

FAST FOLK

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SONGS OF TRADITION

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EDITORIAL

By Richard Meyer

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This month's FAST FOLK MAGAZINE is full of songs from around the world. Italy, France, Ireland and others are represented. We are proud of the international cast that performs on this record. As a small organization we are able to put together a collection such as this only because of the artist's availability in the New York area. It is through artists' performances at the SpeakEasy and other venues that we have the chance to meet, hear and record them in New York. It is possible that the doors of the music community across the United States will be more difficult to open due to increasingly stringent regulations being prepared by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. I quote from a press release sent to FAST FOLK along with the regulations themselves of INS 8 CFR 214. This is very accurate summary of the lengthy regulation.

"In the past year, it has become increasingly difficult for performers to obtain H-1 Visas for national tours. The Immigration and Naturalization Services' proposed rule 8 cfr 214, which appeared in the Federal Register on August 8th, spells out extremely restrictive visa requirements. The rule is scheduled to take effect in January of 1987. It closes our borders to all artists but those who are "pre-eminent", as determined by criteria such as 1) Stardom in a major production 2) Receiving a national or international award, 3) National or international acclaim in major publications, 4) Has and will appear in distinguished venues, 5) Has performed with distinguished groups, 6)

Has extensive commercial success, 7) Received recognition from experts in the artist's field, and 8) Commands a high salary. It limits visas to one visit of at most 60 days per year. Only non-profit or governmental organizations could bring such artists in, and only for a cultural event."

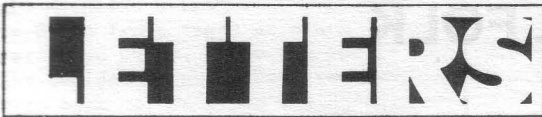
Folk clubs, coffeehouses, and many independent producers and artists' representatives will have difficulty putting on shows by non-mainstream folk performers ethnic dancers, story tellers and singers based on the quality of their financial success. Foreign artists are often brought to this country by individuals acting as booking agents who have no need to be incorporated as non-profit and are certainly not governmental bodies. They are people who support the arts, bringing something vital to the population of this country. Record companies may be less interested in performers who will not be able to tour the States with ease, if at all.

There are many things at risk. Restricting the issuing of visas to artists of preeminence implies that the INS' criteria actually includes artists of preeminence in a field as intimate as folk clubs. Artists must, as specified in the INS regulations, submit a petition including supporting documents from critics and arts organizations in the artist's home country to provide evidence of their artistic significance. This is not always as simple as it sounds. The INS also requires that the artist be highly paid, implying that such high payment indicated artistic worth. There are many performers who are better known abroad than in their home countries. Folk performers from France and England regularly tour the United States playing to large

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Dear Editor,

Taking a cue from the editorial in the January issue "Toward a New Beginning," I am sending some news from the European front. There really isn't any reason to be overjoyed about having to write about singer-songwriters in general. Because, like the music, the problems just do not stimulate the imagination. It may be a bit peremptory, but considering everything, almost all the young songwriters reveal themselves not so much as appropriators of other styles but as bunglers, not bad imitators but terribly lacking in creative nuances. Actually, the new songwriting doesn't yet exist; it's a convenient category which doesn't contain even the slightest expressive homogeneity. This has been obvious ever since the first attempts of The Coop even though you were able to paint a cohesive picture with a few coats of ideology. Here, but from what I know even where you are, we have come to think of expressiveness and careful word-craft as being opposed to a misconceived "majority rule" behind which lurks a contagious disease called "communication" that follows the order set down by the mass media without disturbing it. To a living vital music with many meanings to be discovered and freed, we prefer the ceremony of the emphatic and didactic, the pedantic and jesuitic. Therefore, we should not be surprised if behind many complaisant and diplomatic reviews, almost nothing of what is being recorded can be recommended to noble souls! It is true what you say, that it's not enough to "fare il bucato" (cleanse one's soul) or to show off our literateness by quoting a thousand poets. I remember an old professor of mine who used to admonish us that before practicing politics, one should have a ripened consciousness of history. Today you are the old professor hurling the same litany. The musicians, from what I know, are divided into two schools: some look for joy, sadness - in other words, they live, trying out as many notes (read: syllables and notes) as possible by

twisting and stretching them, reworking them endlessly; the rest rely on the principle that every note contains all other possible ones, and they are content to repeat one sadly. The greatest risk, as I understand it, is that this pretense of content acts to multiply self-aggrandizing manouevs and backstabbing among people. (Are you aware of this?) And if this vigorous harvest of misery hasn't been able to suffocate music, and with it happiness, it's only because at least you are always talking about UTOPIA. Well, utopia is possible, it's beautiful and it's needed. A warm hug.

Adelmo Quadrio
Novaria

Translated by Rosanna Crucillo,
Germana Pucci, and Hugh Blumenfeld



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SEX IN ENGLISH TRADITIONAL FOLK SONGS

by Heather Wood

Folk songs, passed down from generation to generation, are mostly about the daily business of life -- whether it be the life of the farmer, the sailor, or the factory worker. As such, many of them are about that all-important subject -- sex. They are rarely explicit, preferring to shroud their meaning in symbolism. But they are mostly filled with down-to-earth common sense and humor.

Ladies in folk songs are either virgins or whores. If virgins, they invariably pass from this happy state into pregnancy. If whores, they usually have (a social disease), and a propensity for larceny. The virgins sometimes try to stay that way and they sometimes succeed. One favourite story is about the young girl who outwits her would-be ravisher -- she tells him "there is something between your legs which I require to keep me from the cold." He dismounts from his horse to take advantage of the offer, and she quickly makes off with the horse and the contents of his saddlebags.

Other virgins -- either more or less fortunate depending on your point of view -- don't seem to put up much of a struggle. When the lusty beggarman comes knocking at the door "after supper was over, and she went to make his bed, and the beggar following after, gained her maidenhead." King James V of Scotland had the happy habit of prowling round the countryside in rags, finding girls who would love him for himself rather than for his possessions. This story must have been well-known, for one young lady, having given her all to a passing tinker, is most put out when he tells her, next morning, that he is exactly what he seems. "Then she took the feather-bed and threw it at the wall, saying 'Go you with the tinker, then, my maidenhead and all.'" And pregnancy is almost always the result -- "twenty long weeks being over and past, her mother did ask her the reason why she thickened around the waist." But in a rural community, this is neither a great tragedy nor a great shame. Another pair of hands is always useful, and, far from being a bar to marriage, often the love-child was happy proof of childbearing capability.

Sometimes, after being bedded, the girl asks when she is to be wedded. The answer is "when fishes fly and seas run dry." One straightforward seducer (from the North of England) says, "go your way contented to be, for you've had your share as well as me." Frequently, the young man admits to having a wife already. But he often presents the girl with a purse of gold "to pay the nurse's fee," because he confidently expects her to be pregnant after the night's work.

The whore appears most frequently in sailors' songs. She is usually accused of being after Jack Tar's money -- all of it, not just her allotted share: "she emptied my pockets of everything I had, she took my boots from underneath the bed, she even took the gold watch from underneath my head." And she usually leaves him with more than he bargained for -- in Jack's own euphemistic words, "I think her little fire-bucket burned my bobstay through." He is usually more complimentary about ladies from foreign lands -- of whom Valparaiso he confides, "when your money is all gone, they won't on you impose. They're far before them Plymouth girls, who will pawn and sell your clothes." But occasionally, he has a good word to say for the girls back home; "them Rotherhithe girls I do adore, they take it all and ask for more, and Liverpool girls they are so fine, that're never a day behind their time." Of the lady who may one day become his wife, very little is heard -- she is a shadowy figure at the end of a roistering life, "I'll get married instead, and have all night in bed, and go to sea no more."

Sailors often refer to their girls in nautical terms: "Sally she's a pretty little craft, cut sharp to the bow and rounded aft." When they meet on the street he takes her in tow, and they walk along hand in hand -- "Yardarm to yardarm bobbing." After a night of lust, Jack will ruefully declare, "my shot-locker's empty, my powder's all spent, and I can't fire a shot, 'cos it's choked at the vent." This use of the gun as a symbol is also used by soldiers and hunters: "My powder is spent and my bullets all gone, my ramrod is limber, I cannot fire on." Alter-

natively, a musical instrument is brought into play. When the soldier is with his lady, "out of his knapsack he pulled a fine fiddle, and he played her such a pretty tune that the valley did ring." The lady asks him to "play one tune more, for I do love your fiddle and the touch of your string." Often, he cannot oblige, but promises to return next day.

Some of the symbolism used is quite poetic. One young couple amble off into the greenwood, "and he pecked at the bush, till the bird it did fly in, just a little above her lilywhite knee." Appropriately enough, there is a "Bird in Bush" welfare clinic down the Old Kent Road, in London.

Sailors and soldiers are all fine, lusty fellows; so are beggars, tinkers and local squires. The usual butt of the folk song is the tailor. This may partly be due to the fact that his job is considered unmanly, and partly that "tailor" and "sailor" rhyme, thus making the songwriter's life easier. For whatever reason, the poor tailor is always being cuckolded, or robbed of his intended at the altar, or, in one particularly vicious song, when he is for once the cuckold, "the poor tailor was in the midst of his frolics, the molecatcher's trap caught him fast by the elbow..." Another euphemism, of course.

Most of the sex in folk songs is very straightforward -- a very few ballads tell of incest, and those are usually about lords and ladies rather than the peasantry. Sometimes, girls dress as men to go and seek their true loves, who have been pressed away to sea. One such lady finds her man, but he has married another, so she shoots him and his new wife, then marries the captain of his ship. Another enterprising damsel dressed as a cabin-boy, just for the adventure. "The captain's lady being on board, she would have liked to toy -- but 'twas the captain found the secret of the handsome cabin boy." And, behold, she gets pregnant. Voyages in those days lasted so long that she had the baby on board ship, to the great amusement of the ship's doctor and crew.

