Lisa Null: Legacies

Photo by Julianne Fuchs-Musgrave

Photo by Gary Ehrlich

Photo by Miriam Kilmer

A gallery of the performers

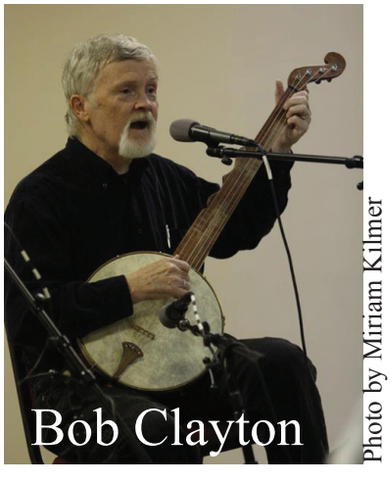

Photo by Miriam Kilmer

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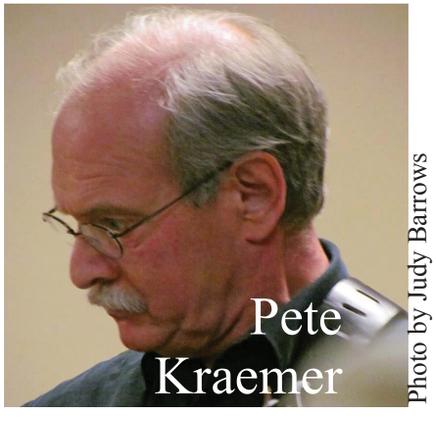

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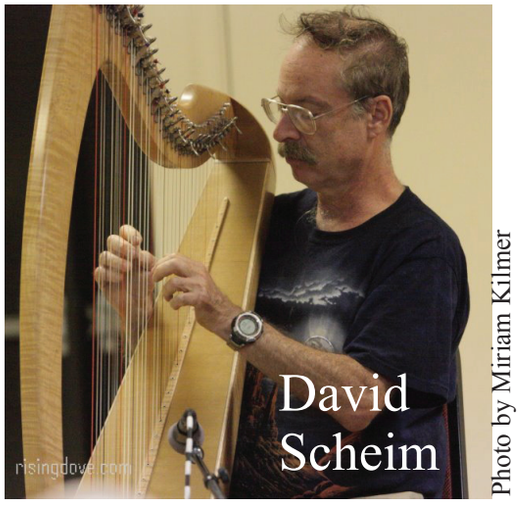

Photo by Miriam Kilmer

Paul Oorts & Karen Ashbrook

Singers and Instrumentalists Who Helped on This Project

The musicians on this album are friends and neighbors with whom I have played for pleasure in private and in public. They are just one part of the marvelous musical talent and wisdom found in the Washington, DC area. Many live in Silver Spring, some just steps from my house. Donna Long, however, lives in Baltimore, and David Scheim left Silver Spring for Blacksburg, Virginia. Both are welcomed as inspirational guests whenever they make music in Washington. Kathy Westra and George Stephens recently left my neighborhood to live in Maine, but they will receive a warm musical embrace any time they return to visit us.

Karen Ashbrook, *hammered dulcimer and flute*
Charlie Baum, *vocal duets*
Bob Clayton, *fretless banjo and minstrel banjo*
Pete Kraemer, *electric bass*
Donna Long, *piano*
Van Mertz, *chorus and guitar*
Paul Oortz, *mandolin, harp guitar, cittern, tenor banjo*
David Scheim, *harp*
Don Stallone, *concertina and melodeon*
George Stephens, *chorus and guitar*
Kathy Westra, *chorus*

Acknowledgments

Recorded and mastered by Charlie Pilzer, Airshow Mastering in Takoma Park, Maryland, with additional recording by Dennis Cook of Oberlin, Ohio ("Banks of Champlain" and "James Hewitt's Star Spangled Banner") and the studio of Bobby Read, Charlottesville, Virginia ("Andy Goodman").

Editing and graphic design by Charlie Baum of Silver Spring, Maryland.

Additional thanks go to Tom Hopper, who encouraged me to make this album, coaxing me back to health and urging me to include my own music. I am also grateful to those who have supported me with donations and advance purchase orders. Hats off to Betsy O'Malley, Gene Rosenthal, Sandrolin Koppel, and Karen Ashbrook who documented my fund-raising concert at Glen Echo Town Hall in November, 2013. David Scheim came in from Blacksburg, Virginia and joined Karen Ashbrook in playing with me there. Janet Stollnitz, Ann Bauer, Steve Woodbury, Lynn Title, Carly Gewirz, Dean Clamons, and many others coordinated refreshments, tickets, and clean-up for that concert; we couldn't have done it without them. I am indebted of course to my partner Charlie Baum, who often ferried me home from the Airshow studio late at night and endured innumerable rehearsals in our living room. Bob Clayton, bless him, tried repairing a dulcimer I never used. Finally, with all the love that is in my heart, I thank John and Jacob Null who spent so much of their youth enduring the chaos that resulted from living in a recording studio and musical hothouse.

Why I've Recorded "Legacies"

In 2013, I became seriously ill with heart and respiratory problems. Facing the real prospect of not recovering, I had time to think about what I'd like to leave behind. Money would be quickly spent, and remembrances of me would last no more than a generation or two. I've been singing traditional songs all my life, though, and many of them have passed from person to person for hundreds of years. I'm a link in that chain, and each old song I've learned feels like a gift from the past to the present. They're full of good advice, stern warnings, beauty, and just plain foolishness. They speak of the dark side of living but also of hope to come. They reflect not only my aesthetic choices but much about our shared human condition. I'm recording them now while I still can. I've put the old songs, originating no later than the late nineteenth century, on the first CD.

I've also written tunes and songs of my own, and a selection of these are on *Legacies*' second CD, along with four 20th-century pieces of known and unknown authorship. Five of

my tunes were composed in 2004 while I was researching and editing *On Her Trail: My Mother, Nancy Dickerson, TV News' First Woman Star* for the journalist John Dickerson. Because this was my first virtual freelance assignment, the tunes convey what I felt about the process of working for someone I'd not yet met and researching a world I'd never personally experienced. I've scattered these tunes throughout the album's second CD, but I call them the *Dickerson Suite* as they are thematically connected. I've included notes about where I got or wrote each tune and included an asterisk for each. Here's hoping some of these songs and tunes, new as well as old, will stay alive after I'm gone.

CD 1: Older Songs

All songs are sung by Lisa Null with additional chorus members and instrumental accompanists listed as they occur.

1. The Banks of Champlain *4:47*
Piano: Donna Long

Since the War of 1812, "The Banks of Champlain" has persisted in oral tradition around the Adirondack region of upper New York State. It's said to have been composed by the wife of General Alexander McComb, who led American land forces to victory against British forces at the Battle of Plattsburgh (1814). Plattsburgh is situated on the shores of Lake Champlain, a large lake bordered by Canada and the United States.

My version of this song was collected in 1941 from the singing of Lily DeLorme by journalist and collector Marjorie Lansing Porter. DeLorme's grandfather had fought in this battle—a victory and psychological turning point for the often-defeated Americans. The song looks at war from the perspective of

women and other civilians who, at this time, were frequent spectators at battles with life-and-death consequences for their families. Donna Long, accompanying me on piano, has been playing Celtic music for years and strikes just the right feeling for this Scots melody which is a variant of "The Banks of the Dee." Singing with Donna feels like a trip to musical heaven.

2. Cold Scenes of Winter *2:18*

This song has a Celtic-like tune and an economy of verbal style, conveying much in few words. I think of it as a quintessential example of how Irish songs and symbols adapt to the American cultural landscape. "Cold Scenes of Winter" comes from the singing of Dennie Sloan of Glenville, Gilmer County, West Virginia (1971) and appears in Michael E. "Jim" Bush's *Folk Songs of Central West Virginia, Vol. 4* (1977). It's quite rare in this country and appears more often in Canada as "The Stormy Scenes of Winter" or "The Lonesome Scenes of Winter." Variants exist in Ireland but are almost unknown in Scotland and England. The original tune is not as modal as it sounds here because I inadvertently altered the last note of the second line and have been singing it that way for a few years.

