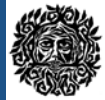




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BIRDS OF Passage

George Stephens & Kathy Westra

My good friends Kathy and George have created a patchwork collection of favorite songs, nurtured over the years by a rich community of folk friends as well as their own great love for the roots and branches of traditional music. *Birds of Passage* presents a potpourri of old and new in both story and chorus songs, performed with the simple elegance of sparkling guitar accompaniment or pure *a cappella*, expressed through distinctive vocal solos and dynamic two-part harmonies. The songs are about time and change in our world, its environment, and its people—past, present, and future; they make us want to know the folk who made them, and from where and when they came—and in so doing, to know ourselves. This is an album filled with the cycles of life, patterns of renewal and migration, new beginnings, the hope for better times, and the joy of celebrating our lives . . . by singing together and sharing these songs.

Bob Zentz, Norfolk, VA
March 2015

Acknowledgements

No single influence has been greater than that of Folk-Legacy Records, the company founded more than 50 years ago by Sandy and Caroline Paton and Lee Haggerty. We are profoundly grateful to them for all they have given us and so many others. You'll see their influence in the songs we've chosen for this, our first CD. We're so honored that Caroline invited us to release this recording on Folk-Legacy (we're still pinching ourselves!).

And finally, we'd be remiss if we didn't thank "all the good people who've touched up our lives" through the years. This CD never would have seen the light of day without the encouragement and assistance of Bob Zentz and Jeanne MacDougall, Christina and Ann Mayo Muir, Larry Kaplan, Sara Grey, Lois Lyman and Jennifer Cutting. And, of course, recording engineer and spiritual guide extraordinaire Charlie Pilzer of Airshow Mastering.

For each of us as individuals, the folk-singing community has been an inspiration and an anchor for many years. The songs we sing—and the extended family of people from all over the world who love to sing and share this music as we do—have provided us with a wonderful circle of friends and a sense of community that spans time and distance. We sing because these songs, and the people from whom we learned them, continue to bring meaning and joy to our lives. Truly, we live to sing, and we sing to live.

Each of us has had other lives, other loves, and other singing partners. We come to our partnership grateful not only for those experiences, but also for the opportunity to expand our musical and personal horizons together as partners in singing and life.

One of the reasons we decided to migrate north to Maine in 2014 was to feel more connected to the natural world. The title and the first and last songs of this CD reflect not only our love of all things avian, but our own situation as "Birds of Passage." And how many albums do you know that have not just one, but two references to chaffinches?

George Stephens & Kathy Westra
Rockland, Maine
March 2015

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1. Flying High, Flying Free (Leon Rosselson)

This song from English composer and singer Leon Rosselson seemed a good introduction to our album of songs (mostly) of nature, movement and avian life. Leon wrote it as a children's song, and I'm told by English friends that many English children of a certain era were required to learn it in school. I used to sing it with my late wife and singing partner Mary LaMarca, who learned it from a recording by English singer Chris Foster; it was one of her favorites and always reminds me of her. GS

The red sun is sinking and the sky is on fire,
The swallows line up on the telegraph wire,
I think they've decided its time to be gone,
For the days they are shrinking and summer's nigh gone.

Chorus:

*Swallow, swallow, I wish I could follow you
Over the deserts, the mountains, the sea,
South, to the colors and sunshine of Africa,
Flying high, flying free.*

Swallow, I don't understand how you know
How high to fly to, or which way to go,
Resting by nighttime and flying by day
With no map or compass to show you the way.
And I wish you could stay here the whole winter through
Just like the robins and chaffinches do,
But I know that you can't, for when frost grips the year
The insects you feed on will all disappear. (Chorus)

Butterfly, dragonfly, salmon and seal,
Whale and reindeer, cuckoo and eel,
All of you doing the migration dance
And I'd do it too, if they gave me the chance.
Clock on the mantelpiece, clock on the wall,
Clock in the kitchen and clock in the hall,

