Pennies from Heaven

This will be an occasional feature reporting the results of various grassroots fundraising initiatives on behalf of CSTM. They all come from the Calgary area this time. Last June, the proceeds of the Pine Grove Music Camping Weekend totalled $125 (the largest in the four-year history of the event). More recently, GWL’s benefit house concert in October brought in $55, and the sale of Entertainment 2000 coupon books (largely organized by Lois Genge) brought in $199.

A number of individuals made substantial donations to CSTM, but some of them (including the most generous) wished to be anonymous, so we’ll respect that wish. Do any readers have thoughts on whether we should be reporting donors unless they choose anonymity?

We’d like to urge members in other parts of the country to support CSTM through appropriate fundraising enterprises—and tell us about the results!

Letters

If you’re making any comments in the Bulletin on the current Sing Out!, Bruce Phillips’ account of the situation when I collected "Lovin’ You" from Luigi del Puppo in Nelson, BC, is somewhat garbled. He says I collected the song from both Luigi and Tino Chumlovich. I never met Tino; Luigi told me he was co-author when they were in prison together, and doing some music. The song must have been written in the late 60s, for I recorded Luigi on August 13, 1970; the tune suggests to me that it is a spin-off from "Snowbird."

Here’s the way he sang it, pretty much the way Hilda and I do it today:

Well I look at my brown suitcase
And I think of all the places that I been;
The railroad yards, the prison guards,
And the dumpy little towns that I been in.
The whisperin’ of the people
As they watch every move that I go through—
I remember all these things
But mostly I remember lovin’ you.

Chorus I remember lovin’ you
Out of all the girls I knew—
Yes, and I’ve had quite a few,
But I remember lovin’ you.

Now the Indians smell, so the people tell,
When we’re huddled in the boxcar from the rain.
Flashing lights that cut the night,
And the railroad bull that kicked me off the train.
When the north wind blows and the winter’s cold
I huddle in the corner till I’m blue—
I remember all these things
But mostly I remember lovin’ you.

(Luigi sang the chorus twice for his finale.

Luigi’s presentation has a raunchy tone, which is completely absent from Phillips’ version. When you check out his version in SO!, you see he has transformed this raw expression of crude sentiment to something suggesting a voice coming from behind a cardboard Chocolate Soldier decorating the stage of a delightful musical.

Phillips’s last stanza is very good, but despite this I don’t feel his three stanzas go with his "back when the world was new," and "I think you loved me too."

At last year’s Vancouver Folk Music Festival, I met a guy who, on my telling him the story with a sung sample of the original, appeared to have a heavy "heart hurt" relieved. He had had a love relationship immersed in Phillips’s take on the song—it was "their song." Somehow the ghost which still haunted him was exorcised when he saw how contrived the reworked "Lovin’ You" is—the song, alas, which had cast a spell on him.

Phil Thomas
Vancouver, BC

Thank you for sending us the Bulletin containing the review of our Louis Boudreault production. I would like to comment on what the reviewer said regarding the French version of the liner notes... that the French translation of the notes is shockingly poor and full of spelling errors. In fact, there was no "French translation": the liner notes were from a typed manuscript from Louis Boudreault himself. His notes were then translated into English. I can’t guarantee that no spelling errors crept in during the typesetting process, but the notes were actually written by Mr. Boudreault.

Vivian T. Williams
Voyager Recordings and Publications
Seattle, Washington

I have been trying to contact the Rare Cuts Music Club mentioned in your December '98 issue interview with Max Ferguson [32.4, p.3]... My calls do not go through and a recording tells me this number is out of service. Is there another company I can contact for hard-to-get recordings from the British Isles?

Beth Crawley
c/o Kootenay Fish Hatchery
Ft. Steele, BC

[I gave Beth information on two UK companies I found out.
about recently, Musikfolk and Fish Records. Anyone have other companies to recommend, especially Canadian? —JL]

My daughter and I are researching and preparing a monograph on the late Augusta Zanzig, author of many publications on folk singing and community singing between 1920 and 1960. His best-known book is Singing America, a collection of folk songs published by the National Recreation Association. There is very little published about Augusta—birth, education, death. I do know that during the First World War he lived in the Columbus, Ohio, area and was a frequent performer at USO camps, taught in New England schools, worked for the National Recreation Association as a music specialist, later in the colleges and, during the Depression, Austin, Texas, on the Writers Project.

