

The Lady Gay

The Cherry Tree Carol

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Old Bangum

Barbara Allen

The Hangman's Tree

Two Brothers

Early One Morning



ANDREW ROWAN SUMMERS with dulcimer

Folkways Records : New York

M
1629
S955
L157
1954

MUSIC LP

THE LADY GAY / SOMMER

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DEDICATED to the memory of my father, Lewis Preston Summers, whose histories of Southwestern Virginia have done much to preserve the culture of the people of this region from which many of the songs in this album come. It was through him that my love and appreciation of these Scotch-Irish folk songs was aroused and cultivated.

Andrew Rowan Summers

Andrew Rowan Summers is a native Virginian, now living in New York. After studying music and voice at the University of Virginia (where he took a degree in law) he returned to his native town in the highlands to practice law and sing. He spent a decade in searching out folk singers, folk songs, and instruments. He was especially interested in the very old singers and players, for they, he felt, would know best that which he wished to know. He took an active part in the White Top Folk Festival, which drew singers, dancers, and instrumentalists from five or six states in the southern Appalachian region. It was at one of these festivals that he heard his first dulcimer, played by an old gentleman in his eighties, so feeble and weak that he could not participate in the festival. This same old fellow willed him his instrument when he died two years later. It is believed that Andrew Summers has perfected the nearest thing to traditional dulcimer-playing handed down from generations past.



THE CHERRY TREE CAROL

The story told in this old carol comes from the 20th chapter of the apochryphal gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, dating from the 5th Century, telling of the Flight Into Egypt. One day Joseph and Mary were resting under a palm tree, and Mary noticing the fruit hanging from the tree asked Joseph to gather some of it for her. He remonstrated with her that the fruit was hanging too high and that her request was unreasonable. It was then that the Christ Child, lying on his mother's bosom, commanded the palm to bow down so that Mary might gather its fruit. The palm tree bent down its fronds and the Holy Family gathered the fruit. By the fifteenth century the palm tree had, in England, become the cherry tree, and the miracle was recorded as having taken place before, not after, the birth of Christ. The prophecy of the birthday of Jesus, given in the last verse (January 6th), recalls the revision of the calendar in England in 1752 when eleven days were dropped out of the calendar between September 2 and 14, and in 1800 another day was lost. January 6th, or Old Christmas, is still often celebrated as the true Christmas by mountain folk of the Southern Appalachian.

In 1953 Agnes de Mille, the famous American choreographer, used Mr. Summer's version of this carol to stage it as a Ballet in the folk idiom, and toured the U.S. with it.

When Joseph was an old man,
An old man was he,
He married Virgin Mary the Queen of Galilee.

As Joseph and Mary were walking one day,
Here are apples, here are cherries,
Enough to behold.

Then Mary spoke to Joseph so meek and so mild,
Joseph gather me some cherries,
For I am with child.

Then Joseph flew in anger, in anger flew he,
Let the father of the baby
Gather cherries for thee.

Then Jesus spoke a few words, a few words spoke he,
Let my mother have some cherries,
Bow low down cherry tree.

The cherry tree bowed low down, bowed low down
to the ground,

And Mary gathered cherries,
While Joseph stood around.

Then Joseph took Mary all on his right knee,
What have I done Lord,
Have mercy on me.

Then Joseph took Jesus all on his left knee,
O, tell me little baby,
When they birthday will be.

The Sixth Day of January my birthday will be,
When the stars in the elements
Shall tremble with glee.

OLD BANGUM

The early British version of this ballad is known as "Sir Lionel" and relates a long romantic story of enchantment, single combats, and the rescue of beauty in distress. In the original Sir Lionel discovers a beautiful lady bending over the body of a slain knight. He espouses her cause and gives battle to a fierce wild boar who serves a giant who lives nearby. Sir Lionel is wounded in the battle, but is given forty days to heal his wounds before meeting the giant in mortal combat. He recovers, slays the giant and saves the lady from her plight. In the American versions all that remains is the boar fight and that for no other purpose than the pressing one of getting foot-leather - and the whole ballad has become rather jovial. Sir Lionel with the shining armor and glistening sword becomes "Old Bangum" with his wooden knife. The origin of the nonsense refrain is unknown -- probably made up by a lawyer singing the ballad as a nursery tune. The "killi-quo quam" certainly suggests legalistic Latin.

