haven't had the opportunity to listen to the music of native Islander Lemmie Chaisson. It is not hard to put the Chaisson musical experience into words—it simply is comfort music, delivered in a clear, poignant, passionate and totally unpretentious manner that is the true mark of any Maritime musician worth his salt. These are the songs that my father sang to himself as he stared into the mirror every morning while he shaved. Also the ones my mother sang to us while we rocked upon her knee, waiting for a thunderstorm to pass, and the kerosene lamp made shadows of our lives on the wall. We all knew the words and have kept them on a backup in our mind that Lemmie manages to put on "play" every time he launches into an ageless rendition of either a traditional-sounding piece, like his evocative version of Eric Bogle's "The Green Fields of France," sung from some place in his soul that let him travel back to that bloody battlefield, or the angst-filled rendering of "I Don't Hurt Anymore."

The material presented here is influenced by the the likes of

narratives still have much to tell us. Moira Cameron is capable of rendering these grand old stories for us ballad buffs to hear, enjoy, and take into our hearts and souls. She opens a window into times long past and places far away. I began with a traditional proverb, let me end as I began, with a traditional Jewish proverb. *When the heart overflows, it comes out through the mouth*. Moira Cameron possesses a grand heart.

—Robert Rodriguez

entes, témoignages d'une tradition fleurissante et combien vivante.

J'y ai découvert un reel d'Aurel Parent, un musicien de par chez nous. Pendant mon enfance et mon adolescence à Cap-Chat, en Gaspésie, dans les années '50 et '60, à la messe du dimanche, je croisais monsieur Parent, un homme de la génération de mes grands-parents, réservé, affable et travailleur, qui jouait régulièrement du violon aux noces et dans les veillées. J'étais loin de me douter qu'il possédait un répertoire digne de mention.

La qualité de l'enregistrement est admirable, la présentation soignée. Les textes des chansons sont bien présentés; les sources aux porteurs de traditions—les chanteurs et les musiciens qui leur ont fourni ces pièces—sont mis bien en évidence, une façon d'affirmer la présence toujours actuelle de la tradition orale. Un disque qui, tout en s'inscrivant dans la plus pure tradition, la renouvelle de belle façon.

—Donald Deschênes  
Sudbury, Ontario

Hank Snow, Wilf Carter and other legendary greats of that era. Lemmie makes these songs his own, for it has long been a Maritime tradition that our kitchens sing with the songs of our people. The gentle gruffness in his voice lends itself to make one time-travel to a simpler place when beans, brown bread and listening to Don Messer's Jubilee were a family tradition. The spirited but not overwhelming vocal and musical accompaniment presented here by Lemmie's wife and four daughters makes this the kind of music that you want playing when you decide impulsively to waltz your best girl around the living room while supper simmers on the stove and the kids roll their eyes in mock indignation.

Lemmie Chaisson is as enduring as the music that has become the cornerstone of his life. While working on a wharf in Souris, Prince Edward Island, in 1989, Lemmie suffered multiple injuries that would have left a lesser man packing up his past and sinking into an uncertain future, but Lemmie rose from the ashes of pain to play with more conviction and grace than any man who knew what it is to work for what is really important in his life: his music and his family. Thirty years as the Island's first choice as master flatpicker—there is not much about

Lemmie Chaisson that isn't tempered with the time he has spent with his music.

Islanders are fiercely proud of their native son. Lemmie came to me via a friend I met over the internet. It absolutely amazed me that I have lived a short three hours' drive from this man and his music for most of my life, and have not had the opportunity to experience his uniqueness.

Whether your tastes lean more toward the traditional lyrics of his first CD, *High Time*, which includes such favourites as "Carrickfergus," "Drink for My Father," and "The Rose of Allendale," or the contemporary songs on his second compilation,

Pierre Schryer. *The New Canadian Waltz*. NCCD-9610. New Canadian Records, PO Box 20046, 150 Churchill Boulevard, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario P6A 6W3

Pierre Schryer is a champion in many musical genres (including Canadian Grand Masters Fiddle Champion and North American Fleadh Cheoil Fiddle Champion), and his fiddle music crosses many borders. His new album, *The New Canadian Waltz*, is a perfect example of just that. Pierre's gift for maintaining the tradition and integrity of the many styles heard on this album, while still adding his unique flavour to the tunes, makes for a very tastefully-done album.

One of the highlights of this recording, recorded live at various venues in Northern Ontario, is the sense you get of being in the front row, watching this master at work. It captures the soul of the man and his music in a way that I doubt would have been possible in a recording studio. The essence of fiddle music can be truly experienced only when you are able to witness the listeners' reaction first hand, and this album (especially cuts 11 and 13), with the audiences' clear appreciation of Mr. Schryer's talent, takes you to the heart of the tunes right from the start.

