

## Fowke for the Folks

“By the time the last bits have been picked off the turkey and the tree has started to drop its needles, everyone has pretty well had enough of Christmas,” says storyteller Janet Kellough, “yet people are looking for something to do during the holiday week, especially if they have visiting relatives. We thought it would be a great time to take the Fowke Tales show into Mount Tabor Playhouse.”

“Fowke Tales Revisited” has been booked for Friday, December 30th at the newly-refurbished theatre in Milford.

The title of the show, which is a play on words, recounts the odyssey of music collector Edith Fowke, who began documenting Ontario’s folk music in the late 1950’s.

“Fowke began looking for unique Ontario songs at a time when everyone was convinced that no such thing existed,” Kellough says. “She discovered a motherlode of music when she made contact with the Towns Family of Douro. The area has a strong Irish heritage and there were many unique variants of old world songs, but Fowke found that the local musicians had continued to document their lives through music and so there was a treasure-trove of new original music as well.”

Fowke recorded and published most of what she found and her collection has subsequently been archived at various universities, as well as at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington. A great deal of the material she found was released commercially on labels such as Folkways.

The original Fowke Tales show, which tells the story of what Edith Fowke found in Douro, premiered at Lang Pioneer Village in 2009. Now it has been reconfigured as “Fowke Tales Revisited”.

“We’ve added some new material,” Kellough says. There’s a greater emphasis on vocal music now, and the singing group Trinity (Prince Edward County’s own Kim Inch, Jeanette Arsenault and Renie Thompson) adds a unique richness to the show.”

Developed by Kellough, the late Zeke Mazurek and Allan Kirby, a Peterborough musician who is currently finishing up his PhD on the subject of Edith Fowke, the show blends the music with stories of where it came from, offering a context for

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Striking Clouds November 28, 2011  
(Photograph Courtesy of Juanita McMahan)

each song. The songs, which were originally collected in mostly a capella form, have been given modern arrangements and augmented with instrumentation by Kirby, Arsenault and Port Hope musician Jim Yates. Sound will be provided by Through the Cedars Music Productions.

“The result is a real hand-clappin’, toe-tappin’, feel-good night of great music,” Kellough says. “For a number of years we did a show called Fiddle ‘n Frostbite at Mount Tabor during the Christmas week. Fowke Tales has the same kind of atmosphere – like a kitchen party that everyone’s been invited to sit in on.”

Showtime for Fowke Tales is 7:30 p.m. on Friday, December 30th. Tickets are \$20 for adults, \$10 for youth ages 5-12 and are available at Hicks’ Store in Milford, at Scott’s Store in Picton or by calling Janet Kellough at 613-476-3988, or email janetkellough@gmail.com