

# Regina Folk Festival:

by Paul Wilson

Posters and promotion for the 15th Annual Regina Folk Festival, May 13, 14 & 15, will carry the catch line; "A spring celebration of music, crafts and children's entertainment." Organizers are approaching the promotion, and the festival itself with a slightly different tact this year; emphasizing the specific features of the festival (concerts, festival stages, craft fair and children's entertainment) which make it a unique "celebration."

There is confidence in the organization that this festival will draw larger audiences than the past few years. The source for this optimism is the impressive list of performers, which artistic director, Norm Walker has brought together. *Bim, Heather Bishop, Margaret Chrystl, David Essig, Folle Avoine, Don Freed, Ken Hamm, Karen Howe, Hot Gossip, Na Cabarfeidh, Julien Poulin, Jim Payne & Kelly Russell, Bev Ross, Salvador Allende Folk Group, David Sereda, Tamarack, Paddy Tutty and Valdy* have all agreed to perform at this year's festival. Though at the time of this writing the list is still subject to change.

Rather than give a purely aesthetic view of the Regina Festival, this article will concentrate on the problems faced by its organizers. All festivals have worries which are particular to their unique situation, but I would hazard to guess that most of them are one way or other linked with finances.

When the Regina Folk Festival Committee, held it's first meeting in December, funding took first priority in the discussion. In the two previous years there had been a contingency fund in the

bank, but that had been whiped out by the deficit of the 1982 Festival. In fact the Festival was beginning in the hole, as it had borrowed funds from the Regina Guild of Folk Arts the "mother" organization which administers the Festival. The situation was serious, but not yet desperate. In the 15 year history of the festival there have been other years when organizers have found themselves starting out from scratch. The fair question then, might be how has the Regina Folk Festival survived as long as it has. Speaking as an inside observer and organizer I would offer two answers: the determination and perseverance of a surprisingly small core of organizers; and the effective association the Festival has maintained with various government agencies.

Regina is one of the few cities in Canada that has an "arms length" Arts Commission. Members of the arts community sit on the commission which receives a yearly allotment from the city. Funding is available to Regina arts groups in all areas and disciplines. The Arts Commission grant to the Guild (see Grants list) is divided between the Festival and the operation of the coffee-house, concert series.

The Saskatchewan Arts Board, the provincial "arms length" agency, has granted funds to the Festival through their Performance Assistance Program. This program is designed to assist arts groups in presenting concerts and tours with professional Saskatchewan artists. The Department of Culture and Recreation also funds the Festival as a promotor of new and proven performers with the province.

The Regina Festival (at least in the last 5 years) has always had a regional focus, municipal and provincial funding may have influenced this trend, but more often than not it has been determined by the constraints of the travel budget. The above mentioned grants are largely for honouraria. It was only last year, when the Canada Council initiated its pilot program to fund performers traveling to festivals "across provincial boundaries," that the Festival Committee was able to invite more performers from outside the west. The Festival has increased its grant application to the Canada Council and will present musicians from many regions, including B.C. and Newfoundland.

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In the past three years the Festival has received grants through the Secretary of State to present Quebecois and Fransaskois performers in concerts and workshops. We will apply again this year to bring Fransaskois performers, including Folle Avoine, who have gained a new audience for their music through appearances at the Festival.

The Festival is also attempting to fund five performers through a grant from the Secretary of State, Women's Division.

Being the first folk festival of the season, is not without its drawbacks. For most of these grants, notice of accept-

ance will not come until just prior to Festival dates, and funds often don't arrive until after it's over. Aside from creating incredible money flow problems for the treasurer, there is the tense uncertainty of not knowing actual amounts and final totals until it is essentially too late. This sort of budgeting includes a risk factor which the organizers of the Folk Guild must assume. Unfortunately at this point the Folk Guild isn't in a position of financial strength and would not be able to assist the Festival if the worst should happen.

In future years Festival organizers are hoping that the "long wait" can be offset by fund raising in the private sector. This is the first year that the Guild/Festival has made a real effort to attract individual donations and financial support from corporations. The fund raising campaign received a boost recently when the Guild was successful in obtaining a Federal/Provincial NEED grant. The work project will employ a number of people in the planning of meetings to form a provincial council of folk arts organizations. Workers will also be involved in fund raising for the various folk arts organizations in the province. Though the project is only for 26 weeks it will help lay the ground-work for a multi-year fund raising campaign.

If this aspect of fund raising is successful, it will undoubtedly result in changes to the Festival. They won't happen over night, though in many ways the Festival is constantly changing. Two years ago the site was moved to the Education Building at the University of Regina, to accomodate larger audiences. Hand in Hand Craft Fair has emerged in

only two years as an integral part of the weekend, and we have increasingly put more emphasis on children's entertainment. But the Regina Folk Festival has remained "small" (or at least smaller than most) as a matter of choice. Although the Festival is supported by the community, the numbers of people involved in the organization just don't warrant rapid expansion of the festival.

#### REGINA FOLK FESTIVAL LIST OF GRANTS

	1982	1983
CANADA COUNCIL	4400.00	8000.00
CULTURE & REC.	1500.00	1500.00
(SASK. DEPT. of)		
CITY OF REGINA	2000.00	2500.00
ARTS COMMISSION		
SECRETARY OF	2000.00	2000.00
STATE:		
LANGUAGE DIV.		3300.00
WOMEN'S DIV.		
SASK. ARTS BOARD		1000.00

NOTE: not all 1983 grant applications have received acceptance

Up until this year food services has been one area where the Festival organization has lacked the energy and people to do the job themselves. Instead meals for performers and staff, as well as concessions have been dealt out on a contract basis. A food committee has formed and will handle meals, but concessions are again being done privately.

All told about sixty to one hundred people volunteer for various tasks. Depending on the hours they've put in, volunteers can earn workshop or concert passes, and of course there is always the parties.

The musicians too, are performing an act of faith when they attend the Regina Folk Festival. Those who are not specifi-

cally included in grant applications are paid an equal share of the door receipts, after expenses. Unfortunately the individual honouraria from last years festival was hurt by a mediocre turn-out. Which can partly be attributed to the fact that the festival was held on a long weekend, a mistake organizers will not repeat.

Performers travel is paid by the festival, they are billeted and most meals are provided at the festival site (and of course there is always the parties). Meals and relaxation are taken in the performers room; a long corridor away from the craft fair, workshops and the Auditorium, where concerts are held. The Auditorium seats 800 with the wings open, 500 with the wings closed. During the day wings are closed and utilized as workshop spaces, a third workshop stage is situated outside just south of the Auditorium.

Since moving to the site two years ago Festival organizers are still finding new ways to adapt various spaces and rooms in the building. The Hand in Hand Craft Fair has redesigned its circular formation around the conversation "pit," just in front of the Auditorium. The pit itself will feature events for children including puppet shows and special concerts. The Craft Fair will be decorated with banners, balloons and indicative of a Spring Celebration, which the Festival is. Or at least that is how it is treated by everyone involved; organizers, performers, craft-people and the audience. In the final analysis, that's what keeps them going on and coming back year after year; the celebration, the unexplainable tonic that is folk music.