Old Bangum would a-hunting ride,
Dillum down dillum.
Old Bangum would a-hunting ride,
Dillum down.

Old Bangum would a-hunting ride
Sword and pistol by his side.
Cubby-ki, cuddle down,
Killum quo quam.

There is a wild boar in this wood,
Will eat your flesh and suck your blood,
Cubby-ki etc.

I wish that wild boar I could see,
Blow a blast and he'll come for thee.
Cubby-ki etc.

Old Bangum blew both loud and shrill,
The wild boar heard on Temple Hill.
Cubby-ki etc.

The wild boar came with such a rush,
He tore down hickory oak and ash.
Cubby-ki etc.

Old Bangum drew his wooden knife,
And swore he'd take that wild boar's life.
Cubby-ki etc.

Old Bangum did you win or lose?
He swore that he had won his shoes.
Cubby-ki etc.

BARBARA ALLEN

This is the most popular and widely known ballad in the English language. It is found in every State of the Union. It has been reprinted in numerous old songbooks which has helped it, along with the widespread oral tradition, gain its great popularity. In 1666 Samuel Pepys wrote of his delight in hearing Mrs. Kipp, an actress, sing the "little Scottish song of 'Barbara Allen.'" It is often called "Barbarous Ellen", "Edelin" etc. Oliver Goldsmith writes in one of his early essays of the tears the singing of this ballad brought to his eyes.

In Scarlet Town where I was born,
There was a fair maid dwellin'.
Made every youth cry out amain,
Oh lovely Barbara Allen.

'Twas in the merrie month of May,
When green buds there were swellin'.
Sweet William on his death bed lay,
For love of Barbara Allen.

And death is printed on his face,
And o'er his frame is stealin'.
Then haste away to comfort him,
Oh lovely Barbara Allen.

So slowly slowly she came up,
And slowly she came nigh him.
And all she said when there she came,
"Young man I think you're a-dyin'."

He turned his face unto the wall,
And with him death was dealin'.
"Adieu, adieu kind friends all,
Adieu to Barbara Allen."

As she was walking through the fields,
She heard the bells a-knellin'.
And every stroke did seem to say
Unworthy Barbara Allen.

She turned her body 'round about
And spied the corpse a-comin'.
"Lay down, lay down the corpse," she said
"That I may look upon him."

With scornful eye she looked down
Her cheeks with laughter swellin'.
While all her friends cried out amain,
Oh cruel Barbara Allen.

When he was dead and in his grave
Her heart was struck with sorrow.
"Oh mother, mother make my bed,
For I shall die tomorrow."

She, on her death bed as she lay,
Begged to be buried by him.
And sore repented of the day
That she did ere deny him.

"Farewell," she said, "ye maidens all,
And shun the fault I fell in."
Henceforth take warning of the fall
Of cruel Barbara Allen.

THE HANGMAN'S TREE

This is one of the oldest ballads in the English language known all over Europe and a version has been recorded in Icelandic. The tune and words were certainly known in England in Chaucer's day. It is widely distributed in this country especially in the south. It is the story of a girl condemned to die for the loss or the theft of a golden ball. Her whole family arrives on the scene, but none can or will help her until, at the climax, her true love ransoms her from the rope.

"Slack your rope, hagman,
Oh slack it for a while.
I think I see my father coming,
Riding many a mile."

"Oh father have you brought me gold,
Or have you paid my fee?
Or have you come to see me hanging
On the gallows tree?"

Refrain: "I have not brought you gold,
I have not paid your fee.
Yes, I have come to see you hanging
On the gallows tree."

(Then, mother, brother, sister, cousin,
uncle, and -last verse, True Love)

"O, true love have you brought me gold,
Or have you paid my fee?
Or have you come to see me hanging
On the gallows tree?"

"Yes, I have brought you gold,
Yes, I have paid your fee.
Nor have I come to see you hanging,
On the gallows tree."

THE TWO BROTHERS

Tragic ballad in the tradition of Lord Randal and Edward, it is rather widespread in the oral tradition in America though seldom encountered in England or Scotland. While some versions differ as to the manner of the killing, all emphasize the ceremonial mourning of the bereaved maiden and the evocation of the ghost of her lover. This mourning is almost always accompanied by magical instrumental music including the pipe, the flute, horn and harp. In this version, the harp has been metamorphosed into "hoppers. . . . tied with silver strings." (For additional references to ceremonial mourning and "dancing upon the grave" see Summers' Folkways album "The Unquiet Grave", the ballad by the same name.)

