

JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL FOLK MUSIC COUNCIL

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EDITORIAL

HAVING held its first General Conference, adopted a Constitution, launched a *Journal*, and with a Festival in Italy and a Conference in Canada in view, the International Folk Music Council may be said to have passed the provisional and experimental stage and to have become an established organisation with continuing liabilities. The articles in this *Journal* give some indication of the varied problems that confront us.

The Council is concerned with the survival and the revival of folk music, and at both levels it recognises the demands of the scientific, social and artistic aspects of the subject and their interdependence.

We have to face the fact that folk music is disappearing as a traditional art—rapidly in some regions and slowly in others. Immediate steps must therefore be taken to preserve our remaining heritage, not only for our own use but for that of posterity. We must consider methods of recording and notation, so as to give as faithful a reproduction as possible of the art as presented to us in its natural state. Then in the interests of musical science and history we must analyse, classify and study comparatively the material thus collected. But in any analysis we must always remember that the whole is more than the sum of its parts and also that the living organism of folk music is not to be found in the stereotyped notation or even in the mechanical recording, but only in the fleeting creation of the singer, dancer or instrumentalist. Our work in the laboratory will therefore be of little use unless we can relate it to the study of folk music as a live social and artistic manifestation.

This is not the place to discuss the reasons that have led to the decline of folk music as a traditional art and in any case they are probably matters which are beyond our control, but the Council can, through its Festivals and other means, assuredly encourage the traditional exponents of folk music and help them to regain their confidence in its value and beauty.

It is, however, doubtful if folk music will survive as an active force if it is relegated to any one class or condition of society. Except in the most isolated regions the fashions and amusements of the city are all-pervasive, as many speakers at the Conference reminded us. It would therefore seem that the survival of folk music is bound up with its revival, and this raises the question of what steps should be taken in the delicate task of lifting folk music from its traditional environment and transplanting it in fresh soil. We have on the one hand to avoid the adoption of an artificial "peasant" style that is foreign to us and on the other hand we

have to beware of making "conscious" improvements. Again, we must guard the uninitiated from accepting every song or dance that is performed by peasants or country people as necessarily a folk song or folk dance. Selection of material is an important factor in the revival of folk music and in this the artist as well as the scholar must play his part.

We have only touched on the fringe of the many responsibilities that the Council has undertaken. It must not however be imagined that these problems are being approached for the first time. There have been devoted workers in the field for many years and much has already been accomplished although there still remains much to be done. Nor should it be thought that the mere creation of the Council is going to provide the solution to our problems. The Council cannot do more than pool the resources and experiences of the individual workers and national bodies. It is hoped that the *Journal* will provide an effective medium in this respect, but it will depend on the goodwill of the correspondents in supplying information and their readiness to regard the *Journal* as a forum for the expression and discussion of opinions.