The accompaniment provided by Brian Pickell (guitar), Julie Schryer-Lefebvre (piano) and Nathan Curry (multi-instrumentalist) is subtle, yet enhances the wide range of influences Pierre Schryer's music incorporates. A little more diversity in the style of accompaniment would have added more authenticity to a cou-

Tzimmes. *KlezMyriad*. TZ-333. Tzimmes Music, #12 - 719 East 31st Avenue, Vancouver, British Columbia V5V 2W9; <denburg@direct.ca>; <www2.portal.ca/jsiegel/tzimmes.html>

*Tzimmes* is a word any Ashkenazi Jewish person will recognize—my mother and my grandmother used to make it on special occasions. It's a sort of sweet, hot casserole with a curious mixture of vegetables and fruit—though it's supposed to be a treat, as a child I never cared for it much (too obviously healthy? or too suspiciously sweet for a main dish?), and as an adult haven't given it much of a second chance.

This particular *Tzimmes* is also a sweetened mixture of nutritious elements, and I'm not sure how well it works. The album is certainly musical, the instrumentals are good, and the overall sound is smooth—maybe too smooth, at least for my liking. In their notes they refer to it as "Sephardi Klezmer." I don't see (hear) it as either Sephardi or particularly klezmer—though both terms have come to be interpreted elastically, to say the least—"klezmer" really just means "instrument or vehicle for

If We Could Find It In Our Hearts, where Lemmie captures the simple but profound sentiment offered by such songs as "These Hands," "You Pass Me By," and "Little Mountain Church," there is something for every appreciative listener wishing to have his or her ear bent by the tried and true or freshly-penned lyrics of longing that make you believe Lemmie has lived every line. The conviction of his renderings is indeed a great part of his musical charm. As for my recommendation, I say "Double your pleasure, buy them both," for this is Canadiana at its best.

—Sheree Gillcrist  
Hampton, New Brunswick

ple of the numbers, but overall the back-up is excellent.

The title track, "The New Canadian Waltz" (one of Schryer's own compositions) is a beautiful, refreshing tune that, after a night of dancing, would be the perfect way to catch your breath and reflect on the joys of music. It flows so effortlessly that even my own two left feet could glide gracefully across the floor to this one. Another great cut is "Reel du pendu" ("Hangman's Reel"). The feet make this tune come alive with the spirit of the French-Canadian culture that is so much a part of Pierre's heritage.

The information on the tunes in the liner notes is helpful in getting a bit more insight on Schryer's influences and personality, creating a better understanding of the motivation behind the album, and adding dimension to each track. With a self-portrait on the cover and pictures on the inside, this album has a very personal touch that adds character to an already interesting recording.

If you love fiddle music of any kind, then *The New Canadian Waltz* is a must to add to your collection. Recorded well, played well, this is one of my personal favourites. Highly recommended.

—Keitha Clark  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

song" (*kle-zemer*), and by extension a musician: this is explained quite well in the album notes, in fact.

A number of cuts are original, and others are adapted or re-set, mostly by group leader Moshe Denburg; few are traditional, though that isn't in itself a negative factor. The "klezmer" aspect is represented by several pieces, mostly newly composed or arranged, as the well-known "Moyshele mayn Fraynd" by the celebrated Yiddish poet Mordechai Gibirtig. "The Shlump," by Denburg, could conceivably pass for a light vaudeville Yiddish song in early 20<sup>th</sup>-Century style, but certainly isn't up to the Yiddish songwriting level of someone like Michael Alpert. Again, a word from my childhood ("Oy, why do you have to dress like such a *shlump*? Look how nice your cousin always looks..."). "Klezmyriad" is a pleasant medley of klezmer tunes, and "Kvetching" (another one: "So why do you always have to be

*kvetching* about something? Look at your cousin, she has lots more *tsuriss* [troubles] and SHE never kvetches like that...") is an intriguing verb to use for a piece played on Jew's harp. This is a very short piece indeed, played on a "consort" of Jew's harps, with a "hyper male chorus" intoning "Oy, oy, oy." It's clever and funny, but the Jew's harp would be fine without the "Oy, oy, oy," which is redundant at best. It probably works fine on stage, but again, not on repeated listening. (I'm sure at least one reader will write in indignantly, or at least think, "Well, I loved it each time I heard it!")