Tocking and ticking me off when I'm late,
But no clock to tell me its time to migrate. (Chorus)

And I'll miss your forked tails as you sweep through the air.
Your nests will be empty, that you built with such care,
But I know you'll return as you have done before
And your nests will be filled with your young ones once more.
So when winter's away with its mantle of snow,
The plum tree's in blossom and the grass starts to grow,
The red sun is rising and the sky is on fire,
I'll see you again on your telegraph wire. (Chorus)

2. Ballad of Many Crows (Andrew Burke/John Warner)

John Warner from Sydney, Australia is to my mind one of the best and most under-appreciated poets and song writers active today, known in the U.S. primarily for his song "Anderson's Coast." He made the tune for this poem by Andrew Burke of Western Australia; a chronicle of the plight of farmers in The Riverina, an agriculturally rich but drought prone area of New South Wales, Australia. The tune, and Kathy's harmonies, still make my hair stand on end. During a recent extended dry period, many farmers took their own lives in the face of financial ruin. Wagga Wagga, a native term meaning "Place of Many Crows" is a town in the Riverina. We learned this from Margaret Walters, John's former singing partner, on her album "Power In A Song." I had the pleasure of meeting and singing with John and Margaret when I visited Australia in 2005. GS

As I sat out upon a hill
Upon a hill, upon a hill,
I looked up at the crows that fill
The leafy trees of Wagga.

I saw their eyes like marbles black
Like marbles black, like marbles black,
And I felt a chill run down my back
Beneath the trees of Wagga.

A woman there she told a tale,
She told a tale, she told a tale,
How the town had felt five years' betrayal
Since crows returned to Wagga.

"Our men have heard the crows' sad song,
The crows' sad song, the crows' sad song,
Until by their own hand they're gone.
I curse the crows of Wagga."

Farmers are a steady lot, not given much to fancy,
Born to heed the call to be as iron tough as Clancy.

Now they hang themselves in their dark loss,
In their dark loss, in their dark loss,
As the crows' stark song becomes their cross
Among the trees of Wagga.

Black-eyed and beaky with a mourning cry,
A mourning cry, a mourning cry,
Riverina crows trespass and fly
To cast their eye on Wagga.

Now's the time to break the spell,
To break the spell, to break the spell,
To greet the future and fare well
Among the trees of Wagga.

I go inside to write my song,
To write my song, to write my song.
The crows know naught of right and wrong
In the leafy trees of Wagga.

"I'll give you gold love, I'll give you gear,
And I will make ye a lady.
I'll make ye a lady of higher degree
Than followin' your collier laddie."

"I'll not have your gold, nor yet your gear,
And I won't be your lady.
I'll make my bed in the collier's nook,
And I'll lie with my collier laddie."

When seven long years were gone and past,
Seven long years and nearly,
This same gentleman came beggin' for his bread
To her and her collier laddie.

She said: "Where is the gold now, and where
is the gear
That was to make me your lady?
Now I've got gold and silver enough,
And I'm still with my collier laddie."

Oh I've been east, and I've been west,
I've been to St. Johnston.
The bonniest lad that e'er I saw
Was a collier laddie dancin'.

Oh I've been east, and I've been west,
I've been to Kirkcaldy.
The bonniest lass that e'er I saw
Was followin' a collier laddie.

3. The Collier Laddie (Trad.)

I first heard this song sung by Ed Miller many years ago, and learned it from his album "Ed Miller – Scottish Voice." I've been singing it now for close to 30 years, most recently with George, whose voice and guitar add so much to this and so many songs. I like the wise and decisive protagonist in this song. Bonnie Jeannie Gordon knows her own mind and understands that being with the collier laddie she loves and having "gold and silver enough" is a far better bet than chasing elusive promises of riches and status. KW

Oh I've been east, and I've been west,
I've been to St. Johnston.
The bonniest lad that e'er I saw
Was a collier laddie dancin'.

She had silken slippers all on her feet,
Her body neat and handsome.
She'd sky-blue ribbons all in her hair,
The gold about them dancin'.