3. The Star of Logy Bay *5:03*

Harp: David Scheim; Melodeon: Don Stallone; Electric Bass: Pete Kraemer

I first heard "The Star of Logy Bay" at a community dance on the eve of a folk festival in St. John's, Newfoundland. People were slowly waltzing around the floor: old, young, outsiders, old-timers. Anything that separated dancers and onlookers from each other seemed to have vanished, if only for the song's duration.

I'd come Newfoundland to sing, observe, learn, and work as a "fieldwork assistant" to the folklorist Dr. Kenneth Goldstein (1927-1995). Kenny liked to bring an outside singer along with him to trade songs, jog memories, and generally alleviate the formality of his recording sessions with informants. Many of the Newfoundland singers with whom he had already established rapport were coming from rural areas into St. John's to sing at the festival. My initial job was to keep them engaged and relaxed. How much I gained from that experience! I particularly enjoyed the late night unison singing that took place at kitchen tables around a bottle of "screech." I heard a lot of

ballads, many of which were local and dealt with accidents at sea. The oldest singers I met regarded their songs as history and often talked about "telling" a song. This reinforced my own approach to much of what I sing. This song's for you, Kenny—thanks for all I learned with you on that trip!

The authorship of "The Star of Logy Bay" is obscure. I learned it from Gerald S. Doyle Limited's *Old-Time Songs and Poetry of Newfoundland,* a free booklet carried in many editions by the packet ships that used to pick up fish and deliver supplies to the Newfoundland outports. There is speculation that the song was written by Mark Walker (1846-1924) of Tickle Cove in Bonavista Bay, Newfoundland. It was first published (as "traditional") in *Songs and Ballads of Newfoundland, Ancient and Modern* (1902) by James Murphy (1867-1931), the St. John's poet, collector, and cabinet-maker.

4. In Old Pod-Auger Times *2:31*

"Old Pod-Auger Times" is a song made popular towards the end of the nineteenth century by Comical Brown (1833-1898), a solo performer who toured the Northeast, particularly Maine. I learned this song from my late brother Dick Higgins when we were both teenagers. He used to sing it very loud and fast as if it were a patter song. I don't know why or from where he learned it. It appears in Helen Hartness Flanders and George Brown's *Vermont Folk-Songs & Ballads* (1931). The song looks back satirically to the presidency of Andrew Jackson (1829-1837) as a time of strong family values and a robust work ethic. Considering that people have been lamenting the "good old days" for longer than I've been around, this song seems more timely than ever. A pod-auger was an old-fashioned bit used in drilling out tree trunks to serve as wooden pipes for running water.

A pod auger.

5. When Adam Was Created *2:59*

I've sung this song at weddings for both my younger brothers, Dan and Alex, but have only rarely sung it in public. It could easily be considered sexist. As I grow older though, I've gone through many hard times and have welcomed the nurture of another caring partner or spouse. I've also learned to make some compromises rather than to pursue my own dreams at any cost. These are issues married people have to deal with all the time, and I wonder if the lyrics of this song should not be revalued. What could be kinder and finer than to urge one partner to cherish and take care of the other and to try hard not to dominate? Who one decides to marry and what roles one chooses to play are increasingly flexible, but the sentiments voiced here are useful when shared between people of any sexual persuasion. Perhaps the words of this song could be revised, but the only editing I've done is to secularize "Christian life" to "goodly life."

This version was collected from Jasper Robertson of Burnsville, North Carolina (1918) and published in Cecil Sharp, Olive Campbell, and Maude Karpeles, *English*

Folksongs from the Southern Appalachians (1932). Some variants have also appeared in England, as well as in George Pullen Jackson's *White Spirituals in the Southern Upland* (1933) and the Frank C. Brown collection, *North Carolina Folklore* (1952).

6. Lake Chemo *4:33*
Chorus: Van Mertz, George Stephens, and Kathy Westra; Electric Piano: Lisa Null

"Lake Chemo" reflects the mythical sense of place I feel about Maine. It's where I get a lot of my songs. My ancestors lived in Maine (before emigrating back to Massachusetts where they had originally settled), and my youngest son lives there today. Our family tended to recite verses about their adventures at birthdays and family reunions. "Lake Chemo" has the kind of text we might have created about a place where we might have gone camping. Filled with evocative images, strong memories, and dry wit, "Lake Chemo," the song, gained enough local popularity to have bestowed its name not only on Lake K'chemegwak ("place of the big bog") but on Leonard Pond,

an adjacent body of water. The words were written in 1871 by James Wilson Rowe of Great Works, Maine. They are a loose parody of an older song, “Norah McShane,” composed by W.J. Wetmore for words by the English Chartist poet, Eliza Cook (1837), who also authored “The Old Arm Chair.” “Norah McShane” has appeared in Irish folk tradition.

One version of “Lake Chemo” comes to us from James Wilson Rowe’s daughter, Mrs. Josiah T. Taylor and is close to this one that I found in Phillips Barry’s *The Maine Woods Songster* (1939). My hearty chorus consists of two neighbors, George Stephens and Kathy Westra, as well as Van Mertz who used to live in nearby Bethesda. We called ourselves East-West Highway after the road that connected our two communities, and we sang several concerts and festival appearances under that name. I’ll never forget the mirthful evenings spent rehearsing while we were fortified by wine and Kathy’s superb cooking. Van is now living in a more distant part of Montgomery County, and George and Kathy have moved to Maine. Singing together one last time for this session felt like a farewell reunion for us all.

7. The Irish Patriot *4:12*

This fascinating Irish-American song has been collected only in Maine and New Brunswick, Canada. It differs markedly in length, sentiment, and tune from the popular theater songs so often associated with urban Irish America. During the first days of Green Linnet Records, I traveled to Ireland to help record Seamus Ennis, the great piper and collector. When I complained that I couldn't master the complex and ornamented *sean nos* singing style, Seamus was not surprised. "You have to have the Irish language in your bones," he said, "even if you are an English speaker." He believed that the ancient style and its ornaments took their cues from the stresses and rhythms of spoken Irish. When he heard that I came originally from New England, he urged me to explore the whole world of Irish song from the northeastern United States and Canada. He believed my own voice and ways of pronouncing words would help me sing those songs. I'm sure he meant songs like "The Irish Patriot."

My domestic partner Charlie Baum first played me this song, which he culled from the Maine Folklife Center's website

at the University of Maine. Entranced, I stole it for myself. Charlie is a champion song finder, and I often take advantage of his skills. The recorded singer we heard singing "The Irish Patriot" is Dale Porter of Mattawamkeag, Maine (1969) who earlier gave the song to Horace Beck (*The Folklore of Maine,* 1957). Beck calls this song "India's Burning Shores."

Edward "Sandy" Ives, the great Maine folklorist, collected a close variant of the song from Jimmy Cameron of New Brunswick (*The Folksongs of New Brunswick*, 1989). Ives considered the song to be a part of the Northeast lumber camp tradition, although it only appears in his own and Beck's collections. Both authors assume that the song was sung in Ireland, but no published version has surfaced there or in Great Britain. Dale Porter's recorded tune, used here, is hard to decipher, but it sounds like a jaunty version of "The Texas Rangers." I changed "India's burning shore" to "Africa's burning shore" to fit with the rest of the story.

8. Bonnie Blue Eyes *3:12*

Fretless Banjo: Bob Clayton

I usually sing "Goodbye My Little Bonnie Blue Eyes" when jamming for the first time with a bunch of singers and instrumentalists. Its tune and chord changes can be picked up quickly by ear, and the chorus teaches itself. This small song has iconic images that pack emotional power.

Music critics could conceivably put down "Goodbye My Little Bonnie Blue Eyes" as lacking in originality, but originality has little to do with what makes a folk song good. It's not a symbol's uniqueness that matters. It matters how a symbol is used and what it evokes. I remember the songwriter Lorre Wyatt once saying, "a good song should sound like it's always been there." "Goodbye My Little Bonnie Blue Eyes" fills that bill. Familiar symbols are all compacted in just a few verses: the boarding train, the little bird wishing to build a nest in its true lover's breast, blue ocean, and high mountains. I love the juxtapostions. They have become hooks for both singer and listeners to grab hold of and invest with their own meanings.