Another girl, this time taking the part of a drummer-boy, is revealed when "her jacket blew open and exposed her lillywhite breast." She is granted a pension for her reward, and her captain tells her he is sorry to lose her.

In most songs, the male plays the active role. Just occasionally, the lady has her say, as in this sad lament: "Come sooner to my bed at e'en, John Anderson, my Jo. When first that we began, you had as good a tiltry as any other man. But now it's weak and wan, John, and wimples to and fro, and often needs my helping hand, John Anderson, my Jo." Or another young lady, going home from a county wake with her young man: "If she should chance to stumble among the new-mown hay, well, it's kiss me now or never, this pretty maid will say."

In general, the attitude is one of light-hearted enjoyment for all concerned, and many of the songs finish, "here's a health to the ploughboy (or soldier, or sailor), wherever he may be, who loves to take a fair young maid and set her upon his knee." Because, in the long run, everybody wins.

HEATHER WOOD is a singer of English traditional folk songs and was a member of The Young Tradition. This article is a reprint from Folk Music Scene Magazine (premier issue).

(continued from page 2)

numbers of people, though not in major venues. Just as many American jazz musicians went to Europe to find a wider audience, so are folk performers coming here to expand theirs. Traveling performers who are in highly visible venues and command high salaries are more easily taxed and at a higher rate. It may even be possible to censor performers with sensitive political views who are not established yet in the public eye.

Whole, in fact, FAST FOLK as a non-profit organization would be able to sponsor such events and petition for performers to enter the US, it will be nearly impossible for many individual clubs to do this as they are run as more conventional businesses. In this time of fair trade, relaxation of import taxes and other fundamental capitalist policies of the present administration it seems contrary to not allow foreign performers to try their mettle in the American market. Perhaps they will take a miniscule portion of the GNP home with them, but in the process they will have contributed to a long tradition of intercultural exchanges which have made the major cultural centers and outlying areas as rich as they are. The folk scene specifically, is fueled by music that reminds us of our European, African, and Latin American roots. Clubs that survive on American and foreign performers contribute to the economy of this country by employing food services, carpenters, waiters, advertisers and paying rent and all the appropriate business taxes.

While it may, or may not be intentional on the part of the INS, the restrictions they are about to enact only serve the financially successful performers who command audiences in the thousands at one sitting and the accompanying revenues. The fact that lesser known (a misnomer) performers actually appear before as

many people in the course of a tour is not taken into account by the INS. A single large scale performance is deemed more valid than a series of intimate ones; generating the same revenue; and perhaps bringing culture of a wider variety to people outside of major population centers. If the INS succeeds in implementing these regulations the more subtle, ephemeral and delicate parts of the international cultural exchange may be restricted. The audiences and the people it's ticket money supports may lose many enlightening, entertaining and varied artistic experiences. It is possible that with many other trade restrictions, other countries will be moved to restrict American performer's work abroad. This would be an unfortunate move to isolationism on both sides of the border. Isolationism only breeds ignorances, jingoism, and fear. Many performers from FAST FOLK and the village scene regularly play in Europe, and we have a fair number of subscribers there. Many of the performances on this record are the direct result of such international exchanges.

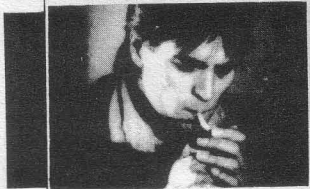
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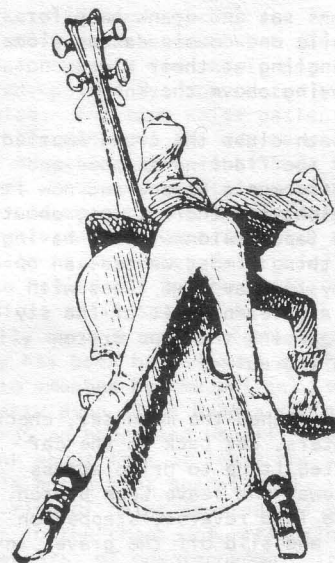
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THE FIDDLERS OF CAPE BRETON

It was 7 p.m. on a Saturday night, and the sun went down across the St. Lawrence Bay through an ominous gray cloud. I drove west all evening, until at last the road curled south toward the mainland of Nova Scotia, and I pulled off the road to watch the moon set into the dark water.

Midnight. Got out and relieved myself under the stars, thinking of my weekend in Cape Breton, listening to fiddle music. Had stayed two nights with the Noels, eating wonderful homemade food and talking 'til late about It All, even down to comparing the Young People, respectively, of America and Canada: "In Cape Breton the Scots still say 'ken', the Irish 'a wee bit' and the French 'oui'. The traditions don't disappear, generation after generation."

Ah, the music. Jerry Holland and Brenda Stubber played Brenda's beautiful, airy fiddle tunes at the Cedar Club in Sydney, while groups of eight danced together (with no one calling): round and round, across, hands up, couples under the bridge, change partners, back to start, round and round, change back, end of song.

And in Cheticamp, French fiddler Donald Leblond played in a tavern all Saturday afternoon, and the local folks -- 200 strong in a town of 1000 -- sat and drank beer for hours while one couple danced alone, hands dangling at their sides, nothing moving above the knees.

But at both clubs the crowd emptied out when the fiddling stopped and the country music began, and now it was midnight and there I was, about to leave Cape Breton without having the one thing I most wanted: an opportunity to play some tunes with someone and learn a bit of the style of accompanying the Cape Breton tunes on the guitar.

And so I watched the moon set, checked the stars, got back in the car and started it up to drive across the causeway and leave Cape Breton. I shifted into reverse, stepped on the gas, and slid off the gravel into a deep muddy ditch.

There was nothing to do but sleep; in the morning I ran to the nearby house as the last two folks were leaving.

"We're just goin' to church," said the Mrs. "Go on inside and my son Curtis will fix you some tea."

I rang the bell and Curtis said come on in. I went for my guitar, and when I got back he had towels out for a shower.

"Can I play your guitar?" he asked.

"Sure." I came out of the shower and Curtis was strumming away.

"What are you doin' all the way up here?"

"I was hoping to learn some fiddle music."

"Well, you've hit on the right place! My dad's a fiddler, wait'll he gets home from church!"

By the time Archie and Martha MacNeil returned we had been through albums by lightning-fast Howie MacDonald and by the MacClellans, a beauty from Rounder Records. I was absentmindedly strumming along when Archie took out his fiddle.

"A few years ago we were down to a half-dozen fiddlers here," said Archie as I sat marvelling over a huge plate of food. "Then people started saying what a great tradition there was, and the younger ones started picking it up. Now we're back up to a couple of hundred."

"A jig goes like this," he began. "Deedle dee dee, deedle dee dee, deedle dee dee, that's it, deedle dee dee, you've got it," he kept saying as he jigged around the living room in church-goin' clothes. "And a strathspey is like this, slow fours, one at a time, and the reel, that's the fast one in fours, deedle deedle dee, that's right. Myself, I like the jig," and away he went on that thing while I deedle dee dee'd some chords.

"That's it, you've got it good," he said at last, and it felt good to me.

Curtis sang then, Rita MacNeil's "Working Man," a tale that may explain why the once-prosperous coal mines of the island are closed these days:

It's a working man I am,
And I've been down underground
And I swear to God if I ever see the sun
Or for any length of time
I could hold it in my mind
I never again would go down underground.



Archie, Sandy, Martha (holding grandson Nathan), Curtis and Morely MacNeil with the author (seated, with guitar).

I was having such a good time that when Sandy offered to tow my car out I wanted to yell No! I won't go back! They'll never take me alive! But I had a ticket to a concert in Antigonish that started in an hour, so it was time to leave.

But first Martha asked me a good question.

"Why did you sleep in your car? Instead of coming over here?"

"It was the middle of the night," I said. Just for effect I threw in some New York menace: "And besides, where I come from people don't open their doors to strangers in the daytime. And for good reason."

Everyone inhaled.

"Well, don't you EVER sleep in your car again in Cape Breton, young man. Folks here aren't like that. Why, we put up a whole busload one time that got stuck in the ice. You come here anytime, night or day, now."

"Yes ma'am," I said. "I'll see you again, some time."

* * *

Here are some good sources for Cape Breton music:

-- Stores: The Halifax Folklore Center has good records and music books, for example, "Maritime Folk Songs," which includes "The Old Blind Horse" (Breakwater). Also, McKnight's, in Sydney, has some hard-to-find fiddle tune books, such as "The Cape Breton Collection of Scottish Melodies" by Gordon McQuarrie (published in 1975 by J. Beaton of Medford, Massachusetts), where Lisa Gutkin found the songs for this Fast Folk Medley.

-- Albums: Howie MacDonald's is the most traditional and high-energy, fiddle and piano, just like in concert in Antigonish, although without the live sound of hundreds of feet stomping in time. "Jerry Holland" is more modern in production and very good, and The Clelland's album on Rounder is a beautiful collection of melodious well-known tunes. MacDonald and Holland's records also include basic information, such as the rhythms (jigs are 6/8, strathspeys and reels 4/4), and instrumentation.

-- And if you're up near Antigonish, listen to Ray MacDonald's "Celtic Fringe" radio show on CJFX -- everyone does. Or go to The Listening Room in Halifax and visit with Ed McCurdy, maybe you can sing "Last Night I Had the Strangest Dream" with him there. Or drive the Cabot Trail to Cheticamp, a French fishing village, where Donald Leblond is playing on Saturday afternoons, or Jerry Holland that night. Or stop off at the MacNeill's in Craignish and say hello for me.