Oh I've been east, and I've been west,
I've been to Kirkcaldy.
The bonniest lass that e'er I saw
Was followin' a collier laddie.

"Oh, where do you live, lass, and what do you do?
What is it that they call ye?"
"Bonnie Jeannie Gordon is my name,
And I'm followin' a collier laddie."

4. Old Port (Monica Marshall)

"Old Port," here, is the waterfront district of Port Washington, Wisconsin, on Lake Michigan. Lee Murdock, from whose album "Between Two Worlds" I learned the song, reports the Linda E. was the last fish tug to leave the port; her loss was both a symbolic and a very real harbinger of the loss of a way of life. Saint Mary's is a large church on the bluff overlooking the town. GS

Many a song has been written,
Many a glass has been raised
For many a fisherman, chilled to the bone,
Returning home from working on the wave.
But Old Port is now all but empty,
No youth come seeking out the old.
The time and the sweat, the years and the nets
Are nothing but a tale to be told.

Chorus: *Now looking down from St. Mary's,
Sailboats and freighters are all that go by,
And we'll all buy fresh fish in Milwaukee,
Or it's up to Two Rivers we'll drive, we will drive.*

A grand harbor town known to my mother,
And to her mother before,
The Lake gave them food, the fishermen sang
As they hauled their catch to the shore.
But a few years ago came such sorrow
When the poor *Linda E.* went below.
Now Old Port's a shadow that's fading away;
No more will the fishing boats go. (Chorus)

History is passing before us
As the old ways fade into a yarn.
Who could have thought there would come such a time
When the fishing boats all would be gone?
Fish tugs in dry dock grow rusty,
No more will they sail with the dawn.
They'll grow rustier still and they'll all fade away,
Their story only left in a song. (Chorus)

5. The Boats of Peter's River (©1995 Mary Garvey)

I first learned this from the singing of Gordon Bok, whose music has been an ongoing inspiration to me over many years. You can find it on his CD, "Herrings in the Bay." This song struck me immediately for its depiction of a Newfoundland town fallen on hard times after the collapse of the Atlantic cod fishery. Mary Garvey's lyrics capture so succinctly the story of so many coastal fishing families whose livelihoods have disappeared as stocks of fish and shellfish are depleted. In Maine, where George and I now make our home, the story is being played out again as once-plentiful Maine fish stocks have been depleted to the point where they are in danger of collapse. This song makes the point eloquently—and elegantly.

The reference in the last verse to "shooting at our boats" refers to the practice of deliberately sinking boats to protect them from being battered in Newfoundland's fierce storms. KW

Not a boat in Peter's River or in all St. Mary's Bay.
The fishermen in rubber boots are staying home today.
Hanging out the laundry, or hang out at the store
And the Little Boats of Newfoundland are idle on the shore.*
The men of Peter's River are just barely getting by,
And the boats of Peter's River have their bottoms to the sky.

The wives of Peter's River are taking up the slack.
The fisheries has ended and it's never coming back.
Sell a little knitting, set some broody hens
No sooner does one hard day end, another one begins.
But the wives of Peter's River are too strong to sit and cry,
And the boats of Peter's River have their bottoms to the sky

The boys of Peter's River are as bright as boys can be.
Their eyes are on the highways instead of on the sea.
Where their fathers went before them is not where they must go,
And the fate of Peter's River is not for us to know.
The boys of Peter's River are too young to wonder why,
And the boats of Peter's River have their bottoms to the sky.

The storms of Peter's River have pounded us for years,
Crashing in the harbor and smashing up the piers.
We've ridden out these storms before by shooting at our boats,
But we know this storm is different and we cannot stay afloat.
There's no nets in Peter's River laying out to dry,
And the boats of Peter's River have their bottoms to the sky.
There's no nets in Peter's River laying out to dry,
And the boats of Peter's River have their bottoms to the sky.

* "The Little Boats of Newfoundland" is the title of a well-known local song.

