

Letters/Lettres

As the Enjoyment Band is a totally voluntary thing and committed only to appearances arrived at by habit and acceptance, there are no contracts or job descriptions, and no one is excluded from participation. Yesterday at the Open Air Market, for example, we started off with just two of us present, myself with violin, Molly Murphy to tap out rhythm on Celestial Beast. (Incidentally, the Beast pastures out during the week—I do not bother to bring it in, and its presence seems to be respected in a nearby open shelter.) Surprise! Georgina arrives, carrying her piano accordion. Now it's on a pair of baggage wheels; she underwent major surgery less than two weeks before, so this is a bit unexpected. Very shortly as many as three guitars and a banjo have joined in; soon a versatile chap doing a switch from accordion and guitar to vocals.



We managed a few lesser known westerns from him, "There's a Bridle Hanging on the Wall," "Old Faithful," "Roundup Time in Texas," "Out on the Western Plains." These we can't do when the regular band is in attendance because then we gotta play what everybody knows. Can't have anyone sitting back, not performing (referred to as "f.t. dog," when we have a certain retired carpenter foreman on board!).

Now, I remember hearing the coyotes on the prairies doing band practice. They did seem to group, but then it came across more like the Dixieland jazz bands on Bourbon Street that I once visited. One would solo a beat and short melody; slowly the others would pick up on it, maybe take turn about, with all of them ending on a final high chorus of triumph. Well, the Enjoyment Band has yet to discover the difference between a gypso work party on a construction site, a band of free roaming howling prairie coyotes, and jazz musicians playing for tips.

But back to yesterday at Open Air Market. I have taken to watching people's feet, as a gauge of response. There people are free to come and to go. There is no captive audience, and the trick is to get them to hang around, maybe dance a bit, or even move in closer and sing. Young children are the best by far. I guess they've seen lots of gyrations on TV, and they seem quicker to embody their own response to rhythm.

If there is a Scottish element present, it surfaces quickly to such tunes as "Scotland the Brave," "Barren Rocks of Aden," &c., even the "Highland Fling." The Irish light up at "Danny Boy," "Rose of Tralee," and a finale of "Macnamara's Band." Sometimes one can pull out of the mainstream people with courtship memories of the 1930s, 40s, or 50s. "Woodpecker Song," "My Happiness," "Lili Marlene"—these tell who was in their prime during WWII.

Yesterday there was this elderly chap seated alone some distance from the players. I noticed a faint handbeat at first, then a toe tap became barely visible to a western number. Another one or two of these got him to move in closer. Now his head was nodding a bit to the music as well. Then someone came and helped him to a vehicle for home, I guess. It would have been interesting to have talked with him about his former homes.

I have described what can and often does happen when we are not overrun with lead instruments, and my associates at Open Air, being mostly accompanists, give the fiddle a lot of liberty.

It was nice to sit back, to let the banjo man do a round of vocals, "Black Velvet Band," "Come Back to Nova Scotia," and a few more of his Celtic favorites. At one time, as many as five singers gathered to do some old campfire numbers with everybody taking part, but easing off for the singers. Ivor Jensen gives the signal, "Take it away, Martin," and we recognize when the singers are ready to come on with another verse or chorus. I guess the fun of it has much to do with spontaneity and body language. Very good because my hearing deteriorates and I must find alternative ways of reading my environment, hence I watch the feet and hands.

...I attach my modest contribution of — by cheque. I know that won't take you very far into another print. I can only give my endorsement and say that I think music is a political necessity for assisting the transition from a "jobs"- and "work"-oriented society into an era of creative leisure. That should have happened long ago, at the time of the 1929 stock market crash. It took the waste, destruction, and killing of WWII to revive the old system for a brief time. There has to be a better venue for human society, in which music has a major role.

So keep up the good work and let the ripples spread!

Martin Rossander
Powell River, BC

To anyone who has browsed the "Fiddle Web" and "Virtual Fiddle Camp," THE FIDDLE WEB HAS MOVED!! We used to spread our Fiddle files, Virtual Fiddle Camp and Fiddlers Database between two servers. We have now amalgamated all our files at the Great Plains Free Net in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada. Change your bookmarks!

Please drop by our newly designed site at:
< <http://www.gpfn.sk.ca/culture/arts/fiddle/index.html> >

To remove yourself from this list, please reply with the word REMOVE in the subject or body of the note... I'll get the message.

All the best in your fiddling fun this summer!

Gord Fisch

(306) 569-8980 fax 757-4422

Saskatchewan Cultural Exchange Society

< <http://www.gpfn.sk.ca/culture/arts/sces/> >

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Thank you for ... the excellent review of Rick Fielding's Lifeline [31.1, p. 31].... I've always appreciated the fact that the CSTM does not completely ignore the work of contemporary singers of folk material and creators of new material that reflects the style of the old. So many folklore organizations seem to think it best to let the art die out with the older singers, rather than accept the work of dedicated "interpreters"....

I am happy to let you know that we will soon have *The Barley Grain for Me* on CD, our excellent recording of Margaret Christl and Ian Robb, with Grit Laskin, singing a wonderful collection of Canadian English-language folksongs and ballads. We are issuing this CD as a special tribute to the late Edith Fowke. Her work inspired many of us to get into the field to record traditional artists, and her scholarship inspired us to do our homework, too. You may remember that our recording of Tom Brandon was produced from her field recordings.

You might want to take a look at our Web site < <http://www.folklegacy.com> > to see what we are now doing in the "custom cassette" category. It's one way to keep the authentic traditional material in circulation even though the demand for it does not justify commercial production.

Sandy Paton

Folk-Legacy Recordings

Box 1148

Sharon, CT 06069

USA

*Great to hear that one of my favourite recordings will be available again! Also, the Tom Brandon recording referred to, *The Rambling Irishman*, is available on cassette from CSTM—another of my favourite traditional singers. —JL*

Please send me Andy De Jarlis's biography Bulletin.... I really look forward to receiving this grand biography of a man who is "Mr. Old Time Fiddle Music of the Prairies and the West," and my fiddle music hero...I personally know Andy. I was born in Winnipeg, 1926. Joined the army, 1944, Winnipeg Rifles. Am an Andy De Jarlis #1 Fan.

George Linsey

Ennismore, Ontario

I am taking the liberty to drop these few lines of congratulation on the so very interestingly well presented article on my brother, fiddler Andy De Jarlis.... I had the pleasure of going to present the \$1000 prize for the August 1997 Andy De Jarlis Scholarship award at the Fiddle Camp Concert in the beautiful University of Victoria Auditorium, very well presented by the Rev. Frenceene Watson. I spent several interesting days as a guest of Rev. Watson, which was very enjoyable. It's been a chance of a lifetime to have met Rev. Watson in 1996. She would never have been able to put the story in your very interesting Bulletin, because I am the last one living in my family, and the only one that could provide the necessary material....

Mrs. J.D. Carrière

Winnipeg, Man.