"It's a music that reflects our lives up here," says Archie MacNeil. "We play it, and pass it on."

Rod MacDonald

AUGUSTA HERITAGE ARTS WORKSHOP:
Davis & Elkins College

Music and dance traditions from both sides of the Atlantic will find common ground this January in the heart of West Virginia, as the Augusta Heritage Center presents its 1987 Winter Augusta Workshop in Elkins.

For two solid weeks--from January 4 through 17--some 30 artists will share their skills in classes, concerts, and dozens of other events on the campus of Davis & Elkins College, spotlighting topics spread from English winter customs to Canadian fiddling styles.

Days at the workshop will be divided into six class periods, allowing participants to study a wide diversity of traditional arts either week. All told, the program will include some four dozen different workshops.

Aspiring musicians can pick from sessions in Appalachian fiddle, clawhammer banjo, Cajun fiddle and accordion, and English concertina, taught by such master players as Kevin Burke, Gerry Milnes, Sam Rizzetta, and Michael Doucet. Vocals classes will include southern harmony singing with Mike Seeger and Hazel Dickens, Appalachian ballads with Jean Ritchie, and songs of the British Isles, courtesy of Tony Barrand, John Roberts, and Lous Killen.

For dancers, there'll be back-to-back classes in flatfooting, Welsh border morris, southern squares, honky-tonk two-steps, contras, and clogging, led by "Caledonia", Jim Morrison, Millie Ortego



Hedlund, Ira Bernstein, Larry Edelman, and more. Live music will be a part of all dance classes, offered by the Critton Hollow String Band, fiddler Ed Michael, guitar picker Wayne Henderson, and many others. Sessions in folklore will focus on everything from collecting old songs to Cajun customs, while crafts classes will encompass skills from wheat weaving to wood carving.

Evenings at Winter Augusta will feature weekly concerts and dances, lectures, and other special presentations. A two-day festival closes out the workshop January 16 and 17.

Tuition for Winter Augusta is \$150 per week, with a \$10 discount offered those who register before October 1. An on-campus housing and meals package is also available, at \$122 per week.

For further information, contact the Augusta Heritage Center, Davis & Elkins College, Elkins, WV 26241; phone (304) 636-1903.



WOMEN AND THE SUPERNATURAL IN ENGLISH BALLADRY

by Robert Rodriguez

A considerable number of Celtic and Anglo-American ballads deal with various aspects of the realm of the supernatural, and the role and image of women is integral to many of them, with variants as diverse as the ballads themselves. With a few exceptions, women may be said to play the following roles in traditional ballad plots: women as mortal adversary to supernatural denizens, women as supernatural adversary to earthly mortals, women as shapeshifters and other spectral figures, or as objects of metamorphosis or transformation either in life or after death, and women as practitioners of magic or witchcraft or other supernatural powers during their lifetime.

In a number of ballads and tales, women pit their skill, courage, and cleverness against an assortment of supernatural beings including the devil, various members of the Faerie folk, and monsters. Mary outwits the infamous Mr. Fox in the ballad of that name through the clever use of a dream sequence, finally unmasking the grizzly deeds of this Renardine-type figure. In "Lady Isabel and the Elf-knight" (Child No.4) the clever heroine manages to drown her would-be murderer by tricking him into turning his back on her while she undresses herself, and as he is drowning she scornfully tells him that he may now join his previous six victims and become their lord and master.

Lady Janet pits her skill and courage against the Faerie host itself in her successful attempt to disenchant Tamlin (Child No.39) from the spell of the elfin world; she stands rigorously to her task as, one after another, Tamlin is changed into a roaring lion, a burning bar of iron, running water, and finally into a naked knight. In the ballad of "The Devil and the Feathery Wife," a wo-

man rescues her farmer husband from the clutches of the devil himself by disguising herself as a creature the devil cannot identify. In a variant of this ballad from Devon, when the devil is informed by the farmer that he possesses seven more such creatures, the fiend from hell is so discomfited that he takes off for parts unknown and does not stop running until he gets clear into Cornwall, where it is said he is still living to this day, if one judges by the behavior of the local folk. The tale of "The Feathery Wife" is not only widespread in various parts of England, but is also known throughout Europe, from Finland to central Russia, and from Ireland to Portugal and Spain.

The motif of the disguise to outwit a supernatural adversary is popular in Celtic tales as well, as in the ancient Irish legend of Una, wife to the famous Gaelic hero, Finn McQuaille, in which the hero's wife disguised Finn as a baby in order to fool a hostile giant; she then tricked him into placing his hand in Finn's mouth. Finn promptly bit off the giant's little finger, in which resided all his strength. In a ballad from Yorkshire, "The Goblin's Riddle," a young lady outwits a forest goblin by successfully answering his riddle and thus saves her own life as well as that of her lover. Other ballads in which a heroine or mortal woman successfully defends herself against supernatural snares include "Love's Riddles Wisely Expounded" (Child No.1), "The Elfin-Knight" (Child No.20), and "The Boy and the Mantle" (Child No.29), just to mention a few additional cases in point.

If the female protagonist in the ballad of "The Farmer's Cursed Wife" (Child No.278) can be said to represent one image of mortal women vs. the supernatural world, then the persona of the Faerie Queen can be said to represent the other side of the same coin, i.e., women supernatural protagonists vs. the world of mortal men. She can be found in several well-known ballads, but her character and behavior are not always the same from story to story. She is at her most malevolent in "Tamlin," where, after Tamlin has been rescued from her clutches, she angrily tells him that, had she known what she knows now, she would have turned him into a tree, cut out his heart, and given him two eyes of wood. Contrast this with her behavior in "Alison Gross" (Child No.35), in which she breaks the evil spell and changes the luckless knight back to normal from his status as a

hideous worm wrapped around a tree. In "Thomas Rhymer" (Child No.37) she seems to play the role of woodland temptress, enticing the poet to spend seven years with her in elf-land, although she does eventually allow him to return to Scotland; eventually, however, he is to return to her realm to be her consort throughout eternity.

The female as ghost or revenant can be seen in two ballads of strikingly contrasting modes. In "Miss Bailey," a young woman, after being seduced by an English captain, hangs herself, but her ghost returns to jovially haunt him until he is clever enough to pay a local sexton five pounds to have her properly buried. She then gaily departs for parts unknown, never to be seen again, while the captain happily goes to a local pub to drink to his newfound happiness. A much grislier phantom is "The Dreadful Ghost," a maritime retelling of the familiar "Pretty Polly" murder ballad. Betrayed by her false lover, the hapless maid hangs herself, but her ghost returns to take vengeance upon her seducer. After she threatens to sink the ship on which he has taken refuge, the crew eventually turns him over to the vengeful ghost and, in a small boat covered in hellish flames, the miscreant sinks to the bottom of the sea with the female phantom having gained her revenge.

The role of women as shape-shifters and practitioners of magic can be seen in a large and varied group of ballads. "Hares on the Mountain" at first may be seen as simply a clever musical allegory for sexual encounter, but it is more likely that this song may be a survival from a period when there were strong beliefs, held even until recent times, that witches met in regular covens, often disguised as magical hares or similar animals. There is a legend from Devon in which a hunter once shot a hare which vanished into the woods; the next morning, he discovered that his wife's left hand had been injured by an arrow -- his own. Thus he realized that the mysterious hare and his wife were one and the same.

In "The Two Magicians" (Child No.44), a young girl, sexually pursued by a gruff old blacksmith, tries to escape by constantly shifting her appearance, but always he matches her, change for change. Eventually she changes into a bed and he into a green coverlet (wonderful symbolism involved here), and he gains her maidenhead. The transformation com-



bat here is somewhat reminiscent of a number of international tales in which a pupil and master magician try to outwit one another, and eventually the pupil gains his freedom through the intervention of a beautiful princess. There are versions of this story from Ireland, Russia, Germany, and even as far afield as Persia.

In Archy Fisher's unusual ballad, "Witch of the Westmirlands," we have the female protagonist described as a creature whose body is half woman and half jet-black mare. This theme is a variation of the motif of the "foul fiend transformed," examples of which include two grand ballads: "King Henry" and "The Marriage of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell." In "King Henry" (Child No. 32), a grisly female phantom spends the night with the young monarch, making him kill his favorite horse, hound and hunting bird, and eventually convincing him to sleep with her. When he awakes in the morning, he is quite surprised to find a ravishing damsel lying next to him. The ballad ends with the maiden telling the king; "many's the gentleman who has given to me my fill, but none there has been who have given to me my will." In "The Marriage of Sir Gawain" (Child No. 31), Dame Ragnell suffers under a curse; she must spend half her life hideously ugly, and only half as a beautiful maiden. She offers Gawain the choice: shall she be beautiful by day, and ugly by night, or vice versa? When Gawain tells her it is her own choice, Dame Ragnell is transformed from an old crone to a beautiful young woman. She then tells him that because he gave her control of her own destiny, even in the matter of when she could become beautiful, the spell was finally broken, and what started out as a dismal future for the comely knight ended with all living happily ever after. There are numerous Celtic, Scandinavian, Germanic and Slavic tales of the transformation of a hideous old woman into a young beauty through a successful series of magical tests in which the male lover allows the woman in question to decide her own fate, thus providing the answer to the ancient riddle: what does every woman require most beyond all things? Answer: her own will in everything.

While not strictly speaking a shape-shifting ballad, "The Two Sisters" (Child No.10) is nonetheless thematically related; we have here the motif of the migration of the living essence or soul of a murdered person into an inanimate object. The elder sister wills the younger her land

and sweetheart; her body is found by a group of minstrels who then make a harp, sometimes a fiddle, out of various portions of her body. Before her own mother and father, the king and queen, the harp relates the story of her death, unmasking the treachery of the younger sister. This ballad is widespread, not only in Britain and North America, but all over western Europe, Scandinavia, the Balkans, and even as far away as the northwest frontier of India, where it was told by bardic singers over two thousand years ago as part of a cycle of local hero tales involving a prince named Rasalu. The "Magic Orange Tree" from Haiti and "The Juniper Tree" from Germany, collected by the Grimm Brothers, have similar plots and motifs.