6. The Four-loom Weaver (Trad.)

“The Four-loom Weaver” comes from 19th Century industrial England. When weaving was done on large steam powered looms in the “dark, satanic mills”, the standard to which weavers aspired was to operate four looms simultaneously; the Oxford English Dictionary reports that industry-wide, a weaver operated “an average of 3.8 steam looms.” The song apparently was written during the “Lancashire Cotton Famine,” brought on by the disruption of the supply of cotton caused by the American Civil War. The version I sing is close to Ewan MacColl’s recording; I learned it from several sources, including MacColl and The Silly Sisters (June Tabor and Maddy Prior). I love the somewhat crooked tune, and Kathy’s inventive harmonies. GS

I’m a four loom weaver, as many a one knows.
I’ve nowt to eat and I’ve worn out m’ clothes.
Me clogs are all broken, and stockings I’ve none.
And ye’d scarce gi’e’s tuppence for all I’d got on.

Old Billy o’ Bent, he’s been telling me long
We’d had better times if I’d nobbut held my tongue.
Well, I held m’ tongue ’til I near lost my breath,
And I fear in my own heart I’ll soon clem* to death. [*starve]

I’m a four loom weaver, as many a one knows.
I’ve nowt to eat and I’ve worn out m’ clothes.
Old Billy were right, but he ne’er were clemmed,
And he ne’er picked o’er** in his life. [**threw a shuttle, in weaving]

We held out for six weeks, thought each day were the last.
We tarried and shifted ’til now we’re quite fast.
We lived upon nettles whilst nettles was good.
And Waterloo Porridge was the best of our food.

Our Margaret declares, if her’d clothes to put on,
Her’d go up to London to see the great man,

And if things didn’t alter when there her had been,
Her swears that her’d fight ’til there’s blood up to th’ e’en.*** [***eyes]

I’m a four-loom weaver as many a one knows.
I’ve nowt to eat and I’ve worn out m’ clothes.
Stockings I’ve none, nor looms to weave on,
And I’ve woven m’self to far end.

7. Glenmary (Craig Johnson)

The late Craig Johnson is probably better remembered as a fine fiddle player and singer with The Double Decker String Band than as a song writer, but he penned a number of songs, such as “The Keweenaw Light” and “New Harmony,” that have become classics in the folk genre. Glenmary, Tennessee is a now mostly derelict old town that lived and died with the coal mines. Craig said his grandfather was born there, moved away, and returned as a grown man to find the town virtually deserted. I learned the song from a tape Craig made on a hand held recorder; there may be errors in my attempt at transcription from the very poor quality sound. I don’t know if anyone else has made a formal recording. GS

Rusted truss bridge leans across the river,
Copperhead’s a’sunnin’ on the bank.
The track gang’s takin’ lunch down by the railroad
By the old abandoned water tank.

Chorus:

*Oh stranger, did you say you know Glenmary,
And did you come here lookin’ for a sign?
Well, it may be where you started from, but all them times has been and gone
It’s just another milepost down the line.*

Well, the stores all closed and the hotel ain’t no different.
It’s a dozen houses huddled by the road.
Some stayed when the mines give out, and some are buried roundabout,
And some have gone, just where, nobody knows. (Chorus)

Now there's nothin' left to be here says the old man.
The mines give out some 60 years ago.
The tipples were out yonder 'cross the river
Over where the scrub and laurel grow. (Chorus)

Well, I don't recall his name young man, I'm sorry,
And I'm the only one who's left to know.
You say he was a miner, well what else could have brung him here?
Besides, it was a long, long time ago. (Chorus)

Well you see that train a'draggin' up the valley?
It ain't stopped here since back in 1910.
This town's grown old thru hopes and tears, and empty through the heartless years;
It's a withered branch that will not bloom again. (Chorus)