The Sephardic songs are "Si la mer" (usually known as "La serena") and "Avre tu puerta serada" (usually spelled "cerrada"). Both songs are incorrectly described as *romanceros*. This is a double error, which was quite common when non-Sephardic artists first began issuing recordings of Judeo-Spanish songs: a *romancero* is the corpus, or an anthology, of the narrative Hispanic ballads known as *romances*: one song cannot be a *romancero*. Also, neither of these songs is a romance; both belong to the relatively recent (late 19<sup>th</sup> Century) lyric song repertoire of the ex-Ottoman Sephardic culture. So, not only is a *romancero* not a song, a romance is not an example of "serenades and love songs in a secular mold" (whatever a "secular mold" might possibly be). It's sort of like mistaking, say, "Fathom the Bowl" for a ballad and then describing it in album notes as "a United Kingdom balladry". Yes, yes, I can hear the protesting chorus of "But we're not academic, that's just that academic stuff!" Well, for one thing, one can avoid simple ignorance without being "academic" (which need not, of course, be an insult), and it would not have been very difficult, especially with today's internet possibilities, to ask someone who could provide the right terminology.

"Si la mar" is presented with a sort of light jazzy sound, and is described by them as "a modern soundscape of the afore-mentioned Jewish-Flamenco interaction." The "afore-mentioned" interaction, at least its musical aspect, is a myth which has been eagerly embraced by a number of musicians. Yes, the Jews did have contact with the Gypsies in Spain and Portugal (not for too long, as the Gypsies arrived when the Expulsion was beginning to loom on the horizon), but flamenco as such was a long way off at that time; it hadn't developed yet. By the time it had, the only Jews left in Spain were *converso* descendants, to all purposes Christians, though some still secretly acknowledged their Jewish origin and even retained some practices. These songs, as I explained, are relatively recent, and "flamenco" as heard at that time could be a part, conscious or otherwise, of their composition, but in no way was the situation in Spain analagous to the Jewish-Gypsy musical interaction in Eastern Europe. In any case, the rather anodyne vocals on the album can hardly reflect interaction with flamenco's passionate, rough-clad vocals.

A couple of composed songs, in Hebrew and in English, are well performed but rather tedious. Two very old Hebrew poems are sung: "Ma'oz Tsur," with a refreshingly different melody

from the "Rock of Ages" one usually heard at Hanuka, and "Dror Yiqra." This is an acrostic Sabbath poem by the famous Iberian-North African Jewish poet Dunash ibn-Labrat. Here, without explaining or crediting the origin of the melody, they use a Yemenite tune which has become very popular as an Israeli folk dance (probably where they heard it; it's not often recorded outside that context). It's hard to make this tune, one of my favourites, sound anything but good, and there are some particularly good instrumentals here, especially lead guitar and percussion.

There are some Terribly Clever inventions—"Outerludes" and a sort of greco-klezmerization of a piece by the 18<sup>th</sup>-Century composer Jean-Philippe Rameau. They're engaging, though the explanations—and the album notes in general—tend to the self-congratulatory Terribly Clever (TC). Sometimes, they end up tripping on them—"Avre tu puerta" is called "another Judeo-Spanish romancero, to be sure." What can "to be sure" possibly mean in this context? As I've already explained, it is not a "romancero", much less "another" one—to be sure.

The plaintive, yet unsentimental *doina* (lament) has long been an integral aspect of the klezmer repertoire, and, personally, the only track I find really worth listening to more than once on this CD is the traditional style "Doina" played by Romanian violinist Lache Cercel. The album ends with the TC title "Coda-da-da," an excuse to include a welcome—albeit too short—solo by the *darabukka* (goblet drum) player.

To return to Tzimmes's tzimmes: unfortunately, all their explanations can add up to different conclusions. Yes, tzimmes is a sweet dish of stewed fruit and vegetables—wholesome, colourful, mixed up, familiar (to Ashkenazi Jewish listeners)—but, as they rather foolhardily go on to say, it is also the basis for the Ringlish (Yiddish-English) expression "Don't make me a big tzimmes"—"Don't complicate a simple matter." Well, gee....now that you mention it....

A friend visiting from England, long involved in traditional music, commented, without knowing what the album was, "What's that, ethnic muzak?" And here, perhaps is the problem, not specifically with Tzimmes but with several groups—we've become so concerned with the smoothness of the final product—how it looks, how it sounds on the surface, how it sells, that other considerations get lost along the way.

Then again, I'm biased. Incorrect or misleading information is one thing, but on a personal level I prefer most traditional music, traditionally played, to most composed music and to most mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Western styles. So, I guess it's a good album, and I know many people will like it. The group is also probably much more engaging on stage than recorded. In any case, as Jewish "ethnic muzak," to quote my visiting friend, the album will probably be very successful.

—Judith Cohen  
Toronto, Ontario



*I was recently in Moncton where I spent a bit of time with the Acadians, and they haven't lost the knack of singing together. A lot of people are intimidated by that; they'd rather turn on the radio. But the Acadians seem to have it—they've never lost it.*

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