My neighbor Bob Clayton gives the song breathing room by adding his very lonely fretless banjo. It's enough.

William A. Owens in his *Texas Folk Songs* (*Publications of the Texas Folklore Society,* Number XXIII, 1950) says he first heard "Goodbye My Little Bonnie Blue Eyes" from May Kennedy McCord of Springfield, Missouri. She sang it at one of the National Folk Festival programs. Since then, Owens says he also heard it with the same title in Texas's Big Thicket area. He found additional versions in other areas of that state.

9. Fannie Blair (Fanny Blair) *3:24*

One early album we recorded at Green Linnet (the record company I co-founded with Pat Sky during the early 1970s), was *Peter Bellamy*. It is an all-vocal album by the stupendous English singer of that name. Peter was one of the first singers to take my own singing seriously, and he mentored me as a performer. I got to know him very well. Because he had winning ways with both my sons, we all soon regarded him as an extension of the family and felt the same way about his first wife, Anthea. They came to stay with us for weeks at a time

on their American tours. Bill Shute, the guitarist with whom I performed, and I also stayed with them for weeks when Anthea arranged tours for us in England. Later, Peter and his second wife Jenny came to visit me at my new Washington home, but Peter committed suicide shortly after that. His death felt like the death of a brother.

"Fanny Blair" was originally recorded for the *Peter Bellamy* album, but Peter's voice was so intense that our reel-to-reel tapes developed "print through" on that cut. By the time Pitt Kinsolving (Green Linnet's first recording engineer and my former domestic partner) decided that this problem was insurmountable, the album cover and notes for *Peter Bellamy* had already been printed. I removed the shrink wrap, grabbed a magic marker, and blacked out "Fanny Blair" on each album. I was furious with myself for screwing up the production process and hired Wendy Newton to replace me as Green Linnet's business and production manager. In time, Wendy took over Green Linnet from me and co-founder Pat Sky.

I learned "Fanny Blair" from hearing it over and over as we tried to eliminate the print through. Pete had learned the song

from his former brother-in-law Chris Birch, who attributes this version to Cecil Sharp's *Collection of English Folksongs,* Vol. 1 (ed. Maude Karpeles, 1974). The plot deals with the trial of one Henry Higgins who was accused of raping an eleven-year-old girl. Based on a true incident in Northern Ireland (County Armagh, 1785), the song has been collected almost exclusively in England and America. One set of words, similar to Peter's, dates from 1839 and was written down in a sailor's logbook. That version can be found in Gale Huntington's *Songs the Whalemen Sang* (1964)

10. The Tune the Old Cow Died On *2:29*

When I was in kindergarten I learned this song from my brother Dick Higgins He was five years older than me and probably learned it from the now-defunct boarding school he was attending, Hickory Ridge. This was a progressive school for younger children and was affiliated with the famous Putney School. Folk music was deeply integrated into their curriculum, and it's where I heard my first contra dance music. I remember laughing and laughing when Dick first sang me the

song. I picked it out on the piano and made my first formal attempt to memorize a song.

Its first published sheet music appeared in 1880 with a text by George Russell Jackson and a tune by "Eastburn," the pseudonym for Joseph Eastburn Winner (brother of Septimus Winner, a more prominent songwriter). The song has been collected from oral tradition by Vance Randolph in 1927 and appears his *Ozark Folk Songs,* Vol. 3 (1948). It had some currency in New England, where it was collected from Lena Bourne Fish by Frank and Anne Warner in 1940 and Helen Hartness Flanders in her *Garland of Green Mountain Song* (1934). There are other British and American songs with the same title, but they have unrelated narratives.

The Jackson-Eastburn sheet music suggests that it originated at an earlier date as the following appears on its cover: "You have often heard of 'The Tune the Old Cow Died On' but never before have seen it in print. Here it is."

11. The Price of Freedom *4:28*

Concertina: Don Stallone

I've developed increasing respect for some of the nineteenth-century labor anthems. They do not always have the simplicity of style and delivery we associate with modern protest songs, but they carry a lot of emotional freight combined with ideological passion. "The Price of Freedom" is not a true labor anthem, but it did appear in the labor press (*The Labor Enquirer:* 12/17/1887; reprinted in *The Workman's Advocate:* 12/24/1887). Much of the language is similar to other labor anthems— literary with rich metaphorical associations.

"The Price of Freedom" is a classic execution ballad written in the purported words of Albert R. Parsons, a leading anarchist thinker and writer who played an instrumental role in organizing Chicago's general strike of May 1, 1886. This strike drew forth 40,000 workers seeking an eight-hour day. When a second demonstration was called three days later to protest the police brutality occurring in the earlier strike, a bomb was set off that resulted in six deaths, including one policeman. Fifty other people were wounded, although some may have been

injured by a virulent police response to the ensuing mayhem. Employers stepped up their campaign to associate the eight-hour-a-day struggle with anarchist bomb-throwers. Parsons was arrested, along with seven other men. They were brought to trial and found guilty of using inflammatory language that could have incited bomb throwing. Seven were sentenced to die and one received a 15-year prison sentence. Albert Parsons was one of the condemned men.

The rather successful strike of May 1st helped establish "May Day" as a time for labor action, and the tragic incidents of May 4th are known through history as the Haymarket Affair. Widespread national and international efforts were made to pardon the "Haymarket Martyrs," as Parsons and his comrades were soon called. Two did indeed have their sentences commuted to life imprisonment. One of the other men committed suicide in prison but four, including Parsons, were executed on November 11, 1887. Later, Governor Altgeld pardoned the remaining prisoners and, in a report, described the trial as a serious miscarriage of justice. The actual bomb-thrower was never apprehended.

At midnight before his execution the following day, Albert Parsons was heard singing "Annie Laurie," the air to which the words of "The Price of Freedom" were set by their anonymous author. Don Stallone, a Silver Spring dweller and enjoyable coffee companion, plays his steadfast concertina.

12. Father Get Ready *3:29*
Hammered Dulcimer: Karen Ashbrook; Harp: David Scheim

When I was in elementary school in the early 1950s, a youthful Jean Ritchie gave a concert in our gym. I'd already learned a fair number of folksongs from family and school, but I'd never heard anyone sing them with her high, lacy voice, at once soft and penetrating, simple and intricate. Jean not only sang the ordinary notes I was used to hearing, she also sang beautiful little microtones in between them. When I was old enough to babysit, I bought one of her records with my first earnings: *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (Riverside, 1956). "Father Get Ready," an old camp meeting song, just popped off that vinyl and into my head. I've been singing it ever since.

Many of Jean's other songs became my own, and eventually I became her neighbor in Port Washington, Long Island. She showed me how to play a dulcimer, invited me to her Methodist church, and introduced me to both the Fox Hollow Folk Festival and New York's Pinewoods Folk Music Club. We had long talks over coffee in her kitchen, and she turned me loose in her music library. For a week, I sailed with Jean and her husband George Pickow on a Maine windjammer with other singing friends. I often think back on that idyllic trip with nostalgia and delight.

13. Locks and Bolts *2:32*

During a long-ago trip to Indonesia, I learned that ritual bride stealing was once common in some parts of that country. As a American, bride stealing has been repugnant to me as it often implies a lack of consent. But this song sheds light on bride stealing as a form of deliverance. For some women, parental control of their love life is unbearable. There is tenderness in this song, and mutual consent is explicit. I sing many ballads from Anglo-American and Celtic traditions that deal with bride steal-

ing and illicit elopements. Singing "Locks and Bolts" however, has been my "aha!" moment, The right to love or marry who one chooses continues to remain an important civil rights struggle that is well worth fighting for.

I got this version of a British broadside ballad from Cecil Sharp, Olive Campbell, and Maude Karpeles, *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians* (1932; 2nd printing, 1966). It was sung by Rosie Hensley of Carmen, Virginia (1916). My tune and words have altered somewhat since first learning it in the late 1970s.