8. Last Winter Was a Hard One (Trad.)

Also known as "When McGuinness Gets a Job," this version of a popular 1880 song by Jim O'Neil and Jack Conroy comes from the Catskill region of New York. I learned it from my good friend (and ex-husband) Joe Hickerson, who has made many wonderful songs come alive for a whole generation of folkies through his performances and his Folk-Legacy recordings. (This song appears on Drive Dull Care Away, Vol. II, which includes Joe's scholarly notes on its provenance.) The narrative describes a moment in history when Irish laborers were being displaced by the newest wave of immigrants willing to work for a little bit less in order to gain a foothold in a new land. The politicians and bosses of the time played one immigrant group off against the next to keep wages low with each new wave of laborers. Even as she laments the difficulties of finding work in the face of the newly arrived "Eye-talians," I love Mrs. McGuinness's clear-eyed view of her own husband's shortcomings and her optimism about the future when "work we'll surely get." KW

Last winter was a hard one, Mrs. Reilly did you hear?
'Tis well yourself that knows it, 'tis for many a day.
Your husband wasn't the only one, sat beside the wall,
My old man McGuinness couldn't get a job at all.

Chorus:
*So rise up, Mrs. Reilly, don't give away to blues,
You and I will cut a shine, new bonnets and new shoes.
Hear the young ones cry, neither sigh nor sob,
We'll wait till times get better, and McGuinness gets a job.*

The politicians promised him work on the boulevard,
To work with a pick and shovel, and load dirt on the cart.
Six months ago they promised him that work we'd surely get,
But ah, my good woman, they're promising it yet. (Chorus)

Bad luck to them Eye-talians, I wish they'd stayed at home.
We've plenty of our own trash to eat up all our own.
They come like bees in the summertime, swarming here to stay,
Contractors they hire them for forty cents a day.
They work upon the railroad and they shovel snow and slush.
One thing in their favor, Eye-talians never get lush.
They bring their money home at night, take no dinner wine—
One thing I would like to say for your old man, and mine! (Chorus)

For springtime, it is comin', and work we'll surely get.
McGuinness will go back to his job again; he makes a handsome clerk.
See him climb the ladder, as nimble as a fox—
Sure he's the man to handle that old three-corner box. (Chorus)

9. The Pinery Boy (Trad.)

There are many variants of this song, lamenting the dangers facing sailors, soldiers, shanty boys (lumbermen), cowboys and others. This version appears in Franz Rickaby's "Ballads and Songs of The Shanty-boy." I learned it from one of my musical heroes, Art Thieme, on his Folk-Legacy album "On The Wilderness Road." In 19th and early 20th century lumber camps, logs cut from the forest were dragged, or skidded (down a "skid road," later to become "skid row") to the nearest river, where they were tied into immense, ungainly rafts to be guided down river by the raftsmen to the sawmills. Indeed, a weary life. GS

A timber raftsman's life is a weary life,
It robs young girls of their heart's delight.
Causes them to weep, causes them to mourn
The loss of a true love never to return.

Father, oh father, go and build me a boat.
On the Wisconsin I will float.
And every timber raft that passes by,
There will I inquire for my sweet pinery boy.

As she was floatin' on down the stream,
She spied three rafts tied in a string.
She hailed to the pilot as they passed by.
There did she inquire for her sweet pinery boy.

Pilot, oh Pilot, come and tell me true,
Is my sweet William among your crew?
Come and tell me quickly, it would bring me great joy.
None do I love better than my sweet pinery boy.

Oh, no, fair maid, he is not here.
He's drowned at The Dells, it's I do fear.
'Twas at Lone Rock as we passed by,
There we left him, your sweet pinery boy.

She wrung her hands and she tore her hair.
She acted like a maid in great despair.
She dashed her boat up against Lone Rock.
Oh, you'd have thought that this young girl's heart was broke.

Go and dig my grave both long and deep.
Place a marble slab at my head and feet,
And on each slab, carve a snow-white dove,
To let the world know that I died for love.

A timber raftsman's life is a weary life,
It robs young girls of their heart's delight.
Causes them to weep, causes them to mourn
The loss of a true love never to return.