The theme of the ballad witch is quite prominent in both England and the Celtic world. The image of women as practitioners of magic is a very old theme indeed, and its occurrence in British balladry is quite frequent. Alison Gross, it is said, was the ugliest witch in the north-country, and so baleful was she that no one ever ventured to her bower if they could at all help doing so. She somehow managed to entertain a young knight, who steadfastly refused all her entreaties, blandishments and speeches. Refusing to become her lover, the knight finally incurred the witch's wrath; taking out a silver wand, she struck him three times, turning him into a hideous worm. He stayed that way for seven years, until one Halowe'en, the Faerie Queen just happened to be riding along. She spotted him, took pity on him and turned him back into a man. It is hoped he returned home much humbler and wiser for his nasty experience. In "The Lailley Worm" (Child No.36) a wicked sorceress places a spell upon her two children, turning her son into a loathsome serpent entwined about an oak tree, and her daughter into a mackerel of the sea. Eventually, their father discovers the perfidy of his wife, forces her to lift the spell, and proceeds to burn her at the crossroads for witchcraft. This ballad may be related to a local legend from Northumbria, dated somewhere in the sixth century, in which a local king's wife, jealous of her step-daughter's beauty, enchants her into the form of a serpent, which spell can only be broken when a daring man kisses her thrice upon the mouth. It is her own brother who breaks the spell on the monster, which then turns upon its

creator, turning the once haughty queen into a serpent herself. In "The Wife of Usher's Well" (Child No.79), a mother sends her three children off to the north-country to learn their grammar, a term referring to the study of black magic. They succumb to the plague, and their ghosts visit the woman and reveal to her that they have gone to a far better place, presumably heaven, but that she must mend her ways if she wishes to join them, a definite reference to the obvious inability of a practicing witch to enter paradise.

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We have already encountered the witch of the Westmirlands. Centaur-like in form, her body was half woman, half jet-black mare, and her powers were quite formidable. Such was her power that any man, even wounded unto death itself, who was fortunate enough to lie with her even for but one night, would be cured of all his wounds, and would be invulnerable to hurt or harm from that day forward. Dame Alice Kettle, on the other hand, was a real person. She lived in the town of Clapham in the north of England in the second half of the fifteenth century. Her son was a staunch supporter of the Lancastrian forces in the Wars of the Roses which raged in England during those years. It is said that to ensure victory by his troops, Dame Kettle consorted with the powers of darkness, even to the point of an actual compact with the Devil himself. Eventually she angered her supernatural benefactor, thus causing her son's death in battle, and her own imprisonment. In the ballad which tells her story, she is given clemency by the court which tried her, but for her pittance, she had to place a crucifix atop the local church in Clapham and formally renounce witchcraft and black magic from that day until the very end of her life.

Perhaps the most interesting ballad witch I have saved for last. In "

"Willie's Lady" (Child No.6) a king's mother, jealous of the fact that the king's new bride is a foreigner, places a dandy spell upon her in which the girl will become perpetually pregnant, but will never deliver a child. The spell is eventually undone by a counter-spell just as elaborate, involving the shaping of a loaf of wax made to resemble a newborn child, and the discovery of such items as witch-knots, combs of care, a left shoe, and the killing of a goat or master kid. A similar tale can be found as long ago as ancient Greece, retelling the events surrounding the birth of the mighty hero, Heracles. It is interesting, however, to note that the tune used for "Willie's Lady" is not traditional, but was composed in the 1940's and taken originally from a Breton pipe tune; but then, so goes the folk tradition in all its wonderful and often obscure ways.

So there we have it: just the briefest look at some of the roles and images played by women in various ballads and traditional songs of the supernatural realm to be found in Britain and in the British musical tradition. The role of women has been as varied and diverse as the ballads themselves, and their abilities to overcome supernatural obstacles and perils has made these ballads even more enjoyable. But then, good ballads, like good stories, are universal, and will endure as long as there are folks around to sing and enjoy them.

**A FOOT FORWARD
AN EAR BACK**

FOLK ROOTS

From our base in the British folk scene, we cover music with roots from anywhere in the world. From English traditions to the latest in "rogue folk", from Zimbabwean folk/rock to Tex-Mex, this magazine is a *monthly* feast of interviews, features, news, reviews, opinion, adverts and much more.

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Sources

The following may be of interest to those who wish to further study the realm of supernatural balladry in print and on recording.

Francis J. Child, English and Scottish Popular Ballads, Dover Books, NY. This five-volume set contains many of the great supernatural Anglo-American ballads mentioned above, listing them by number with alternate texts and variants.

Lowry, Wimberly, Folklore of the English and Scottish Popular Ballads, originally published in 1928 by the University of Chicago Press, later reissued by Dover Books. This is an excellent introduction, with particular emphasis on such genres as witchcraft and magic, ghosts and revenants, and the Faerie realm, with detailed lore on enchantment.

Kathrine M. Briggs, British Folk Tales, Pantheon Books, NY, is a one-volume sampling of tales and ballads from her four-volume monumental work, Dictionary of British Folk Tales, originally published in England in the 1970's, with much useful information on ballad history, related tales, and parallel tales and ballads in Europe and elsewhere.

There are two excellent albums of supernatural ballads: John Roberts and Tony Barrand, Dark Ships in the Forest, Folk Legacy Records; and Dave and Tony Arthur, Hearken to the Witches Rune, Leader-Tracker records (Britain).

Recordings of songs mentioned in the article include:

"Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight" (Canadian variant), Allan Mills, Songs and Tales of Canada, Folkway Records.

"Tamlin," two fine recordings: Mike Waterson on his Topic album, and Franky Armstrong on an album of the same title recorded on Plant-life Records.

"The Devil and the Feathery Wife," two fine recordings: Martin Carthy, Out of the Cut, Topic Records; and Nick Dhow, Byrd Margaret, Dingal's

Records.

"Una and the Giants" can be found in William B. Yates' Irish Folk and Fairy Tales.

"Miss Bailey" can be heard on Mick Hanley's Black Water-side, Green Linnet Records.

"The Dreadful Ghost," an excellent rendition on Dark Ships in the Forest.

"Mr. Fox," the traditional tale can be heard on the Folkteller's fine album of supernatural tales, Chillers, on Mama T. Artists Productions; a modern reworking of it is on Franky Armstrong's I Heard A Woman Singing on Flying Fish; and Richard Chase's book, American Songs and Tales, Dover Books, contains an unusual Appalachian variant of the British tale.

"King Henry," Martin Carthy, Crown of Horn, Rounder Records.

"Willie's Lady," can be heard on Ray Fisher's excellent Folk Legacy records.

"Two Magicians," two excellent recordings: the late A.L. Lloyd, Bird in the Bush: Erotic Songs of Britain, Topic Records; and Dark Ships in the Forest.

"Witch of the Westmirlands," Archy Fisher on his fine record Man With A Rhyme, Folk Legacy.

"The Boy with the Mantle" can be heard on British singer/songwriter Allan Taylor's The Lady, United Artists.

"The Elfin Knight," an unusual modern reworking of the American version known as "The Devil's Nine Questions" can be heard under the title "The Devil in the Garden" on Bob Coltman's Son of Child, on Minstrel Records.

"The Goblin's Riddle" can be heard on Johnny Collins' fine album, Johnny's Private Army, Tradition Records (England).

"Alison Gross," Toni Arthur, Hearken to the Witches Rune.

"The Lailley Worm," Roger Nicholson, Nonesuch for Dulcimer, Leader-Tracker Records.

"Thomas Rhymer," a semiliterary rendition can be found in the classic volume by Sylvia Townsend Warner, Kingdoms of Elfin.

There are many other fine recordings of traditional supernatural ballads from the Celtic world as well as the Anglo-American, but this is just a tantalizing sampler of some of the very best around today; good hunting one and all.



WHAT MAKES A GOOD SONG?

by Pete Seeger

Nobody knows. Or if they do, they won't tell. I used to think that a song needed to be short so that people could remember it. But within the past couple of decades, I've seen some of the longest songs become the most widely sung and memorized. I used to think that the melody had to flow easily and the words trip off the tongue. But I've been fooled. Some of the best songs have an awkward spot that sticks out a little bit like a sore thumb.

I must get an average of five or ten songs sent to me every week by some hopeful songwriter. Most of them will probably never be sung except by the person who wrote them. But some I can tell are going to be picked up and repeated and will gradually get around, whether or not they are ever recorded or played on the air.

And, of course, I know that what is a good song to one person is a pain in the ear to another. I am fortunate that just about every week I can test a new song on an audience and see what they think of it. Quite often I'm surprised. Something that I was enthusiastic about doesn't go over but the reverse has also been true.

I put together the song "Where Have All the Flowers Gone" in about 20 minutes in an airplane over Ohio over 30 years ago this fall. I only had three verses. The idea for them had come from an old Ukranian song translated and printed in a novel. The tune was derivative. I did think up the refrain "long time passing" and "when will we ever learn". Two full years later my manager says, "Pete, did you write a song called 'Where Have All the Flowers Gone?'" I said, "Yeah, about 3 years ago."

"Did you ever copyright it?"

"Nope," says I.