14. Dink's Song *1:48*

My brother Mark learned this song soon after his voice changed. He loved to sing it at the bottom of his vocal range, savoring the new bass resonances. I can remember quietly kayaking with him on Brooks Pond in North Brookfield, Massachusetts, where my father and stepmother lived. Sung slowly, the song kept us moving in a steady rhythm. Because Mark was tragically killed at age 20, I mostly sing this in his memory, not often in performance. Mark's version is a

little different from the one John Lomax collected from Dink (1908), a woman "washing her man's clothes outside their tent on the banks of the Brazos River in Texas" (*Adventures of a Ballad Hunter,* 1947). Mark substituted "woman" for "man":

I got a woman, she's long and tall; Moves her body like a cannonball.

I've always loved the image of a woman who could move her body like that. Mercifully, I've left out another weird verse Mark made up as we paddled along:

I've got a woman, she's short and fat; Moves her body like a vampire bat!

15. Handsome Mary *3:32*
Harp: David Scheim

This song, which I call "Handsome Mary," was collected by Vance Randolph from the singing of Lee Stephens in Jane, Missouri (1928). It appears in volume 4 ("Religious Songs and Other Items") of his mammoth collection *Ozark Folk Songs* (1980). I love its melody, resembling that used by the great *sean nos* singer Joe Heaney for "I Went to Mass on Sunday,"

a closely related Irish song. I especially enjoy the reference in both songs to the local church as community meeting place.

British singer Peter Bellamy produced a fine record of Joe Heaney and flute player Gabriel O'Sullivan for Green Linnet (*Joe and the Gabe*, 1979), and Joe and I became friends. I sat with him at festivals, listening and sharing our thoughts about Irish songs. Joe was afraid the elegant guitar accompaniments emerging in the late 1970s would distract from the power and words of a good song. "Irish rococo," he called the flamboyant, chorded arrangements of newly popular Celtic groups. Then he'd scowl a little, because Green Linnet (the record company I'd originally co-founded with Pat Sky and later passed on to Wendy Newton) was becoming a leading purveyor of that sound.

I hope Joe would be accepting of David Scheim's arrangement of this song. David works hard to keep the melody linear, and I try to emphasize the words. The rhythm is a bit more regular than if I were singing a cappella, but the harp is another voice and gives me space to move around as the words suggest. Forgive us Joe, we couldn't resist!

16. Sweet William and Lady Margaret *5:18*

"Sweet William and Lady Margaret" has been one of my favorite ballads since I first learned it as a teenager from Jean Ritchie. Its tune is considered the quintessential American folk tune by ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl. The folk hymn, "No More Stormy Clouds Rising," is set to the same tune, and "Willie Moore," the murder ballad, is set to a similar tune. "Sweet William and Lady Margaret" shows us how disregarding true love can have fatal consequences. The power of Sweet William's dream ("I dreamed my hall was filled with wild swine and my true love was swimming in blood") affects me so intensely that at times that I've had to stop cold, unable to continue singing.

Many traditional ballad singers in Appalachia and elsewhere in the Anglo and Celtic world tell a ballad story dispassionately. They often avoid broad dynamic contrasts or varying the speed for dramatic effect. When I sing this ballad, I see myself as a narrator, more a journalist than an actor or participant. Some of my favorite traditional singers have urged me not to "get in the way of a song" and to give listeners enough

emotional room to hang their own meanings on the story line. I've tried to follow that approach here.

Francis James Child's five-volume compendium and analysis, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (1882-1898) includes 305 ballad texts ultimately culled, he believed, from oral tradition by earlier ballad collectors, antiquarians and collectors of old broadsides. "Sweet William and Lady Margaret" is listed as #74, and its antiquity is well-established. In 1611, Beaumont and Fletcher's play, *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, quotes two verses of it. Jean Ritchie says she learned her version from Justin Begley of Hazard, Kentucky. An available recording of her singing this version appears in an updated Folkways album, *Jean Ritchie: Ballads From Her Appalachian Ballad Tradition* (2003).

17. I Want to See My Mother *3:20*

Minstrel Banjo: Bob Clayton

I originally got this song from Almeda Riddle, an Ozark singer, who says her mother used to sing it to her as a child. Almeda remembers what she thought as her mother sang the song:

> I'd think maybe this was a girl that was married and gone away from her mother and she was a-crying to go back. I always had a fierce imagination—'fraid I still do have—and she was trying to go back and see her mother and probably it wasn't pleasing to her husband. So at night, when she'd sing this, I could picture it that way. (*A Singer and Her Songs: Almeda Riddle's Book of Ballads,* ed. Roger D. Abrahams, 1970).

I remember singing this to my mother when performing at a coffee house called The Focus, run by the wonderful singer Debby McClatchy during her few years in New York City. My mother was plumped up on the large cushions the audience used instead of chairs. She was all smiles waiting for her daughter to make her proud in her new career as a folksinger. I began singing "I want to see see my mother, whose hair has turned to grey." Oops. I'd wounded her vanity. The song continued; "They tell me she lies sleeping in a lonely new dug grave." Up jumped my mother. "Oh, Lizzybess, really!" she exclaimed in her clear Park Avenue voice. I tried to cover for myself. "That's my Mom," I explained to the audience. "She

just has a hard time understanding how much I love her." That calmed her down as chuckles of modest appreciation filled the room.

Almeda Riddle taught me a lot about singing, about how the little yodels in her voice allowed her to rest it. She showed many of us younger singers how she kept a steady pulse by moving her forearms back and forth in time. I had many chances to speak with her, because she was actively performing during the years I was just beginning. I thought her voice was beautiful and told her so. She said folks in her own community preferred women with lighter and smoother voices.

18. James Bird *6:28*

In 2011, I made up my mind to learn "James Bird" as a song to perform with Yankee Frolics, a trio of singers specializing in War of 1812 material. I value its riveting narrative of a heroic volunteer at the Battle of Lake Champlain who was eventually executed as a deserter. The words, written by Charles Miner for his Wilkes-Barre newspaper, *The Gleaner*, slipped into oral tradition and were collected by Frank and Anne Warner from

the singing of “Yankee John” Galusha, an Adirondack logger and guide.

Late that fall, I visited Caroline Paton in Sharon, Connecticut. Our plan was for me to drive us both to the Folk-Legacy fiftieth anniversary celebration at the Sounding Board in Hartford, Connecticut. She would host and I would perform there as one of the Folk-Legacy artists. A sudden blizzard rendered us snowbound, and the gala had to go on while Caroline and I stayed behind in her house with no power or heat. We sang old songs until late into the night while wrapped in blankets and sharing a big bottle of whiskey. Somehow in the dark, with nothing more than a candle to guide her, Caroline retrieved a handwritten version of “James Bird” copied and sung by Sara Cleveland, another great, traditional Adirondack singer. Now I knew of two singers who had learned this song independently of one another! This was a sign to me that the song had an ongoing impact on the region’s population. Sarah Cleveland’s manuscript is the version I follow most closely. I later learned that the tunes of both versions are almost the same.

“James Bird” offers a view of war quite different than the victory songs, toasts, and poems from naval banquets often found among War of 1812 memorabilia. However popular such songs may have been at the time, it is hard to find War of 1812 songs like these that local singers have been willing to learn by heart and pass on to future generations.

“James Bird” tells a different story: a man volunteers his service courageously when needed but deserts the military of his own volition. This happened a lot in the War of 1812, as it had before during the Revolutionary War, and as it does at times in modern wars. James Bird was executed to set an example to others. Because of his exemplary heroism, his death was a spectacular and well-publicized way to discipline America’s brave but free-spirited men. James displays no remorse and is gallant even in death. I suspect the listener, like me, admires him at least a little.

