

REGIONAL REPORTS



ALI'S CORNER

Rumours have been flying in recent months about major changes in format for Toronto's Mariposa Folk Festival. Not surprisingly, there has been a lot of interest, and not a little concern at the extent of these changes and the implications for long time devotees of this three day multi-cultural extravaganza.

In a recent news release the Mariposa Folk Foundation gave an overview of their plans for the organization in 1980.

During the twentieth anniversary celebrations in 1980, the foundation will be placing more emphasis on the Mariposa in the schools programme, and on the Wednesday evening Mariposa Mainland Folk Club/Concert series at Harbourfront in Toronto. But even more significant is the Foundation's reorganization of the concept of the Mariposa Folk Festival: this year the festival departs from its three day format on Toronto Islands, to expand into a year long event, taking place in many different locations in the Metro Community, consisting of both small and large scale events of varying natures.

Artistic Director Estelle Klein says that these events are designed to show that folk exists in many forms with connections involving other disciplines: theatre, dance, craft, cinema, the spoken word, symphonic and other music. Events are intended to appeal to various segments of the public, emphasizing the principle that folk has no barrier relating to age, culture, or to a particular format.

The opening event, on February 10, with this in mind, was a concert of "Twentieth Century Symphonic Music: Folk Roots" with members of the Toronto Symphony conducted by David Amram, and featuring such diverse performers as The Arabic Traditional Music Ensemble, Margaret Christl, the Friends of Fiddlers' Green, Latin Jazz Quintet and Winston Wuttunee.

Further developing the principle of folk "connections" will be an indoor, family oriented "mini festival" covering a broad spectrum of artistic forms, taking place in early fall, 1980.

The festival will be presenting informal activities at a number of Toronto Landmarks, among them the Metro Zoo, Harbourfront, the Ontario Science Centre, city churches and parks.

The Foundation states that they do recognize the value of the familiar weekend folk festival activity and has also included a new approach to an event of this nature. This will happen in November 1980. It will make use of indoor facilities, as yet unspecified, but will involve artists-in-residence, and a pre-registered audience structure. It would appear that the maximum number for this event is around 200, although Estelle says that there would probably be seats available for daytime activities. She would like some idea in advance and the amount of interest in an event of this nature for future planning, and interested people should write as soon as possible.

Due to the nature of this year's Mariposa events it is very helpful to be on Mariposa's mailing list, and you can do this simply by writing to The Mariposa Folk Foundation (see address in our Directory). Informed sources do tell, however, that there will be a three day folk festival in Toronto, called appropriately enough, the Toronto Folk Festival, on the weekend of June 13. This is being organized by Winnipeg based Mitch Podolak, and will take place in an as yet unspecified Toronto park. Details to follow.

The Home Country Folk Festival in London will go ahead as usual, despite premature rumours of its demise, on July 18, 19, and 20. Details are not available yet but there are likely to be a few changes in format to try to cope with the ever present financial problems inherent in presenting a free festival.

Owen Sound Summerfolk will be presented this year in Kelso Beach Park on August 15, 16, and 17. This year's event will take place without past Artistic Director Tim Harrison, who is devoting more time to his musical career. Ross Gibbons, who has been involved closely with the festival for many years, will take over the job.

Some recent discussions with the men of the media have led me to ponder on a little known law of musicology, known variously as Brown's first law of diminishing criteria, or the square fiddle peg law. This briefly holds that reviewers and radio station managers will tend to avoid that which they cannot readily fit into an easily identifiable category of music. The press (and consequently everyone else) tends to divide all music into mutually exclusive categories, each to be dealt with by the appropriate expert.

These major categories are: Rock, country (soft acoustic rock); Country (Nashville); Classical (a totally homogeneous group); Jazz (again homogeneous. You can always get a friendly English Prof. to review this one); Folk (everyone's an expert on this). Folk means self-penned lyrics—accompanied by guitar—of a morally uplifting nature. Songs are usually introspective and manic depressive, about escaping to somewhere rural, or about travelling this great land (if the writer is in receipt of a grant). Songs are *never* about living in cities where two thirds of us live, or about work, which most of us do, or try to.

If music does not fit into that lot, then it does not exist. There is of course a grouping known as "Traditional" which must not be confused with music at all, let alone entertainment (unless, of course, it

is a jolly male chorale, merrily yo-ho-hoing through some emasculated shanty, whereupon it becomes classical).

"Traditional", an area with the musical value of an archaeological dig, is best left to hard-up PhD candidates, and consists mainly of tuneless dirges about chopping wood and milk white steeds, sung by broken-voiced old windbags for the edification of future librarians, or alternatively, of interminable scratchings on the fiddle, just waiting for someone to add a beat, and make it country.

That's what they seem to think, and I think is one reason why our kind of music is so rarely reviewed, at least as entertainment. Unless the press are prepared to judge music for its intrinsic value, rather than as a component part of some mythical category, then the public will never become aware of the highly complex fusion of musical styles, influences, cultures, and history that is folk music.

Alistair Brown

The Second **EDINBURGH FOLK FESTIVAL** *21 to 30 March 1980*



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