"Oh, brother will you play at ball,
Or will you toss the stone?"
"I am too little, I am too young,
Oh, brother, let me alone."

His brother took his little penknife
Which was both keen and sharp,
He put a deep and deathly wound
And pierced him to the heart.

"Oh, brother take my holland shirt
And rip it from gore to gore,
And bind it 'round my bleeding wound
That it may bleed no more."

His brother took his holland shirt
And ripped it from gore to gore,
And bound it 'round his bleeding wound,
But still it bled the more.

"Oh, brother take me in your arms,
Carry me to Chelsey Town.
You dig me a deep and large, wide grave,
And lay me there so sound."

"You put my Bible at my head,
My psaltery at my feet.
My bow and arrow at my side
And sounder I will sleep."

His brother took him in his arms,
And carried him to Chelsey Town.
He dug him a deep and wide, large grave,
And laid him there so sound.

He put his Bible at his head,
His psaltery at his feet.
His bow and arrow at his side,
So sounder he would sleep.

"Oh, brother as you go home at night
And my mother asks for me,
You'll tell I'm along with some schoolboys
So merry I'll come home."

"And if my true love asks for me,
The truth to her you'll tell.
You'll tell I'm dead and in grave laid,
And buried in Chelsey Town."

And as his brother went home at night,
His mother asked for him.
He told he's along with some schoolboys,
So merry he'll come home.

And when his true love asked for him,
The truth to her he told.
He told he was dead and in grave laid,
And buried in Chelsey Town.

With his Bible at his head,
His Psalter at his feet,
His bow and arrow at his side,
So sounder he will sleep.

And then his true love put on small hoppers,
And tied them with silver strings,
Went hopping all over her true lovers' grave
A twelvemonth and a day.

She hopped the red fish out of the sea,
The small birds out of their nests,
She hopped her true love out of his grave,
So he can see no rest.

Go home, go home, you rambling reed,
Don't weep nor mourn for me.
For if you do for twelve long years
No more you'll see of me.

EARLY ONE MORNING

This 17th Century English tune probably derives from an earlier hornpipe. It has been printed in countless songbooks, both English and American.

Early one morning just as the sun was rising,
I heard a maid sing in the valley below,
"Oh, don't deceive me, oh, never leave me
How could you treat a poor maiden so."

"Oh, gay is the garland and fresh are the roses
I've cull'd from the garden to bind on thy brow.
Oh don't deceive me, oh do not leave me
How could you treat a poor maiden so."

"Remember the vows that you made to your Mary,
Remember the bow'r where you vowed to be true.
Oh, don't deceive me, oh, do not leave me
How could you treat a poor maiden so."

Thus sung the poor maiden her sorrows bewailing,
Thus sung the maid in the valley below.
"Oh, don't deceive me, oh, do not leave me
How could you treat a poor maiden so."

THE LADY GAY

The Scottish original of this classic tragic ballad was known as "The Wife of Usher's Well". The American versions are rather widely known, often under the title of "The Three Little Babes".

There was a lady, a lady gay,
Of children she had three;
She sent them away to the north country
To learn high grammerie.

They had been gone but a very little time,
Scarcely three weeks to a day;
When death, cold death came hastening along
And stole those babes away.

"If there is a king in heaven," she said,
"That wears the brightest crown;
Pray send to me three little babes
Tonight or in the morning soon."

It was just about old Christmas time,
The night being cold and clear;
She looked and saw her three little babes
Come running home to her.

She set a table both long and wide,
Put on it bread and wine;
"Come eat and drink, my three little babes
Come eat and drink of mine."

"We do not want your bread, mother dear,
We do not want your wine;
For yonder stands our Saviour dear
To Him we must resign."

She fixed a bed in the long back room,
Put on it fine white sheets;
And over it all threw a fine golden cloth
The better that her babes might sleep.

Up rose the eldest one, up in bed,
"The cock's a-crowing for the day;
We're going to never come back again
Away and away and away."

"Green grass grows over our head, mother dear,
Cold clay is under our feet;
And every tear that you shed for us
It wets our winding sheet."