

Singing at Sudbury

At the annual conference of the Folklore Studies Association of Canada, held this year at Laurentian University, we found quite a few well-known CSTM members. So, not surprisingly, the musical dimension of folklore was studied and practised that last weekend in May at Sudbury. I didn't take notes, so my memories are partial, by no means a complete account of all the music to be heard. In any case, some of the sessions were concurrent, so one couldn't go to everything. But here are a few highlights.

When we were feeling nicely mellow after the Friday night banquet, Marcel Bénéteau hosted an "open mike" (although in good traditional style nobody actually used the mike). Marcel himself opened and closed the proceedings with some of the *vieilles chansons du Détroit* for which he is justly famous, and Olga from the Centre de Folklore Ontarien also contributed a song from the local francophone community.

The Centre mounted a sort of "travelling exhibition" on the life and work of Germain Lemieux at the conference, and it included an on-line component that allowed us to listen to a small selection from his collecting in Manitoba and Acadie as well as in various francophone communities in Ontario.

Another fine francophone singer (and scholar) at the conference was Francine Brunel-Reeves,

who concluded her exhaustive examination of the varied corpus of songs about "La Blanche Biche [The White Maiden-Hind]" with a dramatic performance of the ballad.

Anita Best was there, and she too bravely sang in French. But, of course, we couldn't let her go without a Newfoundland song, and, since Philip Hiscock had just given a paper on Mark Walker, the obvious choice was "Tickle Cove Pond". Other treats were Shelly Posen accompanied by Neil Rosenberg's mandolin, and Mike Ballantyne's hearty performance of "To Be A Farmer's Boy" (with some help from Shelly).

For me, most special of all was Rosaleen's rendition of "Fair Annie", a Child ballad that I'd never heard her sing before. Earlier in the conference, as part of her paper on "Jewels Left in the Dunghills" (ballads that Child deliberately omitted from the canon of 305), she had sung "As I Came From Walsingham" (which, logically, ought to be called "As I Went To Walsingham"!), "The Death of Bill Brown", and "Christ Made a Trance".

I haven't done full justice to all the songs and singers at Sudbury, but perhaps I've said enough to suggest that lovers of traditional music may well find the next FSAC conference – to be held in May 2003 at Halifax – well worth attending. See you there!

David Gregory

A Lost Song?

Rosaleen writes: Dave and I have just returned from the Folklore Studies Association of Canada conference in Sudbury, a most enjoyable event. One of the highlights was a singing session after the banquet on Friday night. Marcel Bénéteau of the University of

Sudbury led off the performers with a selection of French language songs, among them a version of a song about a young woman who marries a husband so small that he gets lost in her bed and is gobbled up by the cat. I learned a different version while an undergraduate at

Keele University (North Staffordshire, England). My 'informant' was graduating in Modern Languages, a girl I only remember as 'Sylvia'. I learned several French and German songs from her as well as some in English.

At Sudbury I could only think of two lines each in French and English, but in the days following

the rest of the song came back to me. It is performed straight through, first the French version, followed by the English translation. Each set of two lines is repeated, with the repetition acting as the refrain for the audience. Does anyone know the author/origin of this little ditty? It must be almost forty years since I last sang it.

Papa m'a donné un mari

Anon
Sylvia

Folksong

Pa - pa m'a don - né un ma - ri, Mon
Dieu, quel homme, quel pet - it hommel! Pa - pa m'a don -
- né un mar - i, Mon Dieu, quel homme, quel
pet - it hommel!

Il est perdu dans mon grand lit
Mon Dieu, quel homme, quel petit homme! (repeat)

Le chat l'a pris pour un souris
Mon Dieu, quel homme, quel petit homme! (repeat)

I have a man, he is so small
You hardly can see him at all (repeat)

He is quite lost in my big bed
Where is the man that I have wed? (repeat)

Oh Mr. Cat, don't eat my spouse
He is a man, and not a mouse (repeat)