19. James Hewitt's The Star-Spangled Banner *7:37*
Piano: Donna Long

I joined with two other singers, Peter Brice and Judy Cook, as Yankee Frolics, to perform songs for the War of 1812 bicentennial. I sang the full text of the Star Spangled Banner and tried to recapture the fervor with which it quickly touched the hearts of so many Americans. It was not easy for a peaceful soul like myself to sing "Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just," but, as I relived the fears and hope of our little country struggling against the greatest imperial power of its time, I began communicating Francis Scott Key's words with more empathy. I wanted listeners to experience each verse afresh, without the emotional responses automatically conjured up by the strains of our national anthem. I did not want audiences to stand but to sit reflectively and listen. To blur the link between the song and our modern, conditioned reactions, I chose the less familiar tune James Hewitt created for the words and published in his *J. Hewitt's Musical Miscellany* (1817). The tune we sing today, John Stafford Smith's "Anachreontic Song" (London: 1778), was a popular, often parodied drinking song.

Hewitt offers us a more martial setting, and it too remained popular until the 1850s.

Hewitt emigrated from England to the United States in 1792, and he divided his life between New York and Boston as a theatrical composer, publisher, and musical pedagogue. He is best remembered today for his keyboard sonata, “The Battle of Trenton” (1797). Wonderful Donna Long accompanies me here, and follows the musical notation quite carefully.

CD2: Newer Songs and Tunes

About the *Dickerson Suite* and Other Tunes

In 2004, I signed on to do research and editing for the journalist John Dickerson, who was leaving *Time* magazine to write *On Her Trail: My Mother, Nancy Dickerson, TV News' First Woman Star* (2006). This was a searing autobiographical memoir about growing up with a brilliant mother torn between ambition and family. Part of my job was to track down and sometimes interview her former friends and associates. I also dug into archival materials and reconstructed the descriptive flavor of her youthful life and environs.

I'd never been a virtual freelancer for a full-length book, and I loved every minute of the project. I never even met John until his book was published, but we shared a great deal about his youth and his family through emails and phone conversations. Occasionally, though, I felt trapped in a historical fantasy, unsure which content was real and which was my own running away with the facts.

I didn't want to be subsumed by someone else's creative work, so I began re-teaching myself piano. I'd studied classical piano as a child, but now I wanted to play music by ear. I tried composing simple, expressive "fiddle tunes" that could be played by others without any need for musical notation. Our living-room has a small electric piano and its resemblance to a toy made relearning the instrument feel playful. I collected the tunes I wrote during this time into the *Dickerson Suite*, and they are consecutively interspersed between other songs on this second cd of Legacies. Their names are "Follow the Money," "Fenton Street Rag," "Wauwatosa," "Dickerson's Fancy," and "Farewell to Folly." *Dickerson Suite* tunes are each asterisked, and I'll say more about each in the notes as they occur.

I first played these tunes in concerts and folk festivals with Larry Robinson and Mia Boynton. Larry is a local expert on every sort of four-stringed instrument and Mia, his wife, played a wicked bluegrass guitar. Their marriage broke up, however, and Mia moved away, so I stopped playing the tunes. Two outstanding musicians from Silver Spring, Paul Oorts and Karen Ashbook, helped me revive them for this album and pro-

vided a precision and virtuosity of their own, You'll hear what I call "my proudly indifferent piano" chugging along beneath Karen's hammered dulcimer and flute as well as Paul's cittern, mandolin, tenor banjo, and harp guitar.

I've also added a medley of two other tunes, made up during the same period but never a formal part of the *Dickerson Suite*. The first, "Hugh Gillespies' Tune," honors the late Hugh Gillespie, son and namesake of the famous Irish fiddler. Hughie was once my housemate, and he taught me a great deal about listening to Irish music. The second tune, "Off to Bunratty's," is named for the legendary Irish music bar in the Bronx.

An asterisk (*) next to some of the following titles mark the tunes as part of the Dickerson Suite*,*

1. Andy Goodman (To His Mother) [© Jean Ritchie, 1964, 1971, Geordie Music Publishing; all rights reserved, used by permission] *4:47*
Harp: David Scheim

In 1964, I went to Mississippi with my former husband, journalist Henry Null, whom I had married a year before. This was "Freedom Summer" during which thousands of Mississippi civil rights workers and northern volunteers participated in a campaign to register black voters, a process from which they had been excluded for generations. Although I'd been a college participant in the civil rights movement as secretary of Southern Westchester County's Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), this time around I was not an activist but an empathetic observer.

We stayed several days in Greenville with an old friend, Tom Oxnard, who was working at Hodding Carter Jr.'s *Delta Democrat Times*, an outspoken and liberal paper of some literary distinction. The bodies of two northern civil rights workers (Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner) and one African-American CORE activist (James Chaney of Meridian,

Misssissippi) had recently been discovered. They were buried in an earthen dam near the site of their murder. The publicity of the tragic deaths galvanized public attention and helped secure the passage of the Civil Rights act of 1964 and the Civil Rights Act of 1965. It was a frightening and turbulent sojourn for us as well as for the friends we met through Tom.

Almost ten years later, I sang this song (from Andrew Goodman's point of view) for a program presented by the New York Pinewoods Folk Music Society. The concert honored Jean Ritchie and her songs. I learned it from the first printing of *Celebration of Life* (Geordie Publishing: 1971, p. 63) but it disappeared from subsequent editions and eventually from public memory. Thanks to Charlie Baum, my partner, for his indefatigable hunt for the song via Barbara LaGodna, a reference librarian from the University of West Virginia, who helped us rediscover it.

I believe this is one of Jean's most powerful songs. It ties ancient riddles found in the Yiddish "Tumbalalaika" with the outrageous death of a very young man helping to bring justice to an unjust world. There is no sloganeering here, no pat

dichotomies. Out of Andy Goodman's brutal death comes an inspirational cry of determination. Jean told me she had known Andy Goodman's mother and was deeply shocked by his death.

David Scheim is working on what he calls his *sean nos* style of harp playing here, and I like the way it lets me sing very freely almost as if we were having a flowing, call and response.

2. Turn Me Loose and Let Me Go (© Lisa Null) *3:52*
Electric Bass: Pete Kraemer; Harp: David Scheim

Like many songwriters, I've compared a sweet but evanescent love with the seasons of the year. As originally conceived, this song spoke of a fulfilling love that would have to end through no fault of its own. After one concert, however, an audience member told me that for him the song was about letting a loved one die at the end of a terminal illness. I began realizing the song was big enough to include many kinds of love. Each time people hear it, the meanings shift a bit.

The song used to sound lugubrious, but one night, Pete Kraemer, my bass-playing neighbor and former music partner, started

jamming with David Scheim, the harpist. I suggested they jazz the tune up a little, tapping out a "Texas two-step" with my foot. That's how this new version came into being.

3. The Valley and the Farm (© Lisa Null) *2:53*

When I lived in Connecticut, one great pleasure was escaping to the rural, northwestern part of the state. 18th- and early 19th-century towns are nestled in narrow valleys among the Berkshire mountains, There's a beautiful harmony between the woods, the pastures, and the architecture. One day I was visiting North Cornwall's late painter, Jonathan Scoville, who devoted much of his life to capturing cloud formations and the area's natural fauna on canvas. He shared with me a stash of letters from an elderly stonemason who lived in the nearby town of Goshen. They were pen pals, though he said they'd never met.

I compressed the thoughts expressed by the stonemason into this small song. The author is gruff but delivers his complaints with humor and conviction. At times, he even seems to enjoy his own irritability. I also sense, from the letters, that the

stonemason loved his land as well as the woman who had once shared his life. Audiences sometimes read into his words a plea for sustainable development.

4. Hugh Gillespie's Tune & Off to Bunratty's (© Lisa Null) *3:15*
Cittern: Paul Oorts; Wooden Flute: Karen Ashbrook; Electric Piano: Lisa Null

I wrote these tunes as a medley, in part because Mia Boynton (part of the first trio with whom I performed this music) wanted some tunes with a classical feel. Paul Oorts and Karen Asbrook pick up on that initial flavor but have added their own sparkle. The first tune is dedicated to the late Hugh Gillespie: friend, housemate, and my guide to Irish music. Hughie was the son of Hugh Gillespie, the great Sligo-style fiddler who retired to Donegal but lived in the Bronx for many years. Hughie's father was a good friend of Michael Coleman, and Hughie remembered his childhood home as frequently filled with music. No musician himself, he had the art of listening and knew exactly what to look for in a tune and a player.

