

ETHNOMUSICOLOGY NEWS

Ethnomusicology at the University of Alberta

The study of musical traditions across Canada and the world, has become an important project at the University of Alberta, through the offering of undergraduate courses in World Music and Canadian Music, and through a graduate program in ethnomusicology. Ethnomusicology, the study of music in its cultural context, explores the vast range of the world's musical sounds, concepts, and behaviours. In Canada, ethnomusicology addresses itself to the diverse traditions that characterize this country's musical life.

The University of Alberta's graduate program in ethnomusicology is designed to provide appropriate training in the cross-cultural study of music through the MMus program in ethnomusicology, and also through an individually designed interdisciplinary PhD program. Recognizing the interdisciplinary nature of the discipline, the program of study contains core ethnomusicology courses which provide training in theory and method as well as area music studies, along with a balance of courses in both music and anthropology, and in area studies relevant to the student's specialization.

Area emphasis is on South Asian, Near Eastern, North American Native, and ethnic Canadian musical traditions. Topical emphasis is on performance study, historical ethnomusicology, musical transcription and analysis, and the study of music in a political, economic and social context. The program draws upon the resources of the Department

of Anthropology; collaboration is also available with dance ethnology and with Ukrainian Studies.

Library resources in ethnomusicology are uniquely enhanced by the Smithsonian Folkways collection; the University of Alberta is the only institution other than the Smithsonian holding this collection in its entirety. Also accessible are specialized collections of the Canadian Circumpolar Institute and the Institute of Ukrainian Studies.

The University of Alberta is located in a rich musical environment in which to pursue field research. Edmonton is one of Canada's most diverse urban centres and is surrounded by rural ethnic and Native communities. Students can also draw on the extensive historical resources of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, the Archives of the Canadian Society for Musical Traditions in Calgary, and of several community archives.

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Promotion - formation - développement dans le pays en voie de développement

Un projet en ethnomusicologie des professeurs Monique Desroches et Marie-Thérèse Lefebvre, de la Faculté de musique, a mérité en septembre dernier le Prix de la décennie mondiale du développement culturel de l'UNESCO. Seulement quatre autres projets du même ordre ont mérité ce prix au Canada dans le cadre de cette décennie, qui se termine en 1997.

"Ce prix nous ouvrira plusieurs portes", note Mme Desroches, initiatrice de cette démarche de coopération internationale.

Mené sur trois continents, le projet vise à promouvoir les traditions orales musicales de certains pays en développement. Pour ce faire, on souhaite envoyer au Sénégal, en Guinée-Bissau et dans certains pays de la région de l'océan Indien 14 étudiants de l'Université de Montréal.

Par la suite, on recevra à la Faculté autant de stagiaires de ces pays pour leur permettre d'acquérir les connaissances nécessaires à la mise en valeur de leur patrimoine musical respectif.

"Nous sommes à la recherche du financement qui nous permettra d'aller de l'avant avec ce projet", poursuit Mme Lefebvre, musicologue et ancienne coopérante au Centre d'études et de coopération internationale.

C'est à ce titre qu'elle a vécu au Gabon pendant deux ans. "Nous avons besoin de 1,2 million de dollars. Non seulement les organismes subventionnaires doivent faire leur part, mais l'entreprise privée a aussi beaucoup à gagner en s'associant avec nous."

L'ethnomusicologie est une branche de l'anthropologie qui consiste à recueillir et à analyser des échantillons sonores et matériels des musiques traditionnelles. On peut étudier ensuite l'évolution musicale des peuples et leur développement culturel.

Un exemple: le tambour avait pratiquement disparu de la musique traditionnelle martiniquaise il y a 50 ans. Puis, on a assisté à une renaissance de cet instrument parallèlement à l'épanouissement de la négritude. Le tambour est aujourd'hui devenu un symbole culturel dont on est fier.

"De plus en plus, souligne Mme Desroches, nous sommes amenés à travailler dans le domaine de la coopération internationale. Depuis quelques années, des organismes internationaux comme l'ONU ont compris que le développement culturel était intimement lié aux autres formes de développement. Et quant à moi, la musique, c'est 80% de la culture..."



Monique Desroches (à gauche), tenant une kora, un instrument à cordes sénégalais, et Thérèse Lefebvre.

Album Review:

The Shanty Crew - 'Stand To Yer Ground'

'Stand To Yer Ground' is the second album by the English group The Shanty Crew. It is a collection of twenty-one sea shanties, old and new. Most of the singing is a capella, and it sounds very authentic. Or so I thought, until I read the sleeve notes and realised that few people really know how a sea shanty should be sung. This is because real shantymen (sailors who sang these songs at sea) considered it bad luck to sing shanties on shore, and your average song collector was not about to set sail on a clipper ship to collect a few ditties.