Old-timers would certainly know of him, as he was famous for his collection of folk songs and for leading community singing of 300-500 people during the 30s-50s.

Thank you for your assistance.

Marlys S. Waller
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Lopez Island, WA 98261
USA

For the past four years I have been involved in the traditional song and cultural scene in Cape Breton. The incredibly rich repertoire is diminishing as its tradition bearers age. Quite a bit of collecting has been done in this region over the past half a century, but these collected materials have not really been organized, interpreted or analyzed. Also, it seems that there are many important singers who have been overlooked. Clearly, this type of work should be undertaken while tradition bearers are still available to help.

Stephanie Conn
Thornhill, Ontario

I haven't received my copy yet ..., but Marylyn Peringer showed me hers, with the Mirandes E-Folk Letter. I'd like to send a copy to the Miranda Town Hall, and also to Mario Correia, my fellow-juror who got me there to begin with (and has been wanting to see a copy of the Bulletin anyway; his English is pretty good and his French fluent). But just to let you know, one small correction, which won't matter much to anyone not Portuguese, but will matter very much to them: the actual name of the town, near the beginning of the article, is Miranda-do-Douro, not Mirandes do Douro (Mirandes is the language).

Judith Cohen
Toronto

I had a chance to glance through the book [Community Music in Alberta by GWL, to be reviewed eventually!] and was very impressed and pleased. Especially so when I saw that you included the Ukrainians. Who knows? Could be some long lost relatives of mine! Food and music seems to be the lifeblood of the Ukrainians. My grandmother used to make awesome "jam" as grandpa called it.

I grew up with quite a bit of traditional folk music, lots of music. My uncle, Fred Boyko, is an excellent musician and played at all the weddings and dances. Or so it seemed to me. His instrument is the violin (in addition to drums and guitars) and he evidently even won some competitions. A shy man who came alive when he played his music. I loved watching him and listening to him play. Lots of wonderful Ukrainian music. The amazing thing about him is that he doesn't read a note of music. I was with him a few times when he was learning a piece from listening to a record. Amazing!! Other relatives of mine were in a band called The Western Senators. I even have an album that they produced, a mixture of Ukrainian and country.

I love music of all kinds. I know when something is really bothering me because I will not hear music in my head. Sounds goofy, but it's true. Yet I cannot destroy the block that prevents me from learning to play an instrument. I live vicariously through my children in this area and I collect instruments. We have an electronic keyboard (to be replaced someday with a real piano—hopefully an antique stand up and a Baby Grand and, joy upon joys, maybe even a harpsichord someday), clarinet, flute, violin, two guitars, an Irish tin whistle, a couple of recorders and somewhere in my house a couple of jew's harps and harmonicas. I need a bigger house.

What you are doing in regard to traditional music is what I used to daydream about doing when I was (oh, God!!) 30 years younger. I love music and saw a movie about a woman who travelled all over Ireland collecting the old songs. I believe it was a Disney movie, and I think Greer Garson was in it. The name of the movie escapes me right now. I was fortunate enough to travel to Ireland two years ago (my dream came true in part) and my imagination went wild. Music was always present, even if only in my head. I especially love traditional works and had to insist on a few occasions for people to play real Irish music instead of Neil Diamond all the bloody time. Told quite a few that I did not travel all the way from Canada to listen to Neil. When I came back from Ireland, I asked the children if they would consider moving there. They were receptive to it. Now all I have to do is figure out how.

Deborah Diduck
Powell River, BC

While I hope I'm man enough to accept well-presented, solid criticism, I refuse to sit idly by and let Tom Lewis's review of The Marco Polo Suite [Bulletin 33.3, September, 1999] go unchallenged. While I have (or had) a great deal of respect for Tom, both as a writer and a performer, his comments have crossed the boundary of professionalism and common courtesy, and lapsed into sheer vitriol.

Aside from the fact that the entire review is perfunctory and smug, the concluding remarks made by Mr. Lewis are just plain offensive. Tom closes by describing the Suite as "an album whose target audience is not easily identified," and adds the afterthought "The 'grant' market, perhaps?"

While I tend to be more interested in eighth notes than demographics, if Tom wants to identify my "target audience" I
suggest he interview any of the thousands of people who've bought a copy of the album. He might also wish to check with Max Ferguson, who claims The Marco Polo Suite generated one of the largest listener responses of any music played on his radio programme.

