When I first saw a mountain dulcimer it was love at first sight. I was a student in an evening course taught by Kitchener folk music guru Merrick Jarrett, and after a few weeks of introductory ballads and musical history, this particular evening was "meet the instruments" night. Merrick and his daughter Kate played a duet, perhaps a lullaby, on these delicate fretted instruments and I was hooked, immediately and intensely.

Fifteen years have passed, and I am still hooked, perhaps more than ever. I reach for my dulcimer during spare moments of the day, while waiting for the potatoes to boil, or when the kids are finishing their last-minute preparations for school. I have sat in the dark and played for twenty minutes, waiting for a late-night load of laundry to finish spinning so that I can put it all in the dryer and go to bed. My dulcimer fits onto my lap and under my fingers like a child, at home.

My love for this instrument has led to me to all sorts of adventures. I purchased my first dulcimer at the Halifax Folklore Centre. My husband and I took my new toy to the beautiful municipal gardens just down the road and sat there among the flowers and tourists trying to figure out exactly what I was supposed to do with it. There's a picture in our album of me sitting on a park bench, dulcimer perched unsteadily on my lap (I was wearing a short skirt, not quite right for dulcimers or cellos) staring intently at my left hand as I picked out "I Know Where I'm Going."

Years later I would be sitting on the front porch of our little cottage on the Northumberland Strait, working on an arrangement of "Bonny Portmore". Around the corner of the cottage stepped a deer and her twin fawns strolling to within metres of me, stopping to look and listen before wandering off down the lane towards the shore. If I had reached for the camera they would have been gone in seconds; instead I kept playing – perhaps it was my music that drew them near in the first place – and that image is mine forever.

A few years ago, when Paddy Tuty gave a dulcimer workshop for an interested group in Kitchener, I decided that there were enough of us around southern Ontario that we could possibly form a group. After much querying and organizing of peoples' schedules, the Grand River Dulcimer Club finally met, in November 1999, and we've continued to meet ever since. There are about seven of us, with a few members who keep in touch by email (one "member" is 12 hours away in Timmins!), and we meet at a friendly guitar shop in Guelph, Folkway Music. Marg drives in
from Toronto, Angie from Tavistock, Robin from north of Waterloo, Diane and Pauline from Hamilton, Jack from Kitchener, Brian from Cambridge. We are the only mountain dulcimer club in Canada, as far as we know. We’ve been on a local folk music radio show and played outside at Guelph’s Streetfest festival, once being drowned out by a saxophone quintet across the street, and the second year bringing amplifiers that helped us draw crowds of up to thirty interested spectators. We had an end-of-year gathering at Angie’s farm, playing tunes on a warm June afternoon under the apple tree. It was magic.

This instrument is a part of my landscape. It sustains and enriches me, and very often it comforts me. I’ve played it a lot lately. My fingers always seems to return to the same tunes, the sweet lullabies that I once played to my young children in darkened rooms when they needed soothing before sleep. A dulcimer played in the dark is one of life’s treasures.

Jean Mills is a dulcimer player who lives in Guelph, Ontario.
Appleseed Quarterly
THE CANADIAN JOURNAL OF STORYTELLING

Editor-in-chief: Lorne Brown   Design Editor: Meryl Arbing

News, interviews, articles, reviews, stories, opinion about storytelling in Canada.
Published four times a year: Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter

Free with membership in The Storytellers School of Toronto
791 St. Clair Avenue West, 2nd floor,
Toronto, ON M6C 1B7,
416/656-2445
or with membership in Storytellers of Canada/Conteurs du Canada
voyageur@sentex.net

WE HAVE A WEBSITE!

The Canadian Society for Traditional Music has a website! Our webmistress is Heather Sparling, one of the Associate Editors of this Bulletin.

It's well worth a visit. Simply enter:

http://www.yorku.ca/cstm
The Canadian Society for Traditional Music (formerly the Canadian Folk Music Society, established 1957) is dedicated to the study and promotion of musical traditions of all communities and cultures, in all their aspects. The scope of the society’s activities is intended to reflect the interests both of members who are ethnomusicologists and of members whose interests are mainly with traditional music and its contemporary counterparts, especially in Canada.

The Canadian Folk Music Bulletin is published quarterly by the Canadian Society for Traditional Music, and contains articles, notices, reviews and commentary on all aspects of Canadian folk music.

Please use the following addresses:

Mail Order Service:
CSTM Mail Order Service
P.O. Box 65066
North Hill Post Office
Calgary, Alberta
Canada T2N 4T6

Editorial (including exchange copies of publications, news items, etc.):
Canadian Folk Music Bulletin
44 Wentworth Ave.
North York, Ontario
Canada M2N 1T7

Membership (including subscriptions, review copies of recordings and books, information, back issues, etc.):
CSTM
Box 4232, Sta. C
Calgary, Alberta
Canada T2T 5N1

Subscriptions are included with memberships. Annual membership fees are: $15.00 for underemployed (may include students, seniors, unemployed, etc.; we take your word), $20.00 for other individuals, and $35.00 for organizations. Please make cheques payable to the society. Membership entitles the holder to one-year subscriptions to the Canadian Folk Music Bulletin and the annual Canadian Journal for Traditional Music, discounts from the CSTM Mail Order Service, and a voice in the society’s affairs.

Readers are invited to submit articles, songs, notices, artwork and reviews (of items with significant Canadian folk music content). Unless otherwise indicated, all editorial matter, articles, translations, tune transcriptions and arrangements not in the public domain are copyright by the Canadian Society for Traditional Music.

Please write for details concerning submissions, reviews and advertising.

Publication of the Bulletin is assisted by a grant from The SOCAN Foundation.