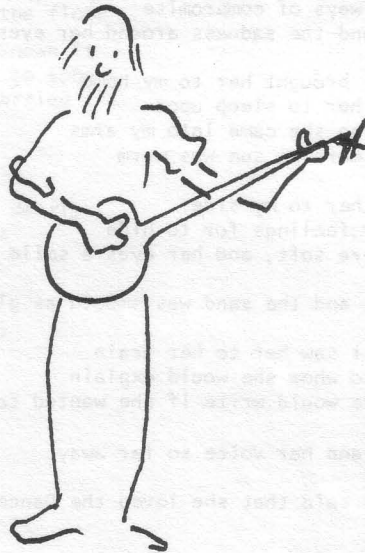
"Well, you better," says he. "The Kingston Trio has just recorded it."

I called up Dave Guard and he said, "Oh, Pete, we didn't know it was your song. We'll take our name off it." Well, the song has gone around the world since then, but I can't say that it was all my doing. Joe Hickerson and the kids at Camp Woodland made up some extra verses;

so it came full circle back to the flowers. And also it gave the song an easy to sing rhythm. I'd sung it without any rhythm in the beginning like an Irish slow aire. Dominic Behan still sings it that way. All I can say is long live the folk process. Long live plagiarism. Or maybe it is better to remember the old college joke:

"If you steal from one person, it is plagiarism. Steal from ten persons, it is scholarship. Steal from 100, it is original research."

from



Linda Allen

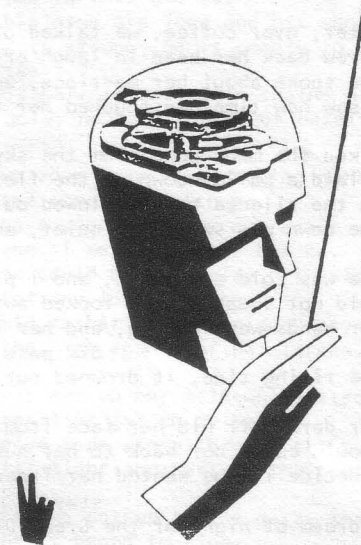
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SIDE LYRIC SONG

THE GIRL FROM THE GREAT DIVIDE

The music is based on the traditional song "The Lakes of Ponchartrain," a fine version of which was recorded by Carla Sciaky on Fast Folk #207

She was tall and dark and slender, and she said that she loved the dance
There was something unspoken between us, but I dared not take the chance
We were something more than strangers when the hour of parting arrived
And she went west to her new life, she was bound for the Great Divide

Word came that she had married, and we all did wish her well
I swore to profit from my mistake and to heed the tolling bell
And if a girl should capture my fancy, not to let that girl go by
And I raised a glass in a sad salute to the girl from the Great Divide

Now fruits are for the picking, and I picked till I had my fill
But alone I'd find her photograph, and her face, it stayed with me still
Till the night in the crowded tavern where I was ready to play
She stepped up to me smiling, and the years just fell away

And later, over coffee, we talked of the things we'd done
She threw back her head in laughter, it was like she never had gone
And she spoke about her marriage, and the ways of compromise
And I saw how time had touched her face, and the sadness around her eyes

We talked the moon down from the sky and I brought her to my home
And I laid a pallet down on the floor for her to sleep upon
But in the silence that followed our singing she came into my arms
And the dawn was sweet and quiet, and the morning sun was warm

The sea was cold at sunset, and I pressed her to my side
We could not speak and we looked away, our feelings for to hide
And her hands were strong, and her lips were soft, and her eyes a smile
did pass
But the rising tide, it drowned out steps, and the sand was smooth as glass

And her dark hair hid her face from me as I saw her to her train
That would carry her back to her husband to whom she would explain
She'd decide if she wanted her freedom, she would write if she wanted to
stay

Now I dream at night of the Great Divide, and her voice so far away

She was tall and dark and slender, and she said that she loved the Dance



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LOVELY JOAN

A fine young man it was indeed
Came mounted on his milk white steed
He rode, he rode himself all alone
Until he came to lovely Joan

"Good morn to you my pretty fair maid,"
"And twice good morning, sir," she said
He tipped her the wink, and she rolled her dark eye
Says to himself, "I'll be there by and by."
"Oh, don't you like these pooks of hay
Make a pretty place for us to play?
So come with me, my sweet young thing,
And I'll give to you this golden ring."

Then he pulled out a ring of gold,
Saying, "My pretty fair miss, do this behold!
How freely I would give it for your maidenhead."
And her cheeks they blushed like roses red

"Give me that ring into my hand,
And I will neither stay nor stand.
That ring is worth much more to me
Than twenty maidenheads," said she.

But as he made for the pooks of hay
She's jumped on his horse and she's rode away
He called, he called, it was all in vain,
For Joan she never looked back again.

Nor did she think herself quite safe
Until she came to her father's gate
She's robbed him of his horse and ring
And left him to rage in the meadows green.

Arrangement c 1986 YT publishing

PRETTY POLLY

Well indeed pretty Polly I once loved you dearly
 And in your sweet company I took great delight
 But once a man is wedded, His joys are all fled
 He is free from all liberty
 Bowed down to hard slavery
 So we both are free love, I will bid you good night

But, Indeed pretty Polly there is one thing I would tell you
 That is to ask me to your wedding love
 And I will do the same
 You'd need never mind, a husband you will find
 If there's any such a thing
 If there is any such a thing
 If there is any such a thing in this world to be had

So she wrote him a letter to come to her wedding
 To come to her wedding on the ninth day of June
 This letter he reads, and his poor heart did bleed
 Crying, Oh I have lost her
 Oh, I have lost her- Crying
 Oh, I have lost her, I have lost her indeed

So with saddle and bridle he rode to her station
 He rode to the place where pretty Polly did dwell
 And when he got there, it's troubles and snares
 The bride and the bridegroom
 The bride and the bridegroom,
 The bride and the bridegroom they was out on the floor

Well, indeed pretty Polly - If only I'd have known it
 If only I had of known love, you'd be married so soon
 We would have married, no longer would have tarried
 So step up beside me love
 Step up beside me love
 Step up beside me love and leave him alone

Well, indeed pretty William, I once loved you dearly
 And in your sweet company I took great delight
 But remember you said when a man once is wed
 He was free from all liberty
 Bowed down to hard slavery
 So we are both free love, I bid you good night



JOHNNY OF HAZELGREEN

(traditional)

One night as I rode over the lea,
 the moon was shining clear,
 I overheard a fair young maid, lament-
 ing for her dear.
 And she did cry as I passed by and
 painful to me it seemed,
 For she was letting the tears roll
 down for Johnny of Hazelgreen.

"What troubles you, my darling girl,
 or what caused you to roam?
 Are your mother and father dead, or
 have you got no home?"
 "My parents they are both alive and
 plainly to be seen,
 But I have lost my own true love,
 called Johnny of Hazelgreen."

"What kind of man is your Hazelgreen?
 He is one I do not know.
 But he must be a fine young man for
 you to love him so."
 "Oh, his arms are long and his shoul-
 ders strong, he is comely to be
 seen,
 And his hair is rolled in chains of
 gold; he's my Johnny of Hazel-
 green."

"Dry up your tears, my darling girl
 and come away with me.
 I'll have you wed to my own brave
 son, I never had one but he.
 And you could be the bride," I said,
 "of any lord or king."
 "I would rather be the bride," says
 she, "to Johnny of Hazelgreen."

So she's got on her milk-white steed,
 and I've got on my bay,
 And we've rode along through the moon-
 lit night and part of the next
 day.
 And when we got up to the gate, the
 bells began to ring,
 And who stepped out but that brave
 young lad called Johnny of
 Hazelgreen.

"You are welcome home, dear father,"
 he said, "you are welcome home-
 to me,
 For you have brought my own true love
 I thought I would nevermore see."
 And the smile upon her gentle face
 was sweet as grass is green.
 I hope she enjoys her married life
 with Johnny of Hazelgreen.



KATIE CRUEL

(Trad.)

When I first came to town, they called me the roving jewel,
Now they've changed their tune and they call me Katie Cruel,
Oh diddle lully day, oh the little de o day.

(chorus) Oh, that I was where I would be,
Then should I be where I am not
Here I am where I must be,
Where I would be I cannot.
Oh, diddle lully day, oh, the little de o day.

When I first came to town, they brought me the bottles plenty,
Now they've changed their tune and bring me the bottles empty.

I know who I love, I know who does love me,
I know where I'll go, and I know who'll go with me.

Through the woods I'll go, through the boggy mire
Straightway up the road 'til I come to my heart's desire.

Eyes as bright as coal, lips as red as a cherry,
And 'tis her delight to make the young folks merry.

500 MILES

If you miss train I'm on
Then you'll know that I'll be gone
You can hear that whistle blow five hundred miles
Five hundred miles, five hundred miles
Five hundred miles, five hundred miles
You can hear the whistle blow five hundred miles!

Not a shirt on my back
Not a penny to my name
And I can't go home this a way
This way, this way,
This way, this way,
I can't go home this way!

Lord I'm one,
Lord I'm two,
Lord I'm three,
Lord I'm four,
Lord I'm five hundred miles away from home!

Well, if you miss the train I'm one
Then you know that I'll be gone
You can hear the whistle blow five hundred miles!

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and the House Band:

MARK DANN, HOWIE WYETH, JEFF HARDY

SIDE BY RIDE TWO

STAR OF THE COUNTY DOWN

Near to Bambridge in the County Down
One morning in July,
Down a borean green came a sweet colleen
And she smiled as she passed me by.
Oh, she looked so neat in her two white feet
To the sheen on her nut brown hair
Sure the coaxing elf, I'd to shake myself
To make sure I was standing there.

From Bantry Bay up to Dublin Quay
And from Galway to Dublin Town
No maid I've seen like the brown colleen
That I met in the County Down.