And to suggest that my writing is contingent upon government funding, or I create music that's specifically designed to win brownie points from artistic juries, is absolutely scurrilous. I consider the remark nothing less than a personal attack on my integrity.

Finally, your readers might be interested in Gordon Bok's reaction to the review. I sent him a copy, since his performance on the Suite was singled out as "the only thing worth the price of admission." Gordon's response?

"Bullshit."

That just about sums it up for me as well.

Jim Stewart
Saint John, New Brunswick

[I will acknowledge that I was uncomfortable as I laid that page out in the last issue and even considered pulling it. Mr. Stewart is right. I might have reached the same conclusion about the disc that Lewis reached, but "perfunctory" describes the review too well. There were serious accusations in it which were not justified. I'm afraid that I should add that "smug" also suits the piece too well. I hope that both reviewers and editors of the Bulletin will do our jobs better in the future. —GWL]

I was under the weather for some time... and haven't been doing any music..., but in the summer, my friend Julie, who used to live in the Co-op but has now moved to White Rock, asked me to type the MS of a comic opera in four acts written by her mother. (I never knew her mother, but I have long been an admirer of her writing.) The only copy of the music Julie had was the score for first violin. I typed the MS and sent her a copy. Then I took a look at the music, which I thought didn't seem to fit in with the clever words at all. So I started working on that as well, spent hours and hours on it, and I think wrote new music for about seven songs... After that I became ill, and now I haven't looked at it for several months, but I must get around to it again. The opera was originally produced by two schools in Alberta, and Julie would like to see it again....

Norbert Ruebsaat is the brother of Rika Ruebsaat, wife of Jon Bartlett, both friends of mine for many years.... In the days when we first organized the Folk Song Circle ..., Norbert used to sing there frequently and I always enjoyed his contributions. Rika and Jon are both excellent performers.

The article by David Gregory ["Transatlantic Troubadours," 33.3, p. 18-20] was superb. I particularly enjoyed reading about a number of old friends like Pete Seeger, Eric Winter, Redd Sullivan, Peggy Seeger, John Brunner. John I saw usually twice a year at Science Fiction conventions, and he also booked me to sing at a folk club he ran down in the south of England. I forget if it was Devon or Cornwall. He was much younger than I, but he died very suddenly while attending an SF Worldcon. What a great way to go!

Vera Johnson
Vancouver, BC

Your article on the early loyalist stuff is intriguing.... Incidentally, you presumably know (but don't say you know) that on page 11, "Other Airs," the title of the first song given, "When Britain First at Heaven's Command," is of course the opening line of "Rule, Britannia."

David A.E. Spalding
Pender Island, BC

[Ue, well, no, I didn't know it. Thanks for the info. I assume then, that "Rule, Britannia" will be the tune for that song —GWL]

It is claimed that the requirements of the Church are much more onerous and its regulations more stringent than formerly. It has recently been ordered that women shall not sing in church choirs. One cure tries to prevent young people of different sexes from walking to church together. Another is especially severe on dancing, but it has been found when they get out of his sight his parishioners are disposed to dance quite as long as a fiddler will play. Dancing is permitted at weddings and on ceremonious occasions, but is looked upon with strong disfavor by most of the clergy.

William Parker Greenough, Canadian Folk-life and Folk-lore (Quebec, 1897)

[Musical differences seem to be the wellsprings of musical creativity (try to name one classical composer who didn't use a folk tune!).

Dr. Lynn Whidden Bulletin 24.1 (June/juin 1990)

A.

Carstairs, Okotoks, Mostleigh, Cochrane, Reid Hill, Elora, Daley, Duchess, Patricia, Lomond, Pincher, Blackie ... were a few of the centres on the map at which Ma Trainor and her [Calgary] orchestra were featured.

Weather [sic] or no ... they got there. By car, mostly, they jogged over rutted country roads, pushing themselves out of snowdrifts and through mudholes.

"I remember one night we were playing at a dance at Cochrane," said New York [sic]. "It was so foggy I was lying out on the fender of the car, directing the driver. It was slow going, but we made it."

Those country soirées often went merrily on and on until the pink blush of dawn. Ma and her musicians would pack up their instruments and pile back into the car while the farmers went home, changed their clothes and milked the cows!

Linda Curtis. "Whether Rural or Royal ... Ma Trainor and Her Hillbillies ... made music for forty years." [Calgary? Date? Publication name? from Ma Trainor scrapbook at Glenbow Archives, Calgary. All ellipses in original]