

The production is of superior quality, and one can almost imagine the pieces as actually sounding this way in their original performances in the 1920s. Indeed, Brozman states this as his intent: "On Big Boy Stomp I've tried to recreate the uninhibited but solid sound of a small-band hot jazz of the late 1920s--inspired by the K.C. Tin Roof Stompers." Brozman, in this sense, brings an additional air of musicological merit to Kicking Mule's stable of performers. **Snapping the Strings** is a slice of inspired musicality and enthusiasm.

Season of the Dream. Mark Biggs with Jeff Doty and Max Tyndall. Produced and designed by Mark Biggs. One 12" 33 1/3 rpm disc. 1983. 12 selections, instrumental and vocal. Kicking Mule Record KM-221.

Vive le Dulcimer! Lois Hornbostel with Ray Owens, Seth Austen and Jesse Winch. Produced by Lois Hornbostel and Seth Austen. One 12" 33 1/3 rpm disc. 1983. 14 selections, instrumental. Kicking Mule Records KM-235.

Reviewed by John Bendix

The Appalachian (or Mountain or fretted or lap) dulcimer has become known far beyond its geographical "home" in the last 35 years, due largely to the national exposure given to it by performers like Jean Ritchie and Richard Fariña. Folklorists such as Alan Lomax and Sam Rizzetta have helped in this process, as have the members of the "how to build and play it" school like Howie Mitchell. Such exposure has encouraged dulcimer performers to extend their musical vision beyond tunes heard in Appalachia, and the two recordings under consideration here belong to this new expansion of vision.

Mark Biggs attempts what might be called "fusion-folk" music by combining jazz and folk elements, "out of a desire to expand the recognized boundaries and conventional idiom of the dulcimer" (liner notes). Taking his cue from George Gershwin, Biggs explores the potential of the dulcimer by emphasizing plucked and bowed playing styles, with tunes accompanied by guitar or bass and the percussive effects provided by bell trees, brass chimes, and marachas. Most tunes are his own, exceptions being

provided by Gershwin's "Summertime," the Irish air "Summertime Summertime" (can you guess the season of his dream?), and several Beatles numbers.

Lois Hornbostel, "a leader in the dulcimer revival" (liner notes), opts for an international approach, presenting dance tunes from various European countries, from Korea, Israel, and Russia, as well as songs and airs from two American musical traditions. Like Biggs, she uses different styles of play (strummed, flat- and fingerpicked), and employs guitar accompaniment, with her percussion supplied variously by tambourine, drums, cymbal and bodhran.

In a sense, both albums are products of the folk song movement of the 1950s and 60s: Biggs opts for the Fariña approach of mixed musical elements, Hornbostel opts for the gee-whiz enthusiasm of the Weavers for foreign folk music (though regrettably without their political commitment). The record covers could not emphasize this contrast more clearly: a painting of a mustachioed Biggs, standing off-balance with his dulcimer slung between his shoulder blades, his shirt sleeves rolled up, versus a photograph of a prim Hornbostel, seated and playing the dulcimer in her lap, her black, long-sleeved blouse buttoned to the neck (and under her the subtitle "Colorful Music from Many Lands Played in Many Ways on the Fretted Dulcimer").

Biggs's album, with its creative yet dreamy spirit, is the more successful of the two, particularly when Biggs plays his own compositions. His versions of Gershwin or George Harrison, however, sound more like obsequious tributes to musical masters than they do like "fusion-folk." Hornbostel, by comparison, sounds thin and lacking in warmth or conviction (is this asking too much from a dulcimer revivalist?), a hodge-podge of tunes unified only by her presence in each. She does best in American and Irish material, but her tune descriptions ("one of the most dramatic melodies I know") reveal a certain inability to be anything other than a musical tourist.

As with all Kicking-Mule albums, tab books are available for these records and a message to this effect is plastered across the top of the liner notes on Hornbostel's album, while on Biggs's it is discretely placed on the bottom.

While this sales pitch may be well intentioned, the potential for self-aggrandizement ought to be resisted: the impecuniousness of musicians makes it only **partly** forgivable.

CONTRIBUTORS

John Bendix is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Political Science at Indiana University. He has been the backbone of the **Forum** typing team for the last two years and the editors are sorry to see him leave for fieldwork in Germany.

Regina Bendix is a Ph.D. candidate in the Folklore Institute at Indiana University. As soon as this issue is at the printer, she'll leave for fieldwork in Switzerland.

Tina Bucuvalas is a Ph.D. candidate in the Folklore Institute at Indiana University and is currently finishing her dissertation.

Tim Cochrane is a Ph.D. candidate in the Folklore Institute at Indiana University.

Hugo A. Freund is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Folklore and Folklife at the University of Pennsylvania. He is currently finishing a dissertation on a family's Thanksgiving celebration.

Gregory Hansen is currently working on the Kentucky Folk Project at the Kentucky Center for the Arts. He eventually plans to complete the remaining three quarters of his master's thesis so that he can no longer claim to be a student at Western Kentucky University.

Bruce Harrah-Conforth is a Ph.D. student in the Folklore Institute at Indiana University. He currently works at the Indiana University Archives. Together with fellow fieldworkers Garry Barrow and Will Wheeler, he is completing a project on the blues tradition in Indianapolis.

Muhammadu Sani Ibrahim teaches in the Department of Nigerian Languages at Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria.