

FOLKWAYS RECORDS NYC FA 2348

ANDREW ROWAN SUMMERS

I WILL GIVE MY LOVE AN APPLE, THE DEATH OF QUEEN JANE, BLACKBIRDS
AND THRUSHES, THE THREE RAVENS, OLD MR. FOX, SHENANDOAH, FULL
MOON, O DEATH ROCK ME ASLEEP, LORD THOMAS AND FAIR ELLENDER.



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ANDREW ROWAN SUMMERS

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SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION



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.

ANDREW ROWAN SUMMERS SINGS

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SIDE I, Band 1: I WILL GIVE MY LOVE AN APPLE

This folk-song, like so many others, exists in many, many versions in the United States. Some of the versions are interesting and some are obvious defamations of earlier and finer originals. The tune here recorded is certainly one of great beauty and originality, and perfectly suited to the words. The great stateliness of the rhythm suggests the Court-dances of the middle ages, which in turn recalls to mind the greatly popular banquetting-game of the times, called "The Castle of Love" (see Huizinga) by such nebulous and often only half-imagined ideas are we able to rush back into the distant past in an attempt to seek out the origins of these beautiful, puzzling and mysterious words and melodies which have survived to our times almost wholly by means of their beauty and many centuries after the literature and supposedly more enduring monuments of forgotten ages have crumbled to dust and become lost in the debris of the ages.

I will give my love an apple
Without ere a core -
I will give my love a house
Without ere a door -
I will give my love a Palace
Wherein she may be
And she may unlock it
Without ere a key.

How can there be an apple
Without ere a core?
How can there be a house
Without ere a door?
How can there be a Palace
Wherein she may be
Which she may unlock
Without ere a key?

My head is the apple
Without ere a core -
My mind is the house
Without ere a door -
My heart is the Palace
Wherein she may be
And she may unlock it
Without ere a key.

SIDE I, Band 2: THE DEATH OF QUEEN JANE

Many versions of this fine ballad exist, and it is also known by the title of "King Henry." It concerns the death of Queen Jane Seymour (perhaps the only one of Henry VIII-the wives whom he truly loved) who died several days after the birth of the Prince, probably as the result of puerperal fever, and not as the result of a Caesarian section, as described in the ballad. It is interesting to note the vivid description of the colours used in the funeral procession, and the great cost of the Queenly shroud, for all during the Middle-Ages there was a rigorous and elaborate code governing the use of colour..... (see "The Waning of the Middle Ages" - Huizinga). The strange and dissonant intervals in the melody gives the ballad a haunting and grief-stricken atmosphere which is eminently suited to tragic words.

King Henry was sent for,
All in the time of her need -
King Henry, he came, in the time of her need.

King Henry, he stooped,
And kissed her on the lips -
"What's the matter with my flower,
makes her eyes look so dim?"

"Oh, Henry, King Henry,
If that you do be -
Please pierce my side open,
For to save thy baby."

"O, no, Jane, dear Queen Jane,
That ne'er will I be,
To pierce thy side open
For to save my baby."

Queen Jane, she turned over,
And fell in a swoond.
They pierced her side open,
And her baby was found.

How bright was the mourning,
How yellow were the bands -
How costly were the shroud
Queen Jane were wrapped in.

Oh, six followed after,
And six carried her along.
King Henry, he followed,
With his black mourning on.

King Henry he mourned,
And wrung his hands till they're sore -
"The Flower-of-England shall never be no more."

SIDE I, Band 3: BLACKBIRDS AND THRUSHES

This song is seldom heard in the United States, but is widely sung, to this day, in England. This version was learned many years ago by Mr. Summers from a visitor from Missouri who said she had known it all her life and had learned it from her mother who had been born and brought up in Canada. Its beautiful melody, akin to the Irish "Come-all-Ye's" (see "Willie of Hazel-green") recorded by A.R. Summers in his Folkways Album "The Fausle Ladye"), is, alone enough to have insured it against oblivion.

As I was a-walking for my recreation,
A-down by the gardens I silently strayed -
I heard a fair maiden making great lamentation,
Crying Jimmy will be slain in the wars, I'm afraid."

The Blackbirds and Thrushes sang in the green bushes,
The wood-doves and larks seemed to mourn for this maid,
And the song that she sang was concerning her lover,
"Oh, Jimmy will be slain in the wars, I'm afraid."

Her cheeks full of roses, Her arms full of posies,
She strayed in the meadow and weeping, she cried:
"My heart, it is breaking, My heart, it is aching -
Oh, Jimmy will be slain in the wars, I'm afraid."

When Jimmy returned with his heart full of burning,
He found his poor Nancy all dead in her grave -
He cried: "I'm forsaken, my poor heart is breaking -
"Oh, would that I never had left that fair maid."

SIDE I, Band 4: THE THREE RAVENS

This is certainly a very, very old song, and goes far far back of its first publication date in 1611. The music is charmingly archaic, and helps greatly to create the mood which the words describe - No more poignant Gothic picture has been created in the mind of man than this one of the deserted and slain Knight, surrounded by his faithful and inspired animal-friends. There is a Danish version of this song (as well as the very well-known Scottish one "The Twa Corbies") and it is very likely that it is a common heritage from the ancient Scalds.

There were three ravens sat on a tree,
Down-a-down, hey, down-a-down,
And they were black as black could be,
With a-down.

Then one of them said to his mate:
"Oh, where shall we our breakfast take,"
With a down, derry, derry, derry, down, down.

O down in yonder green field,
Down ... etc....
There lies a Knight slain 'neath his shield,
With a down.
His hounds, they lie down at his feet
So well do they their master keep -
With a down, derry, derry, derry, down, down.

His hawks, they fly so eagerly,
Down ... etc
There's no fowl that dare come him nigh -
With a down.
But down there comes a fallow doe,
As great with young as she might go.
With a down, derry, derry, derry, down, down.

She lifted up his bloody head,
Down a down ... etc ...
And kissed his wounds which were so red,
With a down -
She got him up all on her back,
And carried him to earthen-lake.
With a down, derry, derry, derry, down, down.

She buried him before the prime,
Down a down ... etc
She was dead herself ere eventime,
With a down -
God send to every gentleman,
Such hawks, such hounds, and such a leman -
With a down, derry, derry, derry, down, down.

SIDE I, Band 5: OLD MR. FOX

This is one of the best-known and finest of the English nursery tunes, and is widely distributed and sung throughout the U.S. and all English-speaking countries. It is one of two folk-songs learned by Mr. Summers from his mother as a child. He says that it was sung to him as a bed-time song, and that he was so fond of hearing it sung that he always willingly climbed onto his mother's lap, ready for bed, upon the promise of hearing it. He has never heard the tune elsewhere, and he believes it to be perhaps the best tune for the words he has ever heard. If one wishes to be very analytical about it, the rhythm definitely suggests the trotting gait - the lope, if you will - of the fox, and throughout there is a decided musical or vocal "cackle" vividly suggesting trouble in the barnyard. However, this "cackle" has been interpreted by others as a hunting-horn motif. Whichever suits the listener's imagination best, the effect of the song, and its power, can be best appreciated when sung to a child. Mr. Summers says that his mother told him, later in life, that she had learned the song from her Negro nurse, a fact that he finds interesting in that it illustrates what so often happened to folk music in this country - the white people, to whom it belonged "forgot" it when it ceased to serve its original purpose, but the inately musical Negro learned it and later re-taught it to the younger generation, thus replacing it in the white oral tradition, giving it a new lease on life. Many, many versions of it exist, including a completely ludicrous and recent Calypso one, which, doubtless, has little chance of survival.

Old Mr. Fox stepped out one night,
He prayed to the moon to afford him light,
For he had many miles to travel that night,
Before he reached the Towne-ee-o,
Towne-ee-o, Townee-o,
Before he reached the Towne-ee-o.

At first he came to a farmer's yard,
Where the ducks and the geese declared it hard,
That their nerves should be shattered
And their rest be marred

By the visit of Mr. Fox-ee-o,
Fox-ee-o, Fox-ee-o,
By the visit of Mr. Fox-ee-o.

He grabbed the old grey goose by the sleeve,
Said he "Madam goose, and by your leave,
I'll carry you away without reprieve,
And take you home to my den-ee-o"
Den-ee-o, den-ee-o
And take you home to my den-ee-o.

He seized the black duck by the neck
And slung her up all on his back,
And the black duck cried out "quack, quack, quack"
With her legs hanging dangling down-ee-o,
Down-ee-o, down-ee-o
With her legs hanging dangling down-ee-o.

Old mammy Willie-Whopper jumped out of bed
Out of the window she popped her old head:
"John, John, the black duck's gone,
And the fox is off to his den-ee-o",
Den-ee-o, den-ee-o,
And the fox is off to his den-ee-o.

Then John went up onto the hill,
There he blew a blast both loud and shrill,
Said the fox "This is very pretty music, still,
I'd rather be home in my den-ee-o".
Den-ee-o, den-ee-o,
I'd rather be home in my den-ee-o.

At last the fox came to his den,
There he had little ones, eight, nine, ten.
Said he "You're in luck, Here's a big fat duck,
With her legs hanging dangling down-ee-o.."
Down-ee-o, down-ee-o,
With her legs hanging dangling down-ee-o.

He then sat down with his hungry wife,
And they did very well without fork or knife,
And he never ate a better goose in all his life,
And the little ones ate the bones-ee-o,
Bones-ee-o, bones-ee-o,
And the little ones ate the bones-ee-o.

SIDE II, Band 1: SHENANDOAH

This song is so widely known and sung that very little need be said about it except to remind the listener that the current popular version derives from a much rowdier and vital Chantey. The sad and sweeping melody, perhaps a little too romantic to place it among the greatest of the folk songs, has captured the modern imagination, and even Hollywood chose it as the theme-music for its version of O'Neill's "Mourning Becomes Elektra."

O, Shenandoah, I long to hear you -
Away, you rolling river -
Oh, Shenandoah, I long to hear you -
Away, we're bound away
'Cross the wide Missouri.

The white man loved an Indian maiden,
Away, you rolling river.
With notions his canoe was laden,
Away, we're bound away...
'Cross the wide Missouri.

O, Shenandoah, I love your daughter,
Away, you rolling river.
I'll take her 'cross the rolling water,
Away, we're bound away,
'Cross the wide Missouri.

O, Shenandoah, I'm bound to leave you -
Away, you rolling river,
O, Shenandoah, I'll not deceive you,
Away, we're bound away ..
'Cross the wide Missouri.

SIDE II, Band 2: FULL MOON

If the foreigner knows only one French folk song, it is very likely to be this one. There are few American children who have not had "Au clair de la lune", drummed into their heads at one time or another usually without the faintest notion of what it is all about. But one of our greatest poets, Katherine Anne Porter, gave herself the trouble to translate the almost untranslatable words and the result is this beautiful poem in English which we can all understand

(Translated by Katherine Anne Porter)

Now, the moon is shining,
Help me, good Pierrot.
Lend me pen and ink, to
Write a line or so.
Wind's blown out my candle,
Nothing in the hod
Open, open, open
For the love of God.

"But the moon is shining,"
Answered good Pierrot;
"Pen's lost. And I went to
Bed three hours ago.
Ask the next door neighbour,
She's about I think.
Seems to me I hear her
Tapping at her flint."

While the moon is shining,
Strephon, handsome swain,
Comes to Chloe's door, and
Knocks, and knocks again.
"Who comes here so late, sir?"
Chloe ask above -
"Open, Chloe, open,
For the God of love."

SIDE II, Band 3: O DEATH ROCK ME