Anyway, the shanties on this album sound how I imagine they should, tuneful and powerful, but not over-polished. The form of most of the songs is similar, a storyline in rhyming verse punctuated by one or more short chorus lines. It seems to be a common feature that the chorus line may not relate to the material in the verse, but rather to the job at hand, be it pumping or hauling. The choruses are simple - 'Whisky Whisky Whisky 'O' and my favorite, which goes something like 'Ah Oh Ah Oh Ohhhh'.

To someone who likes diversity in an album, fifty-three minutes of non-stop shanties may seem a bit daunting, and it is only on repeated listening that the talents of The Shanty Crew in imparting variety to their music become apparent. The lead vocalist changes from song to song, and each singer has a distinct style. Most of the choruses are sung in unison but a few have simple harmonies. Two of the songs are in French, and the song 'C'est L'Aviron' is given a very stylish rendition. Two of the songs are enhanced by the addition of button accordion accompaniment.

A number of the songs are of special interest. I particularly liked the singing style of the lead vocalist in 'Esiquibo River', and it

was nice to hear 'Sailorman's Port in a Storm' by Tom Lewis, whose album was reviewed in a recent issue of this bulletin. The song 'Seraphina' is funny but pretty raunchy, and discerning parents might want to give this a PG rating. 'Anglesey' is more like a regular song than a shanty, with a verse and fairly long chorus. It seems that 'go to sea no more', 'whore', and 'shore' must be the shantymen's equivalent of 'moon' and 'June' when it comes to composing rhymes. My favourite of them all is 'Brother Noah' which is a humourous combination of biblical themes and a pitch for welly boots. The rest of the songs contain all the catch phrases that we associate with shanties -- pirates, the Spanish Main, captains daughters, 'ladies' in port, mermaids, Davy Jones, and of course the obligatory 'Yo Ho Ho'. Don't be mistaken, however, nothing about this album sounds "clichéd".

If I have a criticism it would be that on a couple of the songs, I couldn't pick out the lyrics. Presumably this is realistic, since sailors probably didn't pay too much attention to their diction when heaving away. It may well be that even if I could hear the words they wouldn't make any sense, as in the song 'Hob X Derri Dando'. I know that Jane, Sally Brown, and a bit of tobacco chewing were in there somewhere, but how they fit together I don't know, and what does the chorus mean? The sleeve should contain a detailed booklet of lyrics and biographies, but unfortunately this was missing from my copy. The group does thoughtfully provide a contact address, though, and they do offer to send a copy of the booklet if it is missing.

The song 'Shantyman', a modern shanty, laments the demise of the shantymen in the face of modern technology. After listening to this album I have to agree. When I hear elevator style muzak, even the grim shanty

themes of pox and scurvy seem positively pleasant, because I know that real live people sang about them while they worked.

For more information about the Shanty

Crew, you can contact Chris Roche, 6 Brafferton Road, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 1AD, England.

Louise Quinn
Brandon University

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
OF
THE HELEN CREIGHTON FOLKLORE
FESTIVAL SOCIETY
OF DARTMOUTH

The Board of Directors of the Helen Creighton Folklore Festival Society of Dartmouth wishes to announce its Second Annual Festival on November 2, 1991. As part of that Festival, the Board is initiating a competition for a Commissioned Work, to be performed in a gala concert during the Festival. The description of the Commissioned Work is as follows:

COMMISSIONED WORK

This work will consist of an arrangement of a set, medley, or suite of four or five folksongs from the Helen Creighton Collection for SA or unison with Descant voicing or a combination of both. The use of accompaniment is optional but piano accompaniment would be the most practical for use in the schools. The composer should keep in mind that this arrangement should be within the performance ability of a school choir between grades four and six.

AWARD

The City of Dartmouth is awarding the sum of five hundred dollars (\$500.00) to the chosen composer of the commissioned work. The cost of reproduction of the original manuscript will be absorbed by the production budget of the festival.

The Board of the Helen Creighton Folklore Festival of Dartmouth reserves all right to the work and will premiere the performance of this work at the Festival in November, 1991.

DEADLINE

Deadline for submission of a sample work for adjudication is March 30th, 1991. The winner will be announced by the middle of April and will have until September 1st, 1991 to submit the commissioned work.

Please send submissions to:

Don Hughes
Chairman of Adjudicating Committee
c/o Dartmouth Music Department
35 Major Street
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia B2X 1A7