10. Song for the Mira (©1973 Allister MacGillivray)

Another song I've learned from the singing of Gordon Bok, who recorded it on "Ensemble," and which I never tire of singing. In 2005, I traveled from Maine to Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, for the magnificent Celtic Colours Festival. Amidst all the music, my friend Lorraine Van Buren and I crammed in as much sightseeing as we could in that beautiful place. One of the places we stopped to snap photos was the Mira River near the town of Marion Bridge. Before George and I moved to Maine, our longing to be in this part of the world—and away from the crazy pace of the Washington, D.C., area—was palpable, and this song spoke to that longing. Now we're here, and we are grateful. KW

Out on the Mira on warm afternoons,
Old men go fishing with black line and spoons,
And if they catch nothing, they'll never complain,
And I wish I was with them again.

Boys in their boats call to girls by the shore,
Teasin' the ones who they dearly adore,
And into the evening the courting begins,
And I wish I was with them again.

Chorus:
Can you imagine a piece of the universe
More fit for princes or kings?
I'd trade you ten of your cities for Marion Bridge
And the pleasures it brings.

Out on the Mira on soft summer nights,
Bonfires blaze, to the children's delight.

They dance 'round the flames, singin' songs with their friends,
And I wish I was with them again.

And over the embers the stories are told
Of witches, werewolves, and Oak Island gold.
The stars on the river-face sparkle and spin,
And I wish I was with them again. (Chorus)

Out on the Mira, the people are kind.
They treat you to home-brew, they help you unwind.
And if you come broken, they'll see that you mend,
And I wish I was with them again. (Chorus)

*I leave you now with a wish you go well.
Good health be your fortune, may your happiness swell.
I leave you now, for my journey begins,
And I'm going to be with them again. (Chorus)

* This verse changed from MacGillivray's original words: *And thus I conclude with a wish you go well/Sweet be your dreams, may your happiness swell,/I leave you here for my journey begins . . .*

11. Wedding Dress (Trad.)

This song is just plain fun to sing. I learned it so many years ago that I can't remember when or from whom I first heard it. Like so many of the songs I sing with George, it has been rejuvenated for me by the fun we have singing it together in close harmony. Was Doney indecisive about her impending wedding or her wardrobe? We'll never know! KW

Hey, my little Doney Gal, don't you guess,
Better be makin' your wedding dress.
Wedding dress, wedding dress,
Better be makin' your wedding dress.

Well, it's already made, trimmed in red,
Stitched all over with a golden thread.
Golden thread, golden thread,
Stitched all over with a golden thread.

Well, it's already made, trimmed in brown,
Stitched all over with a golden crown.
Golden crown, golden crown,
Stitched all over with a golden crown.

Well, it's already made, trimmed in green,
Prettiest thing you've ever seen.
Ever seen, ever seen,
Prettiest thing you've ever seen.

Hey, my little Doney Gal, don't you guess,
Better be makin' your wedding dress.
Wedding dress, wedding dress,
Better be makin' your wedding dress.

Well, it's already made, trimmed in white.
Gonna get married on Saturday night.
Saturday night, Saturday night,
Gonna get married on Saturday night.

Well, she wouldn't say yes, she wouldn't say no,
All she'd do is just sit and sew.
Sit and sew, sit and sew,
All she'd do is just sit and sew.

Hey, my little Doney Gal, don't you guess,
Better be makin' your wedding dress.
Wedding dress, wedding dress,
Better be makin' your wedding dress.

12. The Fisherman's Song (Anne Lister)

George and I traveled between Maryland and Maine many times in the process of finding and purchasing our home. On one of those trips, we were lucky to be in Maine for a house concert by Anne Lister at the home of Julia Lane and Fred Gosbee on the beautiful Pemaquid Peninsula. Anne sang this song, and I was enchanted. Based on a Welsh folk tale, it's a wonderful twist on the traditional tales of men seduced by mermaids. This mermaid is so captivated by a fisherman's singing that she leaves her ocean home to make a life with him on land. A life filled with music and "love enough to stay afloat" doesn't seem like such a bad bargain. KW

He sailed his boat across the blue.
He sailed his boat far across the green,
Until he came to where no birds flew,
And he saw things no man had seen.