When Hughie came home in the evening from his work as a contractor, I always felt welcome to join him by 9:00 or 10:00 P.M. He'd be watching television with earphones while slowly nursing a pint of chocolate ice-cream, but as soon as I asked a musical question, he'd flick off the tv, and we'd start listening to his home-made cassettes of Irish sessions. The slight, rhythmic roll of his shoulders usually taught me what I needed to listen for.

Many of Hughie's tapes were created at Bunratty's, the Irish pub for which this second tune is named. After Wendy Newton came to Green Linnet Records and eventually acquired the company, Bunratty's, in the Bronx, became the preferred watering hole for the Green Linnet staff. I stayed home when not on the road to stick around for my teenaged sons. My appreciation for Bunratty's music, then, came mostly second-hand through Hughie's stash of cassettes. Brian Conway, the fine fiddler Hughie regarded almost as a son, now owns those tapes, and I can easily imagine the pleasure he must have listening to them!

5. The Mother's Song (© Lisa Null) *3:54*

I made this song up as a young woman with two little children of my own. I was acutely aware of my own mother growing older, though she lived quite actively for almost twenty years after the song was written. She never died alone at a distance from her family. I was worried, though, about all the caring given to the young compared the scant caring given older people in our big country. I worried about what would happen when I stopped caring for my own young children. Who would eventually take care of me?

In 2013, I found myself in a convalescent center, and it was a pleasant place— a spacious room with all the tv I could want and plenty of time to enjoy it. I even had a laptop perched on a roll-away bed tray that also functioned as a desk. I enjoyed being apart from family obligations and demands of the outside world. I had plenty of family waiting for me at home. This song, then, is a worst case scenario for other older people who are indeed abandoned and alone. What does happen when a mother needs a mother?

6 . *Follow the Money (© Lisa Null) *2:15*
Mandolin: Paul Oorts; Hammered Dulcimer: Karen Ashbrook; Electric piano: Lisa Null

Whenever a check came from the research and editing project I was working on for the journalist, John Dickerson, it felt like a million dollars. I was working on my own, at home, as an independent contractor. After a long and varied life in the work force, I was on early disability retirement, but I could not afford to relax as a retired person. Now all my skills were coming together, and the check proved I'd found a client who could use what I had to offer. I wrote "Follow the Money" to capture the exuberance I felt on my way to deposit that check in my bank's drive-in window.

7. Come Take Me Home Again, Kathleen (© Lisa Null) *4:06*

In the early 1970s, I had a domestic partner named Pitt Kinsolving (an instrument maker, teacher, performer, and recording engineer), who landed a steady weekend gig playing Brock's Irish Pub with me in Norwalk, Connecticut. They paid us $75 a night and all the steak we could eat. We practically

memorized the Clancy Brothers songbook, and each of began began singing five separate sets per night. I learned to balance our songs for a changing audience: rowdy songs for the drinkers; funny songs for the girl-scout administrators who congregated there after work; rebel songs for the weekend warriors.

We soon began digging deeper into traditional Irish song and learning more about Irish history. Our audiences shifted as our repertoire and approach changed—we attracted regulars who stayed most of the night, but they would sip one or two Irish coffees instead of imbibing the hard liquor that management needed to sell. Our growing love for Irish traditional music eventually did us out of this job!

I wrote "Come Take Me Home Again Kathleen" while playing at Brock's, and it was my hit song. I was trying to communicate how Irish traditional music had led me into a deeper emotional sympathy for the Irish resistance. I still expressed a touch of ambivalence, as I'd long considered myself a "peacenik," but my empathy for Irish independence had become genuine.

In 1973, I took the song to Ireland and sang it in pubs. People went wild: they stood up, shouting with a militant zeal that startled me. I began to worry, "Was I exploiting Irish oppression for my own benefit? Did I have a right to stir up somebody else's troubles?" I performed it for the first time in public again in 2013 at a post-concert gathering of splendid Irish singers from South Roscommon. They understood the song with all its feelings of sympathy, hope and despair. I've recorded it here by request, without arrangement or embellishment.

8.* Fenton St. Rag (© Lisa Null) *2:33*
Tenor Banjo: Paul Oorts; Hammered Dulcimer: Karen Ashbrook; Electric Piano: Lisa Null

Almost ten years ago, while working as journalist, John Dickerson's virtual researcher and editorial assistant, getting out of my house was a big effort. I didn't have a mobility scooter back then. If I wanted to reconnect with the world, I'd stagger to the car, drive a few blocks, and park by the side of the road. Sometimes, I'd be close to a restaurant and could sneak in for coffee or a light lunch. Usually, I'd head to Fenton Street, dotted with mom 'n' pop stores, ethnic

restaurants,carry-outs, and cafes. In the summer, a nearby, flat-bed truck might sell fruit to the few strolling pedestrians. In any case, Fenton Street became where I got my bearings. Usually I never got out of the car. I just listened and watched and thought. In quiet moments like that, "Fenton Street Rag" emerged.

The streetscape is changing now. A high rise is about to be built, and the traffic is getting heavier. Soon the little stores may be edged out by high rentals. In my red mobility scooter, I speed down Fenton so fast, I no longer notice the little details. This piece has a dated feel, like an old Hollywood set. Paul Oorts has inserted a quote from "Nola" into the tune, making it a true period piece. That's his idea, not mine—but it makes me want to dance!

9. Will You Love Me in the Morning (© Charles Baum) *2:26*
Charlie Baum, lead; Lisa Null: harmony

One morning Charlie Baum, my domestic partner of twenty-two years, woke up with this song in his head. He said it came to him in a dream, and he woke me up to sing it quickly before

it got lost in the morning drowsiness. Soon I was singing it with him, and we have been singing it ever since. I used to think the words were about us and once accused him of being self-centered: after all, it talked about his getting ensnared by some other lover during an absence. Charlie smiled and replied that the song was of course about some other man, a sailor saying goodbye to someone he loved but might be separated from through no fault of his own. Charlie is proud that people ask where he collected the song— as if it had been around for years and years.

10. The Pecos River Queen (tune & chorus © Lisa Null) *4:04*
Guitars: Van Mertz and George Stephens; Chorus: George Stephens, Kathy Westra, Van Mertz

I wrote the chorus and added a tune to "The Pecos River Queen," which extols a woman valued for her skills as a rancher. The poem comes from "Jack" Thorp (N. Howard Thorp, 1867-1940) and was published in his first edition of Songs of the Cowboys, (1908). He wrote it in 1901 after listening to Judge Roy Bean, a great raconteur, talk about the indomitable Patty Moorhead.

Jack Thorp tells us that Patty Moorhead challenged her suitor to follow her on horseback across the Comstock Railroad Bridge, spanning 2,180 feet across the Pecos River and looming 321 feet above it.

"The Pecos River Queen" caught my fancy as a latter-day retelling of the mythological Atalanta's footrace. Atalanta was a great hunter and the fastest woman in the world. Atalanta was eventually outwitted when her suitor threw irresistible apples in her path and caused her to detour off course. Patty stayed on course, however, and remained single, which was probably her wish.

This is one of the songs I most enjoyed singing with East-West Highway, a trio consisting of a good friend, Van Mertz, and two wonderful neighbors: George Stephens and Kathy Westra, who just moved to Maine.

11. Ghosts (© Lisa Null) *2:46*

This is one of my own songs, looking backwards at how things might have been if I'd made different choices in life. I have few regrets, but when I sing this song, I ache at least temporarily for

those roads I chose not to travel. “Folk” singing is magical in that way. With old, traditional songs I can travel through time and inhabit other minds or tell stories from other points of view. With my own songs, I get to imagine and inhabit one of the many “me’s” I used to be or might have been. The “ghosts” are my referees.

