

singer of traditional material. But he loved the traditional ballads and songs, and I think he never fit into the singer-songwriter pattern that became so popular.

Still, he wrote some beautiful songs. One simple one I find myself singing often at night as I gaze up into the stars:

Countless stars are in the sky,
Have you ever wondered why?

...

Floating out there in the sky,
Have you ever wondered why?

One night in 1950 in a Toronto hotel he started to write a love song about a dream, and the next thing he knew, it had turned into an anti-war song. "Last Night I Had the Strangest Dream" never got played on the radio or printed in school song books, but it travelled all around the world. It was Ed's most famous piece, but many young people didn't know he had written it; some thought it was traditional! And, I'm pleased to report, it's actually in some school songbooks today. In his homemade cassette recording *Ed McCurdy: Thoughts After Sixty*, recorded by his son in New York in the 80s, he has a stirring rendition of "Strangest Dream," complete with a children's chorus. Toronto's classical music radio station plays it every November 11. In the summer of 1999, Ed had serious abdominal surgery, complicated by pneumonia and congestive heart failure. I phoned

Lorne Brown is a Toronto storyteller and ballad singer, and founder of The Ballad Project.

him after he finally came home from the hospital, and he talked to me from his bed. He started to sing the great old ballad "The Three Ra'ens." The voice was unmistakable, but the lung power was gone. Within a few short phrases he had to stop.

And now he's gone. When Canadian ballad singer Moira Cameron heard the news up in Yellowknife, she started to cry. "I think it has something to do with feeling there's not enough of us younger balladeers replacing the older ones," she said. "Doug Wallin, another great ballad singer, also died this week at the age of 80. Thank God these two have been amply recorded, so that people like me are able to continue their music. But for all that I revere these balladeers, I'm not convinced I am adequately carrying on from where they leave off. I am awed by the legacy these people leave. It saddens me no end to think that the people who are listening to me sing ballads may never know the awesome power and magic in the singing of people like Ed McCurdy, Ewan MacColl, Pete Bellamy, and others." So, we who are left, we who love the traditional ballad and folk song, are left to carry on, however inadequately. We've had a great mentor.

*Where do you come from?
Where do you go?
Where do you come from,
Cotton eyed Joe?*

The Centrefold

Fiddler Magazine, PO Box 101, North Sydney, Nova Scotia B2A 3M1; <FiddlerMag@aol.com>; <www.fiddle.com>.

If you love fiddles, fiddlers and the music they produce, you might be interested in picking up a copy of *Fiddler Magazine*. Regardless of the type of fiddle/fiddlers you like, I'm sure you will find something in this magazine that will suite your taste. In the issue I have in my hands, there are articles about Athabaskan fiddlers, New England fiddler-allers, classical bluegrass, and Ireland's Maire O'Keefe.

Fiddler Magazine recognizes and acknowledges the international and diverse appeal of the fiddle. Each article is like a song, taking on the flavour and history of the music it is describing. Lots of attention is paid to authenticity. The interviews and feature are done in good taste, with interesting and reliable information provided. A nice medley of the past, present and future fiddlers is included in each issue. If you are a non-fiddler who is just looking for an entertaining read on the scene, you will like the magazine. It is not bogged down with specific information that is relevant only to players and does not make a whit of sense to anyone else. However, if you are a fiddler, you will appreciate the tunes and practice tips in every issue.

The reviews in the back of the 'zine are written by reputable people who are trustworthy and know what they are about. The regular departments feature a comprehensive range of things

having to do with violins, making 'em, how to play 'em and where to go to play 'em. They also have a lovely *In Memoriam* section for fiddlers who have passed away in the last year.

I always feel like part of a larger fiddling community when I pick up an issue of *Fiddler Magazine*. It is an international gathering place for fiddlers to share their tunes and stories.

The only negative thing I have to say is that, because it is published in the US and is a specialty magazine, it is quite expensive (\$8.60 Cdn per issue). Although it's worth it, I wonder if Canada could come up with a cheaper alternative if we only put a little rosin on the bow and started scratching away.

—Keitha Clark

When the Winter 1999/2000 issue of *Fiddler Magazine* arrived, I noticed that the envelope bore a Cape Breton return address, but thought only that they had a new distribution deal or something—until I turned to the "Note from the Editor." Turns out that editor Mary Larsen is now Mary Holland, having married fiddler Jerry Holland and moved the magazine's operation to North Sydney. So Canada has gained a new world-class folk music magazine, and they're planning on publishing a special issue, in addition to their regular schedule, on Cape Breton fiddle music.

—JL