Chorus:

*What do you sing, fisherman,
what do you sing?*

*For I have waited my whole life long.
I'll bring you pearls and a golden ring.
I'd give up my world to learn your song.*

They say a mermaid can sing so sweet,
You'd fall* from the air into waters cold.
The ocean floor beneath your feet,
You'd give up your family and sell your soul.

But as she listened to what he sang,
She felt caught fast in his net.

She left the ocean to walk on land,
Love held them tight from the day they met.

(Chorus)

What they did then is told in tales:
Their life, their children, and their bliss.
One sunny day they both set sail,
Were never seen from that day to this.
(Chorus)

I know the magic of the singing land,
Songs from sunset and daybreak.
But the fisherman's song brought the
mermaid's hand,
And gave them both hearts no man could
break.

Now I'm no mermaid, and you've no boat,
And we have never sailed across the sea,
But we have love enough to stay afloat,
And music sings between you and me.

(Chorus)

* Anne wrote "dive," a wonderful word,
but one that we found very hard to enunciate when singing. Thus the change.



Photo: Michael O'Neil

13. This Old Earth (Bob Zentz)

Our old friend Bob Zentz of Norfolk, Virginia wrote this at least 40 years ago; it's as relevant now as then. I learned it from Bob's Folk-Legacy album "Mirrors And Changes." Bob has been an abiding inspiration to us over the years; encouraging, presenting, organizing and being an all around good guy. He has re-written the song as "This Old Bay," about the beauties of and threats to Chesapeake Bay; he says it's his way of "thinking globally and acting locally." GS

Fragments of another sunset,
Ashes of another dawn,
Drowned in time's immortal ocean
All too soon, we may be gone.

*This old Earth has seen a lot of living,
This old Earth, the stories she could tell,
This old Earth is done with all the giving,
This old Earth we used so well.*

Now the playground stands deserted
In the yellow afternoon,
And the cotton candy children
Have all gone home too soon.
And the tree of knowledge trembles
For the fruit was ours before
Will we be like Eden's lovers
Driven from the garden's door?

*This old Earth has seen a lot of living,
This old Earth, the stories she could tell,
This old Earth is done with all the giving,
This old Earth we used so well.*

So what can it take from nature,
And what it must it take from man,
For the future generation
To save the sky, the sea, the land?

*This old Earth has seen a lot of living,
This old Earth, the stories she could tell,
This old Earth is done with all the giving,
This old Earth we used so well.*

So ask a child what really matters.
Ask your friend what she will do.
Ask the leaders you've elected,
But the answer lies with you.

*This old Earth has seen a lot of living,
This old Earth, the stories she could tell,
This old Earth is done with all the giving,
This old Earth we used so well.*

*This old Earth has seen a lot of living
This old Earth we've used from end to end.
Now it's time for mankind to start giving.
This old Earth could use a friend.*

14. Of Trees and Humankind (Wendy Joseph)

Wendy Joseph, a New Zealander now living in Australia, wrote this for the International Year Of The Tree in 1980. Kathy and I love songs that celebrate nature, but try not to proselytize (too much!) about our race's short-sighted treatment of our only home; but as we grow older and global corporations grow larger and more powerful and greedy, sometimes our increasingly radical facets poke out. This song forcefully, but with empathy and hope, expresses some of our feelings. We learned it from Margaret Walters' album "For The Future And The Past." GS

The trees of the forest grew tall,
The oak and the hazel, the ash and wild apple.
Their power respected by all,
Their strength safely guarded by priests of the lore.
Sacred the old ways, and Earth's ancient pathways. No more.

Then strangers came onto the land,
They lacked comprehension; their godheads were different.
They simply did not understand.
They laughed at the old ways with scorn and derision.
They raped and they slaughtered, and all was justified
By a word 'civilized.' See the forests die.