12.* Wauwatosa (© Lisa Null) *2:34*
Electric Piano: Lisa Null; Harp Guitar: Paul Oorts; Hammered Dulcimer: Karen Ashbrook

“Wauwatosa” is the only tune from the *Dickerson Suite* that captures some of the fantasies I had about the actual places I was researching. John Dickerson’s mother grew up in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, a suburb of Milwaukee. Its very name enchanted me. I made up the tune after listening to lots of piped-in Ethiopian music at Addis Ababa, a restaurant on nearby Fenton Street. Some of the Ethiopian rhythms provide long, winding riffs for other instruments to play against. Here my piano and Karen Ashbrook’s hammered dulcimer wrap themselves around a mid-western daydream interpreted by

Paul Oorts's harp guitar. In reality, I've never even been to Wauwatosa—this is my own scenario projected on a blank slate:

Float through a hot July twilight into one of Wauwatosa's town parks. Big, tall men are moving slowly to the music of a live, swing band. You can see the fireflies and smell bratwurst roasting on a nearby grill. Women might have been at this gathering, but it's the men who bear watching as they sway gently back and forth, holding the tops of their beer cans with cupped fingers. Most of them are wearing short-sleeved shirts of thin cotton. Undershirts pop up at the collar to absorb the extreme humidity. Soon, as the moon rises, the men will begin gathering up their families and start to wander home. Tomorrow is another day, and they have work to do.

13. King Coal (© Lisa Null) *2:49*
Harmony: Charlie Baum

I wrote this song about my former father-in-law, Henry Null, a mining engineer for the Hudson Coal Company most of his working life. Hudson Coal specialized in deep-pit, anthracite

mining, and he'd mostly worked underground as a safety engineer. "Big Henry" was a man of strong opinions and a love of literature. My own husband, Henry Null IV (or "Little Henry" as the family called him) shared the same qualities. He moved our family back home to the Scranton, Pennsylvania area to help his father run a weekly newspaper after Hudson Coal closed down. Big Henry would have retired with a pension six weeks from the date the mine stopped operating. Among a lifetime of skills, he'd put out an occasional newsletter on mining safety and used that knowledge to publish a weekly for the little towns outside Scranton.

Big Henry taught me how to drive as he delivered papers to the outlying townships. On those trips, he spoke to me about mining life. He was a walking scrapbook of the past, holding tightly to his memories as if they were relics of better times. For him, deep-pit, anthracite mining was a vanishing culture with its own stories, communities, and folklore. In those stories, strip miners were the villains. He could not accept the fact that he was slowly dying of emphysema and that the disease probably resulted from his life underground.

Big Henry used the paper to vent his increasingly conservative ideas. This was hard on my own husband who was progressive, interested in professional standards, and not a bit afraid to take on the establishment. It was a fractious time for them both. This song is a sort of musical portrait of Big Henry and the mining world he loved and lost.

Charlie Baum, my well-loved domestic partner of 22 years, joins me here on the chorus. He felt it needed a harmony, and he was right.

14. *Dickerson's Fancy (© Lisa Null) *2:20*
Hammered Dulcimer: Karen Ashbrook; Cittern: Paul Oorts; Electric Piano, Lisa Null

This tune was composed as a challenge to John Dickerson, the journalist I assisted as he was meeting a deadline to complete his book, *On Her Trail.* I told him if he met his deadline, I'd dedicate a tune called"Dickerson's Fancy" to him. If he fell short, however, the tune would be called "Dickerson's Maggot." Maggot was once used as a name for certain English

country dances. It implies whimsy or fancy, and I've heard that this may be because people with too much "fancy" were once suspected of having maggots in the brain. John was too busy working on his book to pay attention to my challenge, but here's his award, belatedly presented, for meeting the deadline.

15. Sweet Dove of Peace *3:32*

I added this hymn at the last minute because our times could use it. I learned the song from Mike Seeger who, in turn got it from the splendid, traditional Ozark singer, Almeda Riddle. I remember asking Almeda about the song, and she said she didn't sing it any more. Still she seemed pleased that others had revived it. Almeda herself wrote the last verse when her own son joined the military during World War Two:

Beating our weapons of war into plowshares
And sowing the battlefields with wheat
Feeding the hungry of every nation
And living in worldwide peace.

Cathy Barton and Dave Para in the notes to their own recording of this song as "Worldwide Peace" (Folk-Legacy) attribute the song to Will M. Ramsey (1872-1939) an Arkansas gospel writer and publisher who composed it at the beginning of World War 1. In my own voice, I try to capture a hint of Almeda's unforgettable crackle.

16. I'm Going Home to Georgia (© Lisa Null) *3:40*
Electric Bass: Pete Kraemer; Harp: David Scheim

This song evolved from talks with a friend who left his wife back home in Georgia. They married when he was very young, when he could not live up to her family's expectations. He knew their child would be well provided for, and he had a lot of growing up to do. I speculated in this song that perhaps their love had not fully died. I wondered what it might be like if he returned to her some day.

Sometimes you write songs that have nothing to do with your own life experience, but you fill them with feelings as if you inhabited the very soul of the person you are writing about. Why should I sympathize with the person in this song who

left his mate without a declared reason and returned without any apologies? Why does he come home and expect to be comforted? Sometimes a song just has its own point of view, even if it is incomplete. Some of the old, traditional ballads deal with actions and reactions but leave motives unexplored. I echoed that here.

Pete Kraemer and his wife, Grace, lived with me in Connecticut. I moved to Washington, DC in part because I knew they were happy down here. Pete and I performed together locally when I first came to town. I discovered that a cappella singing takes on new texture when you do it with an electric bass. That instrument has a great capacity for melody as well as for flexible rhythms. Our musical interests later diverged, but we continue to play music together for the sheer pleasure of it.

David Scheim never plays the harp behind me in a docile way. Not even here. We struggle and rehearse and adjust and then sigh in pleasure when something works out well. David "owns" this arrangement as much as I do. Our creative dynamic extends to other parts of my life—I now work with

David as an editor and researcher. It is thrilling to combine both parts of my life together in this way.

17. *Farewell to Folly (© Lisa Null) *2:43*
Hammered Dulcimer: Karen Ashbrook; Electric Piano: Lisa Null

"Farewell to Folly," is the last tune I wrote for the *Dickerson Suite*. Its bittersweet air calls up the mixed emotions I felt when the journalist, John Dickerson, finished the book I'd been assisting him with as his virtual editor and researcher. I was proud of the project, but it was hard to detach from the world of that book, a world I had helped rediscover through research and interviews. In actuality, working with John continued for some time thereafter. I helped him adjust to his new work as Slate's senior political correspondent, and I eventually did oral history interviews of his father, Wyatt Dickerson. I've worked on several book-length projects since then, and playing this tune has become a rite of passage for me at each work's completion. I love the soul Karen Ashbrook conjures up on her hammered dulcimer.

18. The Death of Mother Jones *2:13*

I've been singing this tribute to Mother Jones (1837-1930), the labor organizer, for over forty years. "The most dangerous woman in America," as Mother Jones was often called, advocated for improved working conditions, for the eight-hour day, and especially for the rights and needs of children. She was a militant organizer, an orator, and an inspirational stalwart at many of the nation's historic strikes and marches. At different points in her life, she was active with the Knights of Labor and The United Mine Workers. She was also co-founded of The Industrial Workers of the the World.

I learned this song in the mid-1970s to exemplify a strong woman for women's songs workshops at folk festivals. I admired how she coped with her role as a widow who had not only lost her own children and husband in a yellow fever epidemic (1867) but also lost her dressmaking business in the Chicago Fire (1971). She kept her own sense of purpose alive by transforming herself into a national mother figure, living and marching with working people when they arose to protest how they were being mistreated. Having once lived in

Pennsylvania's anthracite region, I empathized with her struggles to improve the lives of deep-pit miners, a vanishing trade by the time I lived in northeastern Pennsylvania. This song is not only a fine labor tribute, it showcases the sometimes overlooked contributions to the American labor movement by Irish immigrants and Irish-American workers. Mary Harris (Mother Jones's original name) was born at the edge of Cork, Ireland. She moved with her parents to Canada as a teenager, and came to this country in 1860.

