

# Alberta

by Dave Spalding,  
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In many areas of Alberta the main trend of the year has been less - fewer record albums produced, stern government warnings of less financial support next year, and other cheering signs of the times. The highlights of the year have been the CFMS annual meeting in Edmonton, as well as some fine festivals (both music and theatre). The CFMS conference received quite a share of media attention, and brought together some individuals and groups not previously in touch. Overall, the year saw the continuation of many activities from last year and the emergence of some new ones.

This Alberta Report has been put together from two sources. Dave Spalding contributed the northern segment (arbitrarily defined as north of Red Deer). Lyn Luft and Holly Quan did the same for the southern part of the province. John Leeder combined the two parts. Efforts have been made to give only passing mention to activities reported in last year's Alberta Report (CFMB, 17(1), p.13-17). New developments are presented in more detail.

## PERFORMANCE OUTLETS

### *Clubs and Coffee Houses*

Edmonton's South Side Folk Club (475-1042) continues its success with a policy of largely out-of-town performers. This is dictated by the audience, which is apparently less supportive of local talent. At least one restaurant, the Sidetrack Cafe (421-1326) is featuring diverse music, which may inadvertently include something traditional from time to time. Edmonton continues to have a very meagre folk club scene compared with Calgary, and there would surely be an audience for another club if there was the leadership to start one.

The past year has seen a continuation of Calgary's established folk clubs and coffeeshouses - though not without some painful jolts of economic reality owing to the recession. The Calgary Folk Club (246-0564) and Rocky Mountain Folk Club (282-3683) still oper-

ate on alternate Friday nights; the Nickelodeon Music Club (246-8427) and Saturday Night Special (249-6063) are on Saturdays, with the Calgary Ski Club Coffee-house running once a month on Sunday evenings. Tough times notwithstanding, a new club on the south side, City Folk (271-2459) has had three sessions over the past year, and the organizers hope to continue. The Chilean folk club Pena Ukumau (275-1707) now has two companion clubs featuring South American music, the Pena Arau Caria and the Latin American Folk Club (both 275-1707). These three penas all run once per month.

There are four other clubs in the south of the province. The Lethbridge Folk Club (327-9627) runs once a month. The Canmore Folk Club (678-4928) has changed from a monthly venue to four times a year. Two new clubs have been added. The Livingston Folk Club (named after a nearby mountain range) is held monthly in Lundbreck (628-2331) near the Crownsnest Pass. The Cochrane Folk Club (932-5555) runs each Sunday in the Big Hill Country Club, which is a lovely restaurant just west of Calgary.

Several Calgary restaurants also feature acoustic entertainment. Notable among these are: the Kensington Delicafe (283-0771) which features folk music most every night of the week; Slack Alice (237-0085) with occasional folk entertainment; the Unicorn (233-2666); Dickens' Pub (265-4200); and The Royal Duke (263-7763). These last three pubs seem to be evolving into British-style folk environments. In Banff, the Magpie and Stump (762-2014) frequently book folk performers

### ***Singer's Circles***

The Edmonton Singers' Circle (487-7597) received a bonus of new "membership" from the CFMS annual general meeting, and is planning some more diverse activities, including a performance at the Provincial Museum, and a Twelfth Night sleigh ride. The Calgary Singers' Circle meets monthly for music and munchies. Organized by James and Gloria Prescott (282-0541), the Circle is very friendly and always happy to

welcome new members. Some of its "special" activities are Christmas carolling and a summer barbecue.

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## **FESTIVALS**

We are seeing an increase in theatre festivals which emphasize folk music as part of their offerings. As well, our folk festivals had a good year, and are showing sure signs of health and even some growth.

### ***Folk Festivals***

The Colonist Car Society of Edmonton is offering two "Folk Rail Tours" in 1984. These events will take place aboard the refurbished vintage 1931 sleeper car "Commonwealth." One is a three-day songwriting workshop proposed for the fall, with seasoned composer-performers conducting the sessions. The car will travel from Edmonton to Prince Rupert and back. On July 5 the "Commonwealth" will depart Edmonton for the Winnipeg Folk Festival, returning on July 10. And, for the fifth year running, the Folk Festival on Rails will travel from Edmonton to Fort McMurray and back, August 12-15. Anyone wishing more information on any of these events should call Dave Watts in Calgary (289-1812).

The Edmonton Folk Music Festival (433-4763) continues its successful trend, with Don Whalen and a huge army of volunteers continuing to build the Edmonton festival into one of the country's biggies. While there were relatively few traditional performers at this year's event, the festival is so large that this was a strong contingent. La Bottine Souriante, Brahan Seer,

Margaret Christl, Christy & Fred Cook, Gilbert Parent, Utah Phillips and Paddy Tutty in various ways represented mainstream (Anglo-French) traditions. Winston Wuttunee reflected native musical traditions in his fine performances. Alpaka and J. P. Nystroms presented the less familiar musics of Latin America and Scandanavia respectively.