As she onward sped, I shook my head
And I gazed with a feeling queer
And I says I to a passer-by
"Who's the maid with the nut brown hair?"
Oh, he smiled at me and with pride says he
"That's the gem of Ireland's Crown,
That's young Rosie McAnn from the banks of the Bam
She's the Star of the County Down."

Chorus

In the Harvest Fair, she will surely be there
So I'll dress in my best Sunday clothes.
With my shoes shone bright and my hat cocked right
For a smile from the nut brown Rose.
No pipe I'll smoke, no ox I'll yoke
Till my plow turns a rust golden brown
And a-smilin' bright by my own fireside light
is the Star of the County Down.

Chorus

DRUNKARD'S TARANTELLA

(traditional)

Get drunk, get drunk,
If you get sick, that's up to you.

Get drunk, get drunk,
You'll pay my doctor's bill as well
as yours.

You see how carelessly are dancing
these children
May Saint Anthony help you,
May Saint Anthony help you, li,
May Saint Anthony help you, la,
May Saint Anthony help you always.

Tra-la-la-la, be happy and content,
Don't get melancholy
That Compare Joe's cat
At my mouse.

Get drunk, get drunk,
If you get sick that's up to you.

Get drunk, get drunk,
You'll pay my doctor's bill as well
as yours.

Get drunk, get drunk,
If you get sick that's up to you.

Get drunk, get drunk,
If you get sick the hell with you.



TARANTELLA D'MBRIACCUNE

(traditional)

'mbriacati tu, 'mbriacati tu,
Se cada malatte da vide tu,

'mbriacati tu, 'mbriacati tu,
I diebbete mia ti paghi tu

Tu vedi cuma balla sti figlioli
Ca Sant'Antonio di puoss'aiutari
Ca Sant'Antonio li, ca Sant'Antonio
la,
Ca Sant'Antonio ti puoss'aiutari

Tirituppiti stare contenti
Nun ti pigliari 'na malanconia
Ca la gatta di Cumpari Beppe
Sa mangiatta lu surrege' mia

'mbriacati tu, 'mbriacati tu,
Se cada malatte da vide tu

'mbriacat tu, 'mbriacati tu,
I diebbete mia ti paghi tu

'mbriacati tu, 'mbriacati tu,
Se cada malatte da vide tu,

'mbriacati tu, 'mbriacati tu,
Si cada malatte da futte tu...

MA DELIRE (MY DELIRE or MY DELIRIUM)

(Trad., Quebec)

1. Oh my Delire
You are leaving to be married.
Why have you made me
Linger for so long?
And look at us here,
In the prime of our lives,
At an age
Pleasant and charming.

2. Do you remember,
My charming Louise,
When we sat upon the grass together
And we spoke
Of our tender love
In the shade
Of a beautiful rose tree?

3. How do they get by,
Those who have no mistress?
They pass their time
Quite miserably.
And I over here,
Who love the most beautiful one,
I must drink,
And speak to her about love.

MA DELIRE

(Trad., Quebec)

Oh ma Délire,
Tu t'en vas, tu t'engages
Pourquoi me faire
Languir aussi longtemps
Et nous voilà
A la fleur de l'âge
Mais d'un âge
agréable et charmant

T'en souviens-tu
Ma charmante Louise
Quand nous étions
Sur l'herbe tous les deux
Et nous parlions
De nos tendres amours
Mais à l'ombre
D'un joli rosier

Comment font-ils
Ceux qui n'ont pas de maîtresse
Ils passent leur temps
Bien misérablement
Et moi là bas
Qui aime la plus belle
Il faut boire
Et lui parler d'l'amour

DI FAYEDIKE LIBE

(as sung by Bronya Sakina, born 1915
in the Southern Ukraine)

Di fayerdike libe
zi tit in maynem hartsn brenen --
vos kimt aroys indzer libn zakh
az mir kenen zikh nisht nemen?

Oy, shildik iz dayn tote
un shildik iz dayn mome
un shildik bisti, dushenyu
merer fun zey ale.

Oy, gonve aroys dayne kleyder,
un b'olt zey tsvishn kuren
un mir 'eln beyde in a kleyn
shteytele
antlofn gevorn.

In a kleyn shteytele,
tsvishn fremde mentshn,
oy, ver-zhe vet indz tsu der khipe
firn
un ver-zhe vet indz bentshn?

In a kleyn shteytele,
tsvishn fremde mentshn,
malukhim veIn indz tsu der khipe
firn
un der ziser Got vet indz bentshn.

BURNING LOVE

This fiery love
Which burns my heart --
How will our love work out,
Since we can't marry each other?

Guilty is your father
And guilty is your mother,
And guilty are you, sweetheart,
More than all of them.

Steal your clothes away,
And hide them amongst the grain,
And we'll both run away to a small
shtetl.¹

In a small shtetl
Among strangers,
Who will lead us to the khupe²
And who will bless us?

In a little shtetl,
Among strangers,
Angels will lead us to the khupe
And sweet God Himself will bless us.

¹ shtetl = village

² khupe = wedding canopy

DACW 'NGHARIAD I

(Trad.)

Dacw 'nghariad i lawr yn y berllan,
O! na bawn i yno fy hunan,
Dacw'r ty a dacw'r sguor,
Dacw ddrws y beudy'n agor.

Dacw'r delyn, dacw'r tannau,
Beth wyf well heb neb i'w chwarae;
Dacw'r feinwen hoenus fanwl,
Beth wyf nes heb gael ei meddwl?

Rhoes fy mryd ar eneth dirion,
Hon sy' bron a thorri 'nghalon;
A bu'n achos iddi hithau
Wylo peth amdanaf finnau.

THERE IS MY LOVE

(Trad.)

There is my love down in the orch-
ard
O! that I were there myself
There is the house and there is the
barn
There is the door of the cowshed op-
ening
There is the harp and there are the
strings
What good are they with no one to
play them?
There is the lively careful maiden
How much nearer am I without know-
ing her will?

I set my mind on winning a gentle
young girl
Who has almost broken my heart
And there was reason for her, too,
to weep a little for my sake.

THE OLD BLIND HORSE

(traditional)

This old man, he made a will
And he willed it all to old Uncle
Bill.
In his will was an old blind horse,
Two dollars and a quarter, that's
what he cost.

And it's come, come along with me,
For the moon is surely rising.
Young girls, young girls can't you
see, for
The dew on the grass is shining.

This old horse, he was so lean
Every bone in his body was plain to
be seen.
His eyes were sunk so far in his head
You had to get a telescope to see if
he was dead.

This old horse, he died one day,
Lay down his head and went away.
And every crow as they'd pass by
Cried, "Caw, caw, caw, old horse you
die."

Arr. c. 1986, Blue Flute Music (ASCAP)

RECORD REVIEWS

PLANXTY

by Josh Joffen

In the accompanying liner notes, it's suggested that "planxty" is a corruption of the Irish "sláinte," which means "good health." In Irish music, a planxty is an instrumental ode or tribute, and Planxty is the name of one of the best and best-known "traditional" bands.

On this, their first album, released in the U.S. in 1979 on the Shanachie label, Christy Moore, Andy Irvine, Liam O'Flynn, and Donal Lunny define the Planxty sound. Playing only acoustic instruments (guitar, hurdy-gurdy, bodhrán, mandolin, Uilleann pipes, tin whistle, mandola, harmonica, and bouzouki), the quartet performs mainly traditional songs and music from Ireland and the other (if you'll pardon the expression) British Isles.

The musicianship is uniformly first-class. The instruments are played with grace and sensitivity, and both the songs and instrumental pieces are extremely well arranged. Mixed in with the vocal cuts are reels, jigs, and harp tunes (including two by the legendary Turlough O'Carolan, one of which is his timeless "Sí Bheag, Sí Mhór").

The songs are enough to restore the faith of anyone who has sat through too many Clancy Brothers concerts (say, one). Planxty's version of "Arthur McBride" (the classic anti-recruiting song) leaves out the gratuitous violence found in other, longer versions. What remains is the essence of the story of two young Irishmen who refuse the persuasive efforts of English recruiting officers and prove eminently capable of self-defense when the Englishmen grow angry.

He says, "My young fellows, if I hear but one word
I instantly now will out with my sword
And into your bodies, as strength will afford,
So now my gay devils, take warning!"

But Arthur and I we tokened the odds
We gave them no chance for to launch out their swords,
Our whacking shillelaghs came over their heads
And paid them right smart in the morning.

This version also leaves out a nice exchange between the recruiting sergeant and Arthur McBride on the subject of uniforms, the pro side being how attractive they are, and the con side holding that they are neither personal property nor removable at one's own discretion. You can't have everything.

Also outstanding is "The Jolly Beggar," which tells the tale of a handsome beggar who receives more than generous treatment from the daughter of the house at which he knocks. The song segues into a delightful reel. (A common practice when traditional musicians play together is to string several pieces into sets, especially when the music is meant to be danced to.)

A third song to keep an ear peeled for is Planxty's rendition of the classic "Follow Me Up to Carlow," which celebrates the victory in 1580 of Fiach McHugh O'Byrne over an English army in the pass of Glen Malure.

Rooster of a fighting stock,
Would you let a Saxon cock
Crow out upon an Irish rock?
Fly up and teach him manners.

Curse and swear, Lord Kildare,
Fiach will do what Fiach will dare.

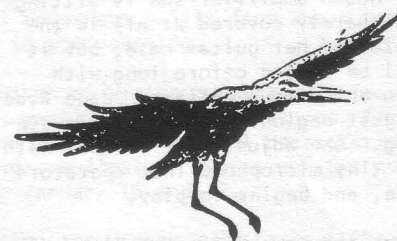
Now Fitzwilliam have a care,
Fallen is your star low.
Up with halberd, out with sword,
On we'll go, for by the Lord,
Fiach McHugh has given the word
Follow me up to Carlow.