"The Death of Mother Jones" is of unknown authorship, but in 1931 it was recorded by Gene Autry, the cowboy singer and actor. According to Peter Dreier in his Huffington Post article, "Was Gene Autry a Radical?" (07/16/2013). Autry was born in Texas but grew up in rural Oklahoma at a time when agrarian socialist ideas were popular. Autry considered himself a fan of Franklin Roosevelt but eventually became conservative enough to vote for Republican presidential candidates from Eisenhower through Reagan. Despite this, he remained a registered Democrat all his life and called himself an independent.

19. Ash to Ash (© Lisa Null) *4.02*
Hammered Dulcimer: Karen Ashbrook

I wrote "Ash To Ash" after returning to college in my late thirties. Touring was taking too great a toll on my children, so I decided to stay home and finish my undergraduate degree at Sarah Lawrence College. One summer, I had a wonderful professor, Ray Clarke, who helped me explore the history of evolutionary theory in his course on "Principles of Ecology."

He was a passionate believer in scientific principles and took the time to challenge my mystical understandings of the world as we picnicked together on the grass. This was the kind of of education I'd longed for all my life, and this song arose from those free-wheeling dialogues.

I learned that Darwin was one of a long chain of thinkers who'd thought seriously about the origins of life. Some were priests; some were scientists; some were pursuing both religious and scientific studies. The principles many discovered while observing the natural world seemed to ratify their sense of the divine. Eventually I concluded that I too felt the same

way. “Ash to Ash” is an early attempt to weigh in on evolution and the handiwork of God.

Karen Ashbrook (hammered dulcimer) and I play frequently for church and worked out this hymn-like arrangement for an Easter service at The Episcopal Church of the Ascension in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Photo of Lisa Null and Charlie Baum at the Washington Folk Festival, 2012, by Gary Ehrlich

Photo of Lisa Null at the Folklore Soicety of Greater Washington Getaway, 2014, by David Diamond

My Life in Music

I was born in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1942 and came from a family that used to sing together for fun. My father sang duets. He accompanied us from *The Fireside Book of Folksongs* as we gathered round the piano. We'd sing in the car or together in our parents' big king-sized bed. My mother taught us rounds and long lullabies with no fixed ending. Her own mother would make up special songs that rhymed with each of our individual names. Granddaddy Higgins took me to Sunday night hymn sings at his summer home in New Hampshire. Folksong remained at the center of family life as long as my parents were married but, when they divorced and remarried, only my two older brothers, Dick and Mark, sang much with me.

In college, I began performing in some of Boulder, Cambridge, and New York City coffee houses. I'd learned the guitar by this time and had a solid repertoire of Anglo-American song culled from old books and records. I also sang at civil rights rallies and in the back of a paddy wagon after an anti-nuclear demonstration,

I got married young (1963) and soon had one son: John Higgins Null. My husband, Henry Null, was a journalist who, leaving his job in New Rochelle, moved us to Clarks Green, a small town just

outside of Scranton, Pennsylvania. There he helped his father run a small weekly newspaper. After acquiring it himself, my husband turned it into a small chain. By this time, we had a second son, Jacob Van Vechten Null. When the newspaper ran into trouble, our marriage fell apart, and I moved to New York City. There, I studied voice intensively with Tom Roszinsky.

I moved to New Canaan, Connecticut in 1972, where co-founder Pat Sky and I started Green Linnet, a record company specializing in Irish traditional music. Golden East Studio recorded most of its early albums right in my home. Golden East was first owned by Pitt Kinsolving, my former domestic partner, and was later used by Don Wade, a New York City recording engineer and mainstay of the New York Pinewoods Folk Music Society. I also co-produced three folksong festivals, one at the University of Maine with Edward ("Sandy") Ives, and the other two at Wesleyan University with Phyllis and Neely Bruce. Wendy Newton ran Green Linnet's business operations, and the company soon came under her full control until she eventually sold it to Compass Records.

By the mid 1970s, I was singing up and down the East Coast with rock guitarist Bill Shute (former lead guitarist of The Fifth Estate). Bill appears with me on two Green Linnet albums, *The Feathered*

Maiden and *American Primitive* (reissued by Folk-Legacy Records in 2007). The two of us specialized in ballads and traditional songs that had usually been sung without accompaniment. Bill used a variety of banjo tunings, rhythms, and harmonic riffs that added emotional color to songs I delivered in a straightforward, narrative style. These albums were considered innovative, and we found ourselves touring all over Canada, England, and the United States. We even played several times on Garrison Keillor's "A Prairie Home Companion."

In the early 1980s, I quit touring to spend more time with my teenaged sons. Bill got married and moved to Massachusetts. I went back to college at Sarah Lawrence and combined graduate study in early American history at Yale with folklore at the University of Pennsylvania. With my own children now in college, I came to Washington in 1990 to do doctoral research and never left. I loved the area's intertwined musical communities, and I soon met Charlie Baum, who gradually became my life's companion. Charlie loves folk music as much as I did but with different emphases. He'd managed the Yale Russian Chorus for several years, co-founded the Kartuli Ensemble (America's first Georgian singing group), and was an enthusiastic singer of both Sacred Harp and Jewish table songs (*z'mirot*). I taught for seven years as an endowed visiting lecturer at

Georgetown University, using music and ethnography to explore the soundtrack and cultural mores of American history.

At Georgetown, I realized that I preferred teaching and guiding students' work to doing my own specialized research. I took another graduate degree in library science at Catholic University of America, and started a series of reference and digital editing jobs at the Library of Congress. It was a happy time, but I was stricken with kidney cancer in 1997. Post-operative complications forced me to retire on disability. Since then, I've been working as a free-lance researcher, editor, and writer while teaching voice. Music has become somewhat of an economic mainstay. In addition to teaching and coaching voice, I live an active musical life: singing, performing when asked, touring on occasion, and helping to produce various musical programs, mostly under the auspices of the Folklore Society of Greater Washington.

Photograph of Lisa Null on next page by Carol Lite.

Lisa Null: Legacies

Lisa Null with: Karen Ashbrook, Charlie Baum, Bob Clayton, Pete Kraemer, Donna Long, Van Mertz, Paul Oortz, David Scheim, Don Stallone, George Stephens, and Kathy Westra

CD 1: Older Songs

1. The Banks of Champlain 4:47
2. Cold Scenes of Winter 2:18
3. The Star of Logy Bay 5:03
4. In Old Pod-Auger Times 2:31
5. When Adam Was Created 2:59
6. Lake Chemo 4:33
7. The Irish Patriot 4:12
8. Bonnie Blue Eyes 3:12
9. Fannie Blair (Fanny Blair) 3:24
10. The Tune the Old Cow Died On 2:29
11. The Price of Freedom 4:28
12. Father Get Ready 3:29
13. Locks and Bolts 2:32
14. Dink's Song 1:48
15. Handsome Mary 3:32
16. Sweet William and Lady Margaret 5:18
17. I Want to See My Mother 3:20
18. James Bird 6:28
19. James Hewitt's The Star-Spangled Banner 7:37

CD 2: Newer Songs and Tunes

1. Andy Goodman (To His Mother) (© Jean Ritchie) 4:47
2. Turn Me Loose and Let Me Go (© Lisa Null) 3:52
3. The Valley and the Farm (© Lisa Null) 2:53
4. Hugh Gillespie's Tune & Off to Bunratty's (© Lisa Null) 3:15
5. The Mother's Song (© Lisa Null) 3:54
6. *Follow the Money (© Lisa Null) 2:15
7. Come Take Me Home Again, Kathleen (© Lisa Null) 4:06
8. *Fenton St. Rag (© Lisa Null) 2:33
9. Will You Love Me in the Morning (© Charles Baum) 2:26
10. The Pecos River Queen (tune & cho. © Lisa Null) 4:04
11. Ghosts (© Lisa Null) 2:46
12. *Wauwatosa (© Lisa Null) 2:34
13. King Coal (© Lisa Null) 2:49
14. *Dickerson's Fancy (© Lisa Null) 2:20
15. Sweet Dove of Peace 3:32
16. I'm Going Home to Georgia ((© Lisa Null) 3:40
17. *Farewell to Folly (© Lisa Null) 2:43
18. The Death of Mother Jones 2:13
19. Ash to Ash (© Lisa Null) 4.02

*Tune is part of The *Dickerson Suite*

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