

From the President

He shoots! He scores!!” Its only one day since Wayne Gretzky’s hand-picked super-stars grabbed the Gold at the 2002 Olympics in Salt Lake City and our city, Vancouver, and every where else in Canada I understand, is still basking in the glow of victory. But that’s nothing compared to yesterday when the city was filled with excited fans racing up and down busy 4th Avenue (only to be stalled in traffic) near my home with maple leaf flags trailing out of their car windows, shouting “Ca-na-da” (in imitation of the American’s musical chant, “You-Es-Eh”, despite Don Cherry’s admonition to the Canadian fans in the E-Centre to stop fracturing the pronunciation of our country and chant “Go Canada Go”). As I stood on the street corner, watching the mayhem and pandemonium I couldn’t stop, didn’t *want* to stop, the rising lump in my throat as I shared vicariously in this blatant expression of our national pride and identity.

Was it my imagination, or were re-playing yet again the theme so brilliantly described in Margaret Atwood’s salute to Canadian Literature, *Survival*? As I watched the game, I couldn’t help thinking that I was sharing the same Canadian style of anxiety with the other one-third of Canada (according to a CBC poll). “Come on boys, lets just survive, and then maybe we’ll even have a little left over for the game goal.” And of course, its not just “boys” that made us beam; the women’s team did us equally proud just days earlier. What a hat-trick!

But wait. I’m way ahead of myself (which my wife could have warned you about if you were here in person). Introductions are in order.

I am Norman Stanfield, the new President of the Canadian Society for Traditional Music, and as you can see from the above, I am unabashedly maple leaf-on-sleeve. Some of you may have read about my stab at a unique course I taught at the University of British Columbia’s School of Music last Fall, Music in British Columbia, just one of the ways I’m interested in promoting our country’s musical heritage, and explorations.

I am a new kid on the block. The downside of my ingenuous position is that I have much to learn before I can speak confidently about the position of traditional music in Canada. The upside is that I want to look at where we are, and where we might want to go, with fresh eyes. But where am I coming from?

I began life as a professional flutist and I’m still an Examiner for the Royal Conservatory of Music, listening to wind players strive for the same excellence I sought for myself. But an accidental discovery of the Japanese flute, called *shakuhachi*, led me to my current world, ethnomusicology. I

experienced the best of both worlds, enrolling in a university (dangerously close to “armchair” study) for a Master of Music in Ethnomusicology and actually spending time in Japan, getting the low-down on the real reason why Japanese flute things worked the way they worked.

One thing (Expo '86) led to another (Canada Council and BC tour grants to take shakuhachi music across British Columbia and Canada) until I found myself again asking, “Why?” Why was I fixated on Japan’s music tradition while being oblivious of my own? And what exactly is “my tradition”? With a name like “Stanfield” one quickly finds themselves in the rural villages of England. And what was there to be discovered? Morris dance. And the pipe and tabor, another rich tradition of itinerant flute-playing of sorts. Yes, that’s a pipe and tabor you saw (played by me) on the cover of the last issue of *The Canadian Folk Music Bulletin*.

But even after decades of pubs and dances in the company of the Vancouver Morris Men, not to mention some great grist for a Ph.D. dissertation, I awoke again, asking if this is really me? The answer was “almost, but not until I locate my Canadian-ness” - growing up in Calgary, living in British Columbia, grappling with the “unbearable lightness of being Canadian”, as described by Richard Gwyn (*Nationalism Without Walls*, 1996).

As President of an organisation devoted to servicing fellow adventurers, I want to expedite our discoveries together. But the obstructions are formidable (and so “Canadian”). The CSTM beautifully reflects the condition of Canada’s multiculturalism (as seen in the latest issue of *Canadian Journal for Traditional Music*) and its roots in the “Old Country” as read in the *Bulletin*. But it seems to me to be a minor miracle how the CSTM can exist without a central office of administration, a stable funding source, an incredibly diverse range of interests, and most important, physical distances that almost defy imagination. No doubt its continuing existence is a testament to the selfless devotion of some very dedicated individuals for whom we cannot express enough gratitude.

So the future. At the very least, we shall hold our annual meetings to re-confirm our dedication to our country’s many heritages. But I would also like to see us link with organisations like The Institute for Canadian Music and the Canadian Musical Heritage Society. I have this vague understanding that there may be some suspicion about the success of our mix of ethnomusicologists and performers that perhaps could do with an airing. A central office, without any whiff of regional bias, where Canadian traditional music interests could be pursued with sustained fire and

focus, would be very nice, thank you. But mostly I would like to re-confirm our devotion to the performer and audience member in all matters that makes one even more comfortable with the other.

I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible in future meetings and of course in letters and submissions to our wonderful journals.

John Stanfield is the president of the Canadian Society for Traditional Music.