Planxty contains recently-written pieces as well. They're not as strong. There's a pretty Ewan McColl song ("Sweet Thames"), and a self-indulgent melancholy effort by

Planxty member Andy Irvine, "The West Coast of Clare," which is saved by its arrangement, especially Irvine's mandolin and Liam O'Flynn's Uilleann pipes.

Planxty has a number of fine albums to their credit. If you're interested in Irish traditional music, and you haven't heard them, you should. And if you're going to make their acquaintance, this is the place to start.

Planxty (SH-79009)
Shanachie Records
Dalebrook Park
Ho-ho-kus, NJ 07423



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STREET SINGING: An Ancient Tradition?

by Hugh Blumenfeld

When it's grey out and the clouds hang down and swag along the deep, the street feels like a covered amphitheater. Noises are hushed, but sound carries, especially music carries. It is early evening in October, before Daylight Savings Time has begun to seem frivolous to the gods and Daylight Squandering Time hits the city with its black humor. So it is still light as I walk toward Sheridan Square, stepping off the curb to avoid the masses of people moving back and forth through the Village. There is a long line at the Chemical Bank cash machine. And just to the side of the line is a chaotic black bundle. I get closer and see that it is a woman with a guitar. She is dressed in dark woolen cloaks and shawls and skirts, with fingerless gloves to protect her hands. Completely covered is the Mouse amplifier she is sitting on. Barely covered at all is the inside of her guitar case, but it will be filled before long with coin and famous dollars. Jane Byaela is just beginning to work this evening. She adjusts her headset with the tiny microphone that operators have, and begins to play.

There are many different kinds of street musicians, all of them taking up one of civilization's oldest unrecognized and often illigitimate traditions. There are the simple beggars who use music to eke out their meals and a roof, or, too often in New York these days, their medical expenses. There's the man who sings too loudly in the subway cars, a catch of some once popular tune. He has a sweet voice despite the loudness, but his eyes are wide and far away, and he moves unconsciously from car to car and hand to hand. Or there's the raggedy steel drum player who takes you on his "Tour of the World" between stops on the IND, from "Irish Eyes are Smiling" to "Hava Nagilla" to "Bali Hai." About ten seconds in each country is enough for this tour, leaving our guide time to make the rounds of passengers with his old hat. The far away man is thin and humble, the steel drummer is fat and jolly. When the first man sings, passengers look down or away or remain completely immobile like deer

or rabbits until the danger is past. When the fat man plays and calls out his countries, people smile at each other knowingly, put their hands to their faces and shake their heads to say "Can you believe this? What next, 'Don't Cry for Me Argentina?'" I always give money to the far away man though I never ask how he is doing and avoid asking myself what he spends the money on.

Then there are the entertainers. They are better equipped, sing more popular songs, and have a noticeable self-consciousness that the beggars lack. There's the guy in the high Dingo boots, denim jacket and long blond hair who sings Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young in Washington Square Park. He uses a microphone on a stand. He sings Fogelberg, James Taylor and Seals & Croft near the fountain in the central plaza. Surrounded by a large crowd that often sings along and one or two junkies or drunks who dance, he strums adequately and sings softly-but-amplified-to-adequate-volume-(for a crowd)-with-more-than-moderate-distortion. There is one fantastic do-whop group that's clearly going places - or by this time they may have "gone": I haven't seen them for a few months. They are young and nattily dressed and do the Supremes, the Temptations, with voices like velvet and satin. "The Beatles" are also on the streets, doing inspiring imitations of you know who and pulling in the big bucks. Some of these acts make their living on the street - and a good living too during the warm season - but most of the entertainers on the street are also working at clubs, or want to be, and street singing is a preparation, a paid rehearsal, a supplement. Like the Fireman and Big Mouth George whose Park antics brought them fame and cable TV contracts, these street singers are only temporary fugitives from the mainstream. Few of them are perennials. Only the guy in the Dingo boots, stuck somewhere in the seventies. He plays Hall & Oates. Simon and Garfunkel. He gets together with a Rasta friend who plugs in his electric guitar and they play Led Zepplin. Eric Clapton. Rolling Stones. Badly. And the crowd grows nostalgic. They superimpose the (probably fresh) memory of the voices and instruments from their records at home

onto what they hear in the park. Their brainwaves are almost audible, murmuring Woodstock...Woodstock... Woodstock...

The beggars and the entertainers. Old, old. They have been around a long time on the streets, panhandling, freeload, climbing or surviving. For one class, the music is incidental. For the other, the street is incidental, or at least only temporary. But the street is home to all of them. There is no uncertainty, no strangeness in it, for the performers or for the passers by who ignore them or enjoy them according to the routines of give and take, of commodity and conscience.

In between the beggars and the entertainers are some strange birds.

On the corner of Montague Street and Clinton in Brooklyn an old black man sits on a soapbox playing blues. He has a microphone taped in place on his neck and he plays authentic blues, old, raw, plunkety-plunk blues. He is so completely anomalous in this place, a stratosphere of suits, ties and pumps. But there are people in those suits, and they stop to listen to this man. For a few moments the people's souls jump out of their suits and stand there naked in the middle of this high class neighborhood - you can see it in their expressions. Unguarded wonder.

Jane Byaela begins to play. Beside the line at the Chemical Bank where she has created a space. She plays a music never heard before, strange, mysterious, hauntingly beautiful. The nylon string guitar rings bright and true, her voice calm and clear, amplified just barely, to make up for her natural quietness. Like the bluesman, she also not a beggar, though she earns her living here in this and other alcoves on the sidewalk, in New York, Boston, and betimes in Europe. She is not an entertainer, for she is not trying to entertain. Audiences have learned what to expect, she says, but they don't really know what they want. So each performance is an encounter. There is no mask to mediate between her and her audience,

and no popular song to force familiarity. She is there and you are there and she is saying something to you that is more personal than anything you and your lover have said to each other for a few days.

Strawberry Fields is a small garden dedicated to the memory of John Lennon. It lies in the shadow of the Dakota where Yoko and Sean still live. Set into the pavement is a mosaic that looks something like a compass rose, and in the middle the word "IMAGINE" makes it a shrine. Roger Manning makes it a stage. He stands behind it and turns the flow of pilgrims into an audience. If it were anybody else I'd think it was opportunism or pretentiousness. If I saw the "Beatles" there I'd be disgusted - not because of the sacredness of John's memory, but because the city has so little non-commercial space as it is. Roger tries to turn it into an artistic space, to increase its worth, and in a way he succeeds. Sometimes it seems that Roger just fancies himself as carrying on the tradition of Woody Guthrie and carrying out the folk legacy of John Lennon. He touts himself as the "inventor of folkgrass music and singer of rhythmic Euro-songs," and ekes out the less well known work of Woody and others along with his own original songs in a coarse voice, a vague twang, and a heavy-handed flatpicking on a considerably beat-up guitar. But there is an earnest-



ness about Roger Manning. He is poor, but poor by choice. You sense his intelligence, his commitment to the street as a forum for singing to people about issues, even his choice to keep his coarse tone, his vague twang, and his considerably beat-up guitar. He starts to grow on you, earns his vocal choice as Guthrie and Dylan earned theirs, and you start to think that his guitar is admirably beat up.

While Jane seems to materialize on overcast days that turn the sky into a ceiling and the sidewalk nook into an intimate room, I always find Roger in the sun, playing his folk-

grass music and singing his rhythmic Euro-songs about world peace and good times and travelling. He always plays without an amplifier and tends toward the open spaces, prominent places: street corners instead of alcoves in the middle of the block - or Strawberry Fields. Fewer people tend to find Jane, but those who do stay for a song or two if they can, sometimes longer. Jane's music says stop and listen, let the beauty fill you. These are my greatest loves and sorrows. They are yours too. Reflect. Roger stands where the crowds will pass him by, and he almost dares them to, but a very few stop, sometimes against their will, wondering all the while why they are listening till the song ends to this brash performer whose music says look what I am doing here. Stay if you have a mind to, for a chorus or two. Or stay if you have a mind. A memory. Eyes and ears. I challenge you to enjoy the gift I've chosen to offer.

Jane Byaela traces her tradition back to John Dowland, one of her favorite composers, a Renaissance songwriter who played the streets of Shakespeare's England, under windows and in the markets. He has since gotten the reputation of having been the best songwriter in England before Purcell. In time, he was taken in at various courts, given commissions. But Dowland, a native of Ireland and an inheritor of her musical genius, was a street singer, a mad lutanist who wrote songs of rare beauty and



who composed instrumental pieces that Jane still fingers on her classical guitar in the afternoons near the Public Library. At night, in her cloak, she is most content when she has written a new song to give to the people who listen.

Roger used to play at the SpeakEasy and other clubs and coffeehouses but started to shun them as he realized that clubs were looking for a certain polish and sophistication, that they had tolerated his coarse and simple approach as long as they thought he might "grow" out of it, and were now determined to ignore him. I was one of the people down at the club who were waiting for Roger to get "better." Who found it awkward when he played at a show or a benefit and equally awkward when he wasn't asked to play. But now I wonder whether Roger is working at something no one else can or is willing to do, and I admire him for it. I hear he can be found playing at The Fort in the East Village. Among the really new ideas and the new wave folk harum-scarum, Roger stands out as one of the few who has an accurate consciousness of who he is and how to evaluate what he is doing as a performer, as an artist. Pick on, Roger.