The trees of the bushland grew strong
The casuarina, the red gum, the mulga.
Honored by those who belong,
The brown Pitjantjara, the emu, the brolga.
Clear understanding and close affinity
With the land and the trees. Calm serenity.

Then strangers came onto the land,
Born of those ancients, both victor and victim.
They simply did not understand.
They laughed at the old ways with scorn and derision.

They raped and they slaughtered, and all was justified
By a word: 'civilized.' See the bushland die.
And now here we sit on the land,
The children of children of children of ages.
If only together we'd stand,
With courage and love we could turn back the pages.
The Earth and its fullness are ours if we try.
Raise the cry! Raise the cry! See the trees grow high!

15. Waltz Into Winter (Archie Fisher)

Folk-Legacy Records introduced me to the incomparable singer, songwriter and guitar player Archie Fisher of Scotland in the Fall of 1976. For a few magical days, I was privileged to join Archie at Folk-Legacy as he recorded his album "The Man With a Rhyme," playing cello with an all-girl backup band that Archie dubbed the "Ladies of the Lake." All these years later, Archie remains a friend, and is still one of my very favorite musicians and songwriters. "Waltz Into Winter" grabbed me the first time I heard him sing it at a concert in Baltimore, and Archie generously allowed us to record it here before his own recording of the song is released. This song evokes perfectly the passage of time and seasons, seen through the eyes of a writer whose appreciation of the natural world shines through so many of his songs. Thanks for all of them, Archie! KW

Now I've only just noticed that the martins have flown
And their music is gone from the wire
And there's still a good hour for the sun to go down,
But already I'm lighting the fire.
We welcomed the springtime, the martins and I,
Now October will find me alone
There's a pain in the parting, without a goodbye
I've just noticed the martins have flown.

Hear the high lonesome call as the wild geese pass o'er
Like a freight train way up in the blue

As the arrows of autumn to a far southern shore
Are flying so straight and so true.
We're both birds of passage, the greylag and I
For the journey is all we have known,
But the long winding road and the vast empty sky
Will be there when the wild geese have flown.

A starburst of chaffinches rise with the wind
And they scatter like leaves on the air.
When the summer days end and the autumn begins
Is a secret the trees never share.
We'll lean to the leeward, the tall pines and I
When the northerlies cut to the bone,
And the birch and the willow and the ash heave a sigh
When the last summer breezes have blown.

As the dance of the seasons goes around and around
There's a time for all nature to rest,
When the green summer pastures have faded to brown
And the forest with color is blessed.
We'll waltz into winter, the autumn and I
In a flurry of russet and gold,
And the swirl of the snowflakes falling down from the sky,
While we watch her white blanket unfold.

We'll waltz into winter, my sweetheart and I
In the warmth of the love we have known
With thanks for another good year that's rolled by,
While the closer together we've grown.

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Recorded, mixed and mastered by Charlie Pilzer at Airshow, Takoma Park, MD*

Birds of Passage

George Stephens & Kathy Westra

1. Flying High, Flying Free (Leon Rosselson) 4:39
2. Ballad of Many Crows (Andrew Burke/John Warner) 3:18
3. The Collier Laddie (Trad.) 4:12
4. Old Port (Monica Marshall) 4:44
5. The Boats of Peter's River (©1995 Mary Garvey) 4:11
6. The Four-loom Weaver (Trad.) 3:18
7. Glenmary (Craig Johnson) 4:38
8. Last Winter Was a Hard One (Trad.) 3:49
9. The Pinery Boy (Trad.) 3:45
10. Song for the Mira (©1973 Allister MacGillivray) 4:18
11. Wedding Dress (Trad.) 1:58
12. The Fisherman's Song (Anne Lister) 4:44
13. This Old Earth (Bob Zentz) 4:05
14. Of Trees and Humankind (Wendy Joseph) 4:26
15. Waltz Into Winter (Archie Fisher) 4:25

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