The Calgary Folk Festival finally had good weather, and a better turnout has rendered financial problems less worrisome. The festival, with its emphasis on out-of-town musicians, will run again August 10-11 on Prince's Island.

The Heritage Day Fair in Canmore (near Banff) features music and crafts. It will continue its two-day format August 5 and 6 this year. The Lethbridge Folk Festival had money problems last year and was unable to run in 1983, but the organizers are hoping to stage one this summer. Back in Calgary, last year's Spring-song Folk Festival, a one-day family event sponsored by the Continuing Education Department of the Calgary Board of Education, will go again on April 16. Call Lyn Luft (281-7738) for details.

### **Theatre**

"Return of the Fringe" was again part of the Edmonton Summerfest. It was bigger and better this year, offering a variety of folk music in varying guises. Brandywine and the McDade Family Band presented family shows, and an extended traditional story with traditional music was presented by Bethany Ellis and David Holmes. Folk music was used by a number of other performers as well.

The Fringe spirit is continued by Cushion Theatre (487-7597), which is now planning its second season in Lemarchand Mansion. It will feature at least one folk music-storytelling evening in its season. The new Chinook Theatre opened December 83 with a winter season including the Medieval group Chanticleer, and a traditional Christmas by Brandywine.

### **Concerts**

Calgary's Glenbow Museum (237-8988) continues

its Sunday afternoon concert series, which occasionally includes folk musicians, usually one each month. The Muttart Gallery offers a Thursday noonhour concert series, and folk music may frequently be heard at these events (266-2764). The Foothills Bluegrass Society presents a workshop or concert the first Sunday of every month (283-9397). Various other groups promote concerts in Calgary on less regular schedules.

The Edmonton Folk Festival (433-4763) and the South Side Folk Club continue as major concert promoters in Edmonton, often using the auditorium of the Provincial Museum (427-1730). The latter also provides its own increasing diversity of ethnic musical events. More rarely, larger folk-related concerts (such as J.J. Cale and John Hammond) take the Jubilee Auditorium stages in Edmonton as in Calgary.

### **Recordings**

For those who like their folk music in the comfort of their own homes, Calgary artists have produced several albums over the past year. Barry Luft and Tim Rogers have collaborated on an excellent work, "Songs of the Iron Trail - The Canadian Railroad Experience in Song." The album was released in September of '83 and is available at Buck Dancer's Choice Music (283-9397) or the Glenbow-Alberta Institute (237-8988). "Songs, Stories and Games for Fun" is a cassette of music and poems put together in Calgary by Judith Benninger of the Forest Lawn Public Library and a choir of students from the Elbow Park Elementary School. The Wild Colonial Boys, house band of the Calgary Folk Club, have released a "45" this past summer, available from Buck Dancer's.

Edmonton's economic climate has no doubt been the major factor in determining that only one new folk album has appeared in the region: singer-songwriter Richard White's second offering, "Ladies and Gentlemen." Sales of existing albums continue steadily though often slowly.

### **Distribution**

Distribution of specialized albums continues to be a

problem. Increasing numbers of record stores nowadays seem to have no folk section of any kind, though small numbers of albums may be filed under "International" with wild inaccuracy. In Edmonton, only the Students' Union Record Store (432-5024) can be counted on for a good range of traditional albums. In Calgary, Buck Dancer's Choice Music, mentioned above, fills the same role. Some larger stores, such as Sam the Record Man, are (sometimes) willing to risk carrying specialized albums.

Celtic Productions (478-6417) is now distributing British albums widely in Canada, and Brandywine Enterprises Ltd. (487-7597) is marketing some Canadian folk albums to educational outlets.

## MEDIA

### Radio

Canada's national folk music radio program, "Simply Folk," is produced by CBC Calgary for weekly broadcast on CBC-FM (stereo) at 11:00 p.m. Saturdays. Simply Folk and CFMS are jointly sponsoring a National Folk Festival Directory which will be published in the CBC Radio guide and the Bulletin. It will also be distributed at festivals. Over the past few months CBC Calgary has regularly carried excerpts from the Calgary Folk Festival on its "Westmount Boulevard" radio show, 4:00-6:00 p.m.

In Edmonton, CKUA (428-7595) continues its minority programming, though increasingly it attempts to emulate other radio stations by cutting down on the non-mainstream folk and other content that makes it special. Edmonton CBC has intermittent traditional material, and gave Dave Spalding the interesting experience of singing Alberta folk songs this year to a live audience consisting largely of cows.

### Television

Edmonton's CFRN has taped a fourth series of "Storytime." Brandywine present a variety of traditional materials to young children on this nationally broadcast CTV show. Paul Hann now has a regular children's spot on the same station. Highlights of the

1983 Calgary Folk Festival will be aired on CBC Calgary - watch your local listings this winter.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

### Storytelling

The Alberta group "TALES" had a successful second conference in Red Deer, with Utah Phillips as its out-of-province guest. The newsletter continues, and the Edmonton members have started a monthly storytelling group.

