

Editorials

The 1995 Annual General Meeting will be held in Toronto (exact place to be announced in the next *Bulletin*) the second weekend of November, 1995 (Friday through Sunday). Please submit your proposals for presentations, papers, panels, performances, workshops, &c.) to Judith Cohen by September 10 at the latest, along with information about what equipment you may need. Also, please state whether you will want to be billeted at someone's home, and if so, what your smoking/non-smoking, pet allergy, &c., situation is. If there's a specific topic you're interested in but you are not proposing a presentation yourself, let us know too; maybe something can be set up. The Canada Council Touring Office may be able to provide some travel funding for performers accepted at the meeting; otherwise, prospects for funding are pretty low, so please look to whatever sources you may have.

The 1996 meeting will also be held in Toronto, to enable us to meet with the Society for Ethnomusicology, which rarely meets in Canada. This meeting will be held October 30-Nov. 3, 1996. At the 1995 meeting one of our priorities will be to make sure CSTM/SCTM's participation in this exciting joint meeting is well planned. Two CSTM members, Bev Diamond and Bob Witmer, are Programme Chair and Local Arrangements Chair respectively, so a very positive communication has already been established.

If you have any proposals for amendments to the Constitution, this is the time for a notice of motion to be submitted for the next *Bulletin*. Please contact Judith if you have any questions. [Judith Cohen]



Corrections: Gulp, gawrssh, and all that stuff, primarily from the last issue:

The address for the *West Coast Blues Review* is 302 - 655 Herald Street, Victoria, BC, V8W 3L6.

We neglected to note that the photo of the Calgary percussion group Yemaya which appeared on page 27 of our last issue (29.1) was taken by University of Calgary staff photographer Bob Armstrong and first appeared in the *University's Gazette* (December 12, 1994).

In the same issue, the copyright to Vera Johnson's songs should have been credited to Zax Music Publishing, rather than to Ms. Johnson herself.

Going back to December 1993 (27.4), page 11, the key signature for the song, "The Plough," should contain *only* two flats (B \flat and E \flat). We apologize for any difficulty or confusion we may have caused.



We would like to offer an email directory of Society members. Please send your email address with a note indicating that you'd like to be listed in this directory to the email address given on our Contents page. This directory will appear in the December issue; we expect that a yearly update will be appropriate. Thank you for your participation.



For all our self-congratulations about alternate communities and lifestyles, the folk music revival has not done a particularly impressive job of developing alternate cultural delivery systems. It doesn't take close examination of most folkie publications to realize that what they are generally writing about is a specialized form of popular music, with stars, a hierarchy of venues, and a great (and tempting) array of commodities. If, as Utah Phillips has said, we're in the waning days of Babylon, the lights are indeed bright in this final flareup, and few artists or audiences of any sort of culture find it easy to imagine other possibilities.

But other systems are possible. I used to know a visual artist who was involved in a network he referred to as Correspondence Art. His motto was "Keep Art out of Museums: Mail It, Don't Jail It." Periodically I'd get a nifty envelop from him, full of odds and ends he'd drawn and/or collected during the intervening period since the last one. Sometimes these would be on a theme, and usually there was some reproduced component, since he was mailing to a reasonably hefty list of friends and colleagues, but even these would often be personalized to each recipient, or at least to me.

I think this model was in the back of my family's mind when we inadvertently invented what we called Dial-An-Audience. This custom began on one of my son Stephen's birthdays. He was living with his mother in Texas at the time

and was in his James Cagney phase. He was a real fan—even to the point that he liked the musicals, though I'm sure he preferred the gangster stuff. Anyway, those of us in the Calgary branch of the family decided to work up an arrangement of "Yankee Doodle Dandy" for his birthday, to phone him and surprise him with it. I don't remember who was at home then, but there was probably a banjo, a violin or two, a guitar or mandolin (or maybe Mark played the trumpet that night), and maybe percussion. We'd all sing. Our rehearsals went great, but when we dialed his number, he wasn't home! All dressed up, we were, with no place.... So, let's practice on somebody, *anybody*! And we did. I don't remember why we decided to do it anonymously; perhaps that had been our intention with Stephen, as well: just let him answer, hit him with the song, and hang up. He'd know who it was and what it was for.

I can't remember whether we did get Stephen that night, but we had a lot of fun. A few weeks later, Carolyn, who would have been in late elementary or early junior high, and I were at loose ends, so we worked up some sort of flute or fife duet. We liked it well enough that we wanted to share it with somebody, so one of us dialed a friend's number, "This is Dial-An-Audience; please hold the line." The next day my boss asked me slyly if I played the recorder. In fact, I could answer honestly, No. I've never been able to get a decent tone from one, so I've always stuck to whistles and things that give

me more immediate gratification. It's a good thing his question was so indirect that I was able to answer with something like a straight face.

