

LETTERS

Shelley Posen's "On Folk Festivals and Kitchens" in your May/June issue admirably re-opens the dialogue about the definition(s) of "folk music". Of course, the term will never be absolutely fixed—reality is too slippery, and besides, academics have about 20 definitions for it, which sometimes agree, sometimes don't. If they ain't scared, then I ain't either.

Unfortunately, Posen's subtitle indicates the limits of his essay: "Questions of Authenticity in the Folksong Revival". But authenticity was never in question. Anyone singing anything anytime is authentic, unless they claim to be doing something besides singing. Richard Nixon tickling "Happy Birthday" on the ivories is as authentic a music maker as Dock Boggs or Bela Bartok. And if Nixon were to pound out the "Atlanta Stomp", he would be playing a blues, an authentic blues. But he would not be a blues singer, anymore than he would be a baroque keyboard player by working his way through the Brandenburg Concertos.

Art comes out of human traditions, and there are many traditions, and often they are related and often they are not. Nixon, or Posen, or myself, cannot enter the original blues tradition just by playing a few 12-bar pieces, no matter how much we may sound like Blind Willie. Style remains the essence of folk music, but it isn't the totality. Only the southern Black context could have produced the blues, as only outport Newfoundland could have produced its music, and only neo-classical Europe could have produced Mozart. Once produced, any art, it seems to me, is a gift to humanity. Who has ears, may hear. Picasso heard the majesty of the Benin sculptors, and some of their song entered his work, though he did not become *one of them*.

Boiled down a bit, all of this can be squeezed into the saying, variously attributed to Woody Guthrie, Louis Armstrong and Big Bill Broonzy, "All songs is folk songs; I never heard horses sing." All that really means is that all songs (and singers) are authentic. However, if all songs are "folk" songs, we don't really need the word "folk", do we? It's only useful if we use it to differentiate something from something else.

Posen seems as concerned with validating the folk festival context as with differentiating it from the kitchen context. That's the only reason I can see for his failure to label the festival context as a pop concert. That's what it is, more than anything else. For some people, that's an insult, but that seems silly. It doesn't mean that the context is a "sham" or "farce", except, perhaps insofar as the participants may think that they're doing something different than the audience at Disneyland, Woodstock, the Calgary Stampede or any other popular festival.

George W. Lyon,
Calgary, Alta.

This is just to say thank you to all of you at CFB and Pulp Press for the fine job you did in reproducing the action adjustments article—looks great! And *no* typos—terrific! I guess people who know me well know that I can be a real finicky, nit-picking s.o.b. at times and can drive people up the wall with my obsession for getting things done right. My hat's off to all of you. You've done a first-rate, bang-up job!

Bruce Martin,
Calgary, Alta.

I'm still enjoying the Bulletin and I don't mind the cutback in the news section. I was pleased to see the "Blarney Pilgrim" in print and I hope others get as much enjoyment out of the tune as I do. I should put together an article on playing bagpipe tunes on guitar. Struan Robertson plays a pipe tune called "Dovecote Park" that I really liked and browsing through some old pipe tune manuals looking for it has given me a lot of pleasure. Finally I did find it and with a little help from Francis Collison's book, *Traditional and National Music of Scotland* I managed to put it on guitar. It's a great tune for the tin whistle as well.

I've recently purchased the four volumes of Kerr's *Merrie Melodies for Violin*; at \$2.75 a volume they are great value. Over 1,200 tunes so there's plenty to try. Also *The Cape Breton Collection of Scottish Melodies for Violin* by Gordon McQuarrie. I purchased the above trying to find two tunes I recently heard Scotty Fitzgerald play—"McNabs Hornpipe" and "The Farmer's Daughter Reel". Unfortunately I still haven't found them, so if anybody has them, I would like to see them in the Bulletin.

Harry Hibbs plays a tune called "Twiddle Toe" that I really enjoy. It is supposed to be traditional but I haven't found it yet, so that's another I'd like to see published.

Rod Wilson,
Cranbrook, B.C.