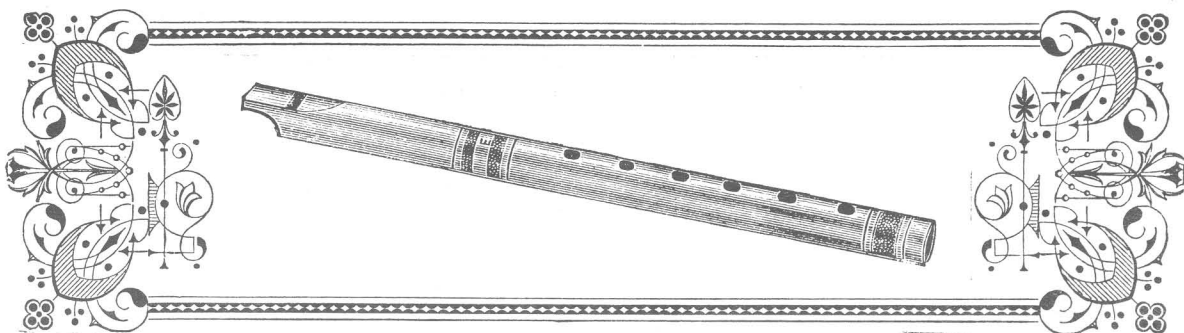
### Dance

Calgary is a great place to sing (or listen to someone else sing), but there's a bit of a gap when it comes to traditional dance. A night of folk music and country dance of various kinds - square, Scottish, Morris, etc. - was held this fall at the Windsor Park Community Hall. The organizers were Lou and Linda Keresztes, and they're planning three or four similar events throughout the coming year. For details, call 253-2070.

### Kids

Calgary's Rocky Mountain Folk Club is hosting a family-type folk fair, including singing, dancing and crafts (282-3683). The Saturday Night Special (253-2507) will be hosting their annual children's concert on April 28 this year, featuring Edmonton performer Paul Hann. They plan to hold two such concerts next year. The Wild Colonial Boys (several of whom are teachers in real-life) will put on their annual concert for kids on March 3 this year (246-0564). Folk music concerts for children are also offered by Stage West (243-7077). These concerts include lunch. Luminaries such as Bob Schneider, Eric Nagler, Fred Penner and Paul Hann have performed at Stage West.

A variety of children's concerts have been sponsored by various groups or promoters in Calgary. Included here are: Sandra Beech, Raffi, Fred Penner, Eric Nagler, and Jim and Rosalie. Australian performers Mike and Michelle Jackson will be appearing in Calgary in early 1984.



The Edmonton Children's Festival (425-1820) and Stage West's (483-4051) Children's Lunch Theatre have continued to present children's performers, but with few if any traditional performers. Raffi and Sharon, Lois and Bram come through on the Edmonton Jubilee Auditorium circuit. A few performers are reaching smaller northern Alberta communities.

Finally, the University of Lethbridge, the Lethbridge Community College, the Southern Alberta Art Gallery, and the Public Library all sponsor children's concerts in Lethbridge from time to time through the year.

### **Education**

The Calgary board of Education continues its outstanding promotion of folk music through its Continuing Education music programmes for adults. Courses are offered in instrument building and maintenance, instruction on a wide variety of acoustic instruments, advanced study in technique and playing style, and various vocal classes and workshops. The Board also sponsors the occasional concert, and hosts the one-day family festival Springsong.

Courses are also offered by Homegrown Music (242-5111), a folk/acoustic music store, on an individual basis, in a variety of folk instruments. Buck Dancer's Choice Music (283-9397) also offers individual instruction, or can put interested persons in touch with teachers of instruments like hammered dulcimer.

Compared with the healthy Calgary scene, Edmonton boasts little instrument training except for the courses offered by guitarist Ma Fletcher (429-0914).

School programs in Northern Alberta are being offered by Brandywine, Gilbert Parent, and Paul Hann, and the former are also doing workshops for teachers in folk music and storytelling.

At the University level, the Slavic Studies program is actively teaching music-related material at the University of Alberta, and Athabasca University continues its courses backed by radio programming on CKUA. The University of Calgary's folklore course has had a successful first year, and things bode well for the future expansion of folklore studies at University of Calgary. As well, the Kodaly summer course's fourth session is upcoming for 1984, to be taught by Richard Johnston.

### **IN SUM**

Well there you have it - a round up of folk music related activities in Alberta. Clearly there is a significant amount of activity in the province. The emphasis appears to be upon formally organized activities, at least in comparison to the east. While casual "kitchen sessions are definitely a part of the Alberta scene, there is a tendency to gravitate toward organized outlets. Perhaps this reflects the tremendous numbers of people moving in and out of the province which complicates the evolution of "kitchen" music.