Of course, a few people guessed us right away. Some of them played the game, wondering aloud who it was who called them and played the nifty stuff; some of them really *were* wondering, but, then, some people would request a call. On the other hand, there were a few people who hung up instead of holding on, and once one of the girls managed to get the older sister of one family, who heard our line and responded with a heartfelt "Fuck *Off!*" as she slammed the receiver. Then, again, Barry Luft once cheered loudly enough that we several of us thought we could hear it across the room.

Most of our pieces were short and snappy, but not all. Stephen was visiting during the weekend the Russian fighter shot down the Korean air liner. We couldn't get the event and its implications out of our heads, and our free improvised music (Stephen on alto sax) was pretty heavy, I think. We



Take a bunch of folk musicians and singers, stick them in a room together, and something magical spontaneously happens. A jam session bursts forth upon the world in all its pristine glory. Right?

Sure. But most of us have experienced the session where the Celtic players have no patience with the bluegrassers, and the singer-songwriters can hardly wait for the bluesmen to shut up, and everybody goes home grouchy because their precious speciality had to coexist with lesser breeds. Most of us have been to sessions where the local heavies controlled the agenda, and the newcomer who ventured to start a song was frowned upon with barely-concealed scorn. Or where the pickers picked tunes all night, and the unaccompanied singers couldn't get a note in edgewise and left in disappointment. Or where the folks in the back, the timid or inexperienced ones, never got a chance to show what they could do. Or where a couple of Major Talents Found Each Other, got the bit in their teeth and ran away with the evening, while the peons were allowed to look on in awe as long as they didn't get in the way of the Great Event.

Spontaneity is wonderful! But spontaneity doesn't just happen. Yes, occasionally great sessions can materialize out of thin air, with little aid from human agencies. Mostly, though, spontaneity needs a little help, especially in our pluralistic society, and our pluralistic folk music community.

Sometimes all it takes is proactivity. A person who enjoys many kinds of music, and is sensitive to other people's needs, and doesn't mind taking a little initiative to bring the outsiders into the conceptual circle, often is all it takes to make a session a success. This person could be the host, or an elder statesman, or an experienced performer, or someone with charisma or moral authority. Overt control isn't necessary or desirable—a quiet word or two often is all that's needed.

called it "Threnody for the Dead in Kamchatka"; Stephen, who was announcing that one, felt that a slogan was appropriate, but he found it difficult to make satisfactorily. One time through it was, "Forgive and forget," then "Forget, but don't forgive," and finally, "Forgive, but don't forget."

When JP Huang, proprietor of Calgary's *Buckdancer's Choice*, decided to leave town, we gathered for what may have been the last of our sessions. The kids were moving away by then, and a quorum wasn't always easy to gather. JP had asked me several times whether anyone ever called me and played records on the phone. "Gee, no," I'd answer, usually pretending to be disappointed that whoever it was had never zapped my house. At any rate, it didn't take much to figure out what to give JP: a nice little march-time version of "Aloha Oe." The next day I was up in the shop for one last looksee. "By the way," I said, as I flipped through some records, "that was us last night." "And the times before?" "You got it."

Now you do, too.

[GWL]

Another approach is that taken by the Calgary Singers' Circle, and most of the jams I get to take part in, including those I host. This is the simple-minded, heavy-handed but effective approach of merely Going Around the Circle. Everybody gets a chance to contribute, everybody gets their moment in the spotlight. The self-assured people don't get to control, the timid people have the decision to step forward made for them, the people who only want to listen at least get to choose that option for themselves. But often, an offer to help someone by singing along with them, or accompanying them instrumentally, can give a shy person the confidence to take part. People who really don't sing at all can participate by storytelling, commenting on the songs, making requests of singers, or sharing a joke. In many cultures this is the normal way of holding a session, and it comes naturally. For many of us it's a conscious option, but one that works. People who protest that this Spoils the Spontaneity are likely those who create the jam-defeating problems in the first place.

The more these practices and similar ones are put into play, the less self-conscious they become. In fact, after a while the role becomes the reality. Naturalness takes over, and the goals of spontaneity and inclusiveness blend into each other. The framework within which the events occur becomes less visible, and finally melts into the background. Where it starts is with respect—respect for people, and respect for people's musical preferences.

Music should be a sharing experience—and an experience shared not only by Godlike Beings, but by everybody who wants to be part of it, in whatever fashion. Most of the articles in this issue set up signposts pointing the way for those who try to bring music into the everyday lives of people who make music and those who experience it. All of us should be both. Most of us, if the situation is right, can be. [JL]