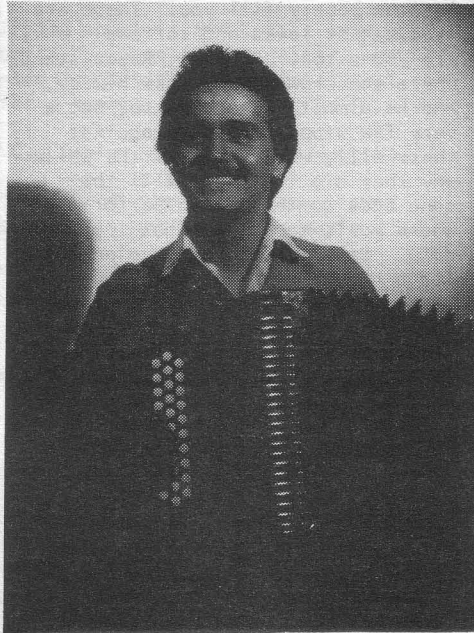
To have street singers, you need a city. Minstrels and troubadours can wander from town to town, and they are closely related to street singers in what they do. But when the minstrel comes, he plays in an official or semi-official forum. The market, the town green, the inn, the village soapbox. When the minstrel comes to town he is not ignored, passed by, unexpected and unwanted. The town waits patiently for the minstrel the way we wait for Bruce Springsteen at Shea Stadium. You need a city to create the element of risk involved in street singing. Not the risk of bodily harm (though Peter Lewy has been hauled off by the police and had his cello smashed by them), bodily harm or arrest (though Peter Lewy has been hauled away and had his cello smashed by the police), or of poverty even (Jane Byaela can make \$25-35 an hour, and usually doesn't think about it - at least not when she's being most successful). It's the risk of being ignored, of getting lost in the chaos, of affronting strangers, of opening your guitar case when no one has asked you to, of opening your mouth when almost no one will be able to hear you over the traffic and talking, the buzzing and building and shoe-scraping. And

it's the risk of choosing to say something to these strangers, to communicate a real idea or a real feeling - and choosing not to entertain but to confront - in a place where the pace of life does not allow most people to stop, even for a few moments.

I think back and think far back. To the prophets standing around the gates of Jerusalem chanting their prophecies, their warnings, their strange visions. As the oxcarts go by. The merchants on their asses and the slaves on their errands. Performers in rags yet not beggars, choosing the street for that lingering elusive reason.



GIUSEPPE GIANNINI, a third generation Italo-American from the region of Calabria and Sicily, who also proudly acknowledges his one-quarter Gypsy blood, has played and sung Calabrian-Sicilian folk songs and music since the age of nine. He made his debut at Carnegie Hall in October 1985 with the Giullari di Piazza (The Jester of the Square), with which he is performing regularly.



A native of Paris, GABRIEL YACOUB is no stranger to the American music scene, where he is known for his guitar arrangements and singing of French traditional songs as well as his own originals. He has already gained popularity in Europe playing with Alain Stivell and then founding the group Malicorne, which released nine prize-winning albums and which, after a four-year hiatus, has just released a new album for Celluloid Records this October (1986). This features many of Gabriel's originals, a departure from the primarily traditional repertoire for which they had been known.



DEB KAYMAN interprets traditional and contemporary songs in half a dozen languages. With care for detail, she presents songs selected for their political, poetic and musical power. She lives in her native New York, waiting impatiently for the Messianic Age or a subsidized apartment, whichever comes first.

Songbook !

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IDLE RUMORS met through an ad in the Village Voice one year ago, and have been performing in the Northeastern U.S. ever since. The members are equally creative in or out of their group context: Paul Kovitz just finished directing a two-hour concert video of the famed folk group Fairport Convention, and has written the score for a film interpretation of the English ballad "Tamlin;" Adrienne Jones is involved in musical theatre, and is responsible for most of the group's original songs; and Margo Hennebach recently composed and performed the music for two off-off Broadway plays, including Sam Shepard's Savage Love.

They plan to record soon, and you can reach them for bookings at: (718) 624-6803.

BRAIN TRUST:

Joe Virga - vocal, Mark Dann- bass, Mark Dannenhirsch - lead guitar, John Michel - drums
The Brain Trust began at a New Year's eve party, where the musicians decided to put a band together to back up Joe Virga's singing.

THE RENTONES

THE REN-TONES (Lisa Gutkin - violin, Robert Morffi - bouzouki, Bob Lepre - percussion, and Nikki Matheson - vocal & pennywhistle) have been performing as peasant rabble street minstrels at the New York Renaissance Festival since 1984 or 1558. Their repertoire ranges from lovely Irish ballads all the way to all-out rousing jams from which many of their originals have sprung. Thanks to the magic of the 1980's they appear on this record. (They were bewildered singing and playing in front of the "silver sticks," but the Queen said it was alright.)



LISA GUTKIN, co-founder of The Ren-Tones, has been fiddling and singing her way around the globe with warm receptions from Ireland to Hawaii, and the East and West coasts of the U.S. Her versatility has led to commercial and studio work, and tours with The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas, Vanaver Caravan, The Foot and Fiddle Dance Co. and I Giullari Di Piazza. She has appeared on several albums by folk artists, including David Roth, Josh Joffen, and "The Jumbo String Band." Her real claim to fame, however, is her special appearance with that wonderful trio, The MacDisks, after which she will never be the same.



Born in Toronto, NIKKI MATHESON now resides in New York City where a few years ago she co-founded "Rhythm and Romance" to perform originals and jazz standards in an acoustic band setting. She then teamed up with Lisa Gutkin at the New York Renaissance Festival and going back a few centuries, began singing and playing guitar and pennywhistle with "The Ren-Tones." Her affinity for traditional Irish and French music has led to tours with French singer-guitarist Gabriel Yacoub and Scottish fiddler John Cunningham in the Northeast U.S. and Canada. Nikki is currently part of the Fast Folk show appearing in Boston and the Bottom Line in New York, and has performed and recorded with Rod MacDonald. But what has really overwhelmed her is the honor of being part of the incredible trio The MacDisks, and she thanks Fast Folk for changing her life.



CARLA SCIAKY is a seasoned performer and songwriter from Denver, Colorado. While working with different ensembles, she has recorded on Owl Records, appeared at Carnegie Recital Hall, and performed during an extended residency at the EPCOT Center in Florida's Disney World. As a soloist, she has performed throughout the midwest and on both coasts. She has been profiled on numerous radio and television programs. Several recent Colorado Folk Festivals have featured her in special children's concerts and various workshops, along with such folk artists as Mike Seeger. Carla's first solo album, To Meet You, is available on Propinquity Records and is featured on folk music programs nationally.



WILD ROSE is ANNE GOODWIN and ANABEL GRAETZ, two singers whose energetic style has been admired by critics at Boston's major papers as well as by growing audiences. Their vocal style is rooted in the powerful shout singing of the Balkan countries and both performers are specially equipped to bring off this clear earthy sound: Anne Goodwin, as a six year old, won the Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin Cub Scouts' Little Sisters screaming contest; Anabel Graetz is a coloratura soprano.

An American gospel tune, a Scots love song, a Yiddish dance melody, and a Sephardic lullaby, as well as a selection of the best of contemporary songwriters are some of the treasures in the a-cappella repertoire of Wild Rose. They often sing

of the changing seasons, celebrating neglected holidays such as Candlemas or April Fool's Day with appropriate songs, proverbs, customs, and general foolery.

HEATHER WOOD sings English traditional songs, and contemporary songs in the same idiom. She was one-third of the a cappella harmony trio The Young Tradition, "that most notable of English folk groups" (*The Stage*). With the YT, Heather toured extensively in Great Britain and North America, appearing at the Newport, Philadelphia, and Mariposa festivals, and at a variety of colleges, clubs, concerts, and coffeehouses, as well as on radio and television. The Young Tradition made several recordings, released on Transatlantic in Europe and on Vanguard in the U.S.

Since the group disbanded in 1969, Heather has performed solo or in partnership with others. She made a record with Royston Wood (another YT member), and has also recorded with Judy Collins, Mike Heron, Al Stewart, Steve Goodman, and Andy Wallace. Heather has also written a few songs which have been performed and recorded by other artists.

As well as writing songs, Heather has written articles and reviews for such publications as *Broadside*, *Come for To Sing*, *Folk Scene (U.S.)*, *Melody Maker*, and *Folk Review (U.K.)*. She is co-editor of the *Grass Roots International Folk Resource Directory*, which lists over 3,500 useful names and addresses worldwide in the field of folk music.

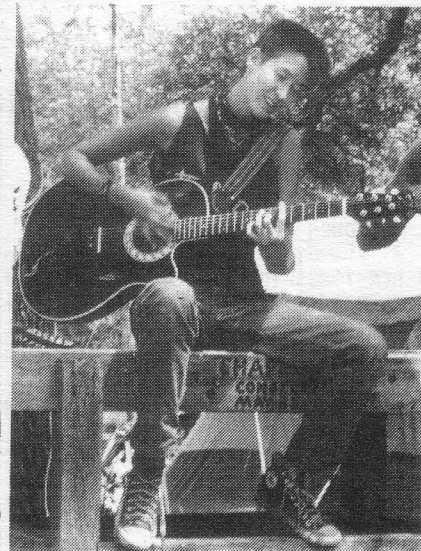
Heather's attitude toward folk music is that it should be enjoyed, not enshrined. She presents the songs of yesterday in the context of today, showing that basic human values remain constant, and that we absorb more folklore in our daily lives than most of us realize. Currently, she is performing, being an agent, planning a new edition of the *Directory*, and planning a Young Tradition reunion in 1987.



Elliott Murphy Information Society



We publish a bi-monthly newsletter to keep you informed of Elliott's touring and recording plans. Plus we offer hard to get Elliott Murphy items; records, teeshirts, posters, songbooks, etc. For more information or membership, please write **THE ELLIOTT MURPHY INFORMATION SOCIETY** P.O. Box 209, Ludlow, VT. 05149, U.S.A.



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DI FAYERDIKE LIBE
(BURNING LOVE)
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