I have thoroughly enjoyed CFB this past year and I hope you are able to keep up the standard. We have no regular music outlets here in the Windermere Valley, but periodically the local musicians get together and organize coffeehouse type evenings at the Windermere Community Hall, and some fine evenings have happened in the past two years. If any of your readers are passing through they can find out what's happening by contacting me at 342-6444 in Invermere or at **Musical Friends** music store in Invermere—ask for Gordon Askey.

I thank you again and look forward to the next issue, and maybe getting out to Vancouver sometime this coming winter for some music and song.

*Bernie Evans
Invermere, B.C.*

Will you please request a few of the more studious folk song singers among your acquaintances to send one or two of their favourite *Canadian* folk songs to Mr. Gordon Slater, Dominion Carillonneur, House of Commons P.O., Ottawa, Canada, for him to perform on the Peace Tower carillon. By these I mean a vocal score, words, and a tape (cassette) copy to show the interpretation so that he will know how to perform them.

This request is not to bring fame to any living singer (although his interpretation might be mentioned on a program). It is, rather, to make Canadian folk music better known nationally, and to preserve the traditional way in which it has been handed down as opposed to the 'jazzed up' manner in which so much of this music is now rendered. I mention the words because a knowledge of these will affect the way the music is arranged for carillon and interpreted, although they will not be sung. Thus only pieces of real melodic value (and to a lesser extent rhythmic) should be sent; and above all they must be genuine folk music of some historical standing, and not what is passed off in the commercial music world today as some modern composer's just created 'folk song'.

I trust you will understand the disinterested spirit in which I make this request. It is so that our 'national musician' can help make known the songs of our people on our national instrument.

*Percival Price
Former Dominion Carillonneur
Ann Arbor, Mich.*

On July 28-29 the *Dawson City Music Festival* introduced a format quite different from your typical "southern" folk festival. Saturday afternoon featured workshops and songswaps in 3 bars, the local bakery, and the old folks home—with varying success. The non-bar workshops were quiet and intimate, while the more serious bar workshops were drowned out by noise and the less serious ones turned into country-bluegrass jams. Saturday night was an informal jam session/party at a farm outside the city where the musician/spectator split was totally obliterated. Sunday afternoon and evening featured formal concerts at Diamond Tooth Gerties with Dave Essig, Paul Hann and Dalen and Stojan from Grande Prairie. Local highlights were Theresa Doyle (originally from P.E.I.) singing acapella, the Aurora Borealtones Barbershop Quartet, and Wayward, an oldtime country blues group from Whitehorse.

The 5th Farrago Folk Festival, Sept. 7-9, held in the Faro Rec. Centre, was probably one of the best ever. Highlighted by Barde from Montreal, Utah Phillips, Connie Kaldor, Richard White, Heather Bishop, Stan Rogers, Tom Paxton, Curly Boy Stubbs and Odetta, this festival consisted of daytime workshops (e.g. "Barefoot, Pregnant and Living Alone in the Bush") and evening concerts. One of the surprises was a singer/songwriter from Edmonton, Richard White, whose songs portraying the problems of dealing with modern society's conflicting values hit home to the Yukon audience, many of whom are making efforts to withdraw from modern civilization and make their homes in the bush. Another excellent surprise was a miner from Faro, Rob Wallinger.

Criticisms of a shortage of traditional music were valid as far as the concerts went, but workshops such as "Acapella", "Music that will last forever", "Flutes, Whistles and Pipes", and "Jigs, Reels and Fiddle tunes" partially made up for this. One legitimate criticism was the lack of intermingling of audience and performers, a problem dictated by the layout of the Rec. Centre which provided few spaces where impromptu jam sessions could take place. One attempt to remedy this was to hold a series of "how to" workshops at the nearby school. I found the intermingling of outside and local performers on the stage and in the back rooms, plus the outsiders' enthusiasm towards the calibre of Yukon performers to be quite exhilarating.

*Larry Saidman
Mayo, Yukon Terr.*