

## BOOK REVIEWS

### Scotland's Best Folk Song Collection

*The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection*. Vols. 1 and 2. Editors: Patrick Shuldham-Shaw and Emily B. Lyle. Published by the Aberdeen University Press for the University of Aberdeen in association with the School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh. 562 pp., 1981; 604 pp., 1983.

Reviewed by EDITH FOWKE

In the early years of this century a schoolmaster, Gavin Greig, and a minister, James Bruce Duncan, both in Aberdeenshire, produced what Patrick Shuldham-Shaw described as "Scotland's biggest and finest manuscript collection of folksong, biggest in sheer size, and finest on account of the integrity, breadth of vision, and high scholastic ability of the collectors." The combined collection runs to some 3,500 texts and 3,300 tunes.

Some of the songs were published as *Last Leaves of Traditional Ballads*, and others appeared in a weekly folk song column Greig prepared for the *Buchan Observer*; these were later reprinted as *Folk-Song in the North-East*. However, until the present project was undertaken, the bulk of the collection remained unpublished. Now eight volumes in all are planned. Patrick Shuldham-Shaw did the preliminary work and described the collection in an article that introduces the first volume; after his death, Emily B. Lyle took over the editorial task.

The tunes are reproduced from the collectors' manuscripts, and the texts have been reproduced with minimal editing. The songs are grouped by subject, and the substantial notes list the sources of all the versions of each song, give any comments the collectors had made in the manuscripts, identify the song by reference to other sources, and add brief editorial information. The system is thoroughly scholarly and very useful.

Volume 1 contains 185 different songs, many in multiple versions. (There are 18 versions of "The Irish Dragoons," for example.) The topics cover nautical, military, and historical songs, and a group in which characters adopt the dress of the opposite sex.

Volume 2 is devoted entirely to narrative songs. (Actually, there were quite a few narrative songs in the first volume, too.) No explanation is given for the order: Child, broadside, bothy, and local Scottish ballads (and even one North American, "The Lumbering Boys," known here as "The Jam on Gerry's Rocks") appear with no obvious type or subject grouping. I would have appreciated some general discussion of the make-up of this very large assortment — a total of 345 different titles.

Canadian folklorists will find many familiar titles, particularly in the second volume where there seem to be as many Irish as Scottish songs. In fact, except for the specifically Scottish items, most of the songs have turned up in Canada. I was interested to note some rather rare ones known in Ontario: "Johnnie Gallagher," "The British Soldier's Grave," "The Black Cook," "The Bunch of Water Cresses," and "Bung Your Eye."

Most collectors have to be satisfied with publishing a small fraction of their songs. All those interested in folksong owe a debt of gratitude to the editors and publishers who are making available this remarkably rich treasure. We look forward with happy expectation to the appearance of the succeeding volumes.

## Fiddle Music

*Scottish Fiddle Music in the 18th Century: A musical collection and historical study* by David Johnson

Edinburgh: John Donald, 1984. L25.00. (U.S.A. and Canada: Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, NJ).

Reviewed by GEORGE A. PROCTOR.

It has oft been stated that interest in fiddle music has greatly increased in recent years in Canada and elsewhere. This is certainly true with regard to one of the more distinctive styles in Canada, the Scottish. Associated mainly with Cape Breton in Nova Scotia but also to be found in other parts of the country where Scots find themselves, such as Glengarry County in eastern Ontario, this style was imported into Canada in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. This interest has been underlined recently with the re-publication of Simon Fraser's *Airs and Melodies peculiar to the Highlands of Scotland and the Isles* (Edinburgh, 1816) by Paul S. Cranford in Sydney, N.S. in 1982. At the performing level the activities of the 'Cape Breton Symphony' and other fiddlers and groups have shown that Scots-style fiddling is as popular as it ever was. On top of this the recent publication of *Scottish Fiddle Music in the 18th Century* by David Johnson indicates that this style remains active in its place of origin.

Johnson is also the author of *Music and Society in Lowland Scotland in the 18th Century* (London, 1972), an informative book which surveys, in the author's words, "a minor tributary of the European mainstream." Included in this survey is a brief treatment of the main theme of the present volume, which is that Scotland maintained in the 18th century both folk and classical fiddling traditions which were often carried on by the same people.

In my opinion *Scottish Fiddle Music in the 18th Century* makes a very important contribution to the literature of instrumental folk music. It is both an anthology of ninety pieces as well as an historical study. As a performing edition it has its drawbacks in that there are some awkward page turns and the accidentals are so small that this pair of middle-aged eyes had trouble telling the difference between the "sharps" and the "naturals." But the volume more than makes up for these shortcomings by including, on the historical side, many references and explanatory notes, all compiled in proper scholarly format. The volume was designed with the intended purpose of reviving the playing of this repertoire, only some of which has survived through oral tradition since the 18th century. Like