Siobhan Miller • Ric Sanders • The McCalman\ns
Lincolnshire Folk Song Competition • Celtic Nyckelharpa
Celtic Colours Festival • Stovies and Salsa
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the otherwise superb packaging is let down by multiple typing errors (for example the Rafter is Rafter or Rafter is Back has three different spellings). I know, only minor points. Content is King, and there’s 11 cracking songs to get yer teeth into. Nuff said.

Grem Devlin

BOOKS

Ewan McVicar
Lang Legged Beasties
Gallus Publishing
ISBN 9780956599001

Well known as a Scottish songwriter and storyteller, particularly for children, Ewan McVicar has written or co-written several previous collections of songs. This book is specifically designed for children, pre-teens mainly, who like a good story or a silly song. Lang Legged Beasties is a mix of traditional and new material, with rather less than half the items here written by Mr McVicar. I say items, because there’s a broad range from playground rhymes to fairy stories, old rhymes to funny verse. Nothing is taken too seriously, and although this book is beautifully printed and bound there’s a homespun feel to the layout and illustrations, almost as if someone had pinned the oral tradition to the page. I quite like the seeming haphazard use of fonts, the overlapping of text and images, and it’s certainly a change from the too-glossy production of many kids’ books and magazines.

There’s a fair amount of Scots vocabulary in both the old and new works here, and even a Gaelic word or two, so the glossary at the back will be essential for most children, but my Angloised brood had no problems using it. With plenty of attractive drawings and lots of humour, Lang Legged Beasties should appeal to a wide range of young readers. It’s also good for reading aloud, or singing along to - the sounds and repetitions are an important part of the fun. The title promises monsters and creepy crawlies, but there are as many tales of woodland and farmyard animals, and some stories where the animals only have a minor part to play: versions of The Gingerbread Boy, The Dancing Princesses, The Selfie, and The Tinder Box for instance. It’s not all sweet little bunnies and happy endings, mind: this is traditional fare, with death and misfortune a normal part of life. Nothing new for the videogame generation, of course. Google it, or email ewan.mcvicar@gallus@tesco.net for more information.

Alex Monaghan

Chris Goertzen
Southern Fiddlers And Fiddle Contests
University Press Of Mississippi
ISBN: 978-1-60473-122-4

Ian Russell & Anna Kearney Guigné (EDS.)
Crossing Over: Fiddle And Dance Studies From Around The North Atlantic 3
The Elphinstone Institute, University Of Aberdeen, With The Department Of Folklore, MMA Lowe & The School Of Music, Memorial University, Newfoundland
ISBN: 978-1-60473-122-4

Fiddling in the US has seen the seemingly unstoppable growth of the “Texas competition style”, which have the structure to allow them to be used as a springboard for variations - mostly melodic, but with some rhythmic, which can point to aspects of the original tune whilst allowing for multiple interpretations and the exhibition of the performer’s improvisational and technical ability. This has led to the context holding “protected” contests, where specific regional styles other than the “Texas” are specified. This puts me in mind of the situation in Ireland where the seemingly overwhelming impact of the “session style” - an ironing out of regional styles allowing more group playing whichever your regional style might have been - led to organisations such as Ceoltoir na bhFidhridh successfully championing a greater appreciation of regional culture.

Goertzen’s fascinating book looks at the phenomenon of fiddle contest; the overall event, the contest itself, the fringe events, the fiddlers and, of course, the music they play. There are several transcribed interviews with musicians and a detailed look (with impressive musical transcriptions) at some of the tunes. So, we trace how Neil Gow’s Lord Macdonald’s Reel mutated into Leather Breeches and how this may be approached by a fine Texan-style performance; the other tunes in this section are Mississippi Sawyer and Dusty Miller. It is interesting to see how, in a country like England, which has no such contests, the Folk Festival has developed into a similar counterpart as regards the people who go, what they do when they’re there and how they approach both the music and the traditions which surround it. He writes: “I am an academic with a primary audience of other academics”, but his breezy style and rigorous research make this a volume to be appreciated by a much wider audience, especially anyone interested in the development of traditional fiddle music.

Goertzen repays part of his research in the excellent new collection of essays from the North Atlantic Fiddle Convention (NAFCo) held at St John’s University, Newfoundland in 2008. The third such collection, once again under the inspired stewardship of Ian Russell with Anna Kearney Guigné, this collection ranges far and wide. Unsurprising, the bulk of the essays deal with fiddle traditions in the Americas, but there is something here for everyone, not just from different traditions, but for those who wish to consider the position and motives of revivals, how local and national traditions are shaped and, indeed the role of the fiddler in the twenty-first century. It is hard to do justice in a short review to the breadth, vitality and interest of this collection. Superb!

Paul Burgess

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