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Joe Holmes: Here I Am Amongst You, by Len Graham, Four Courts, 2010

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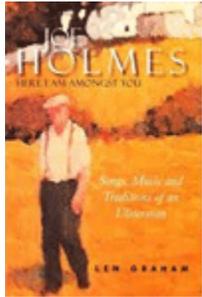
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Recommended Readings



Joe Holmes: Here I Am Amongst You

by Len Graham, Four Courts, 2010

Reviewed by George Geib

Joe Holmes (1906-1978) was one of the great traditional musicians of County Derry, Northern Ireland. As both a singer and a fiddler, he possessed a highly varied repertoire of tunes, ballads, and entertainments that made him a welcome performer throughout the island. Len Graham was a close friend of Holmes who collected much of this work in both recorded and print versions. This delightfully illustrated print collection is an extensively annotated compilation of eighty songs, fifty-three fiddle and dance tunes, and an introduction to Christmas mumming. Holmes performed with, and frequently influenced, many of the leading artists of the Celtic revival. Thistle and Shamrock listeners will recognize some old favorites, but should be surprised by the amount of new and unexpected material. Holmes learned many of his favorites from his mother, who in turn drew heavily upon nineteenth century broadside ballads and community dancing. The feel of an earlier Ireland is very real and immediate. Biography, history, and musical archive, this volume is well worth a visit.

- George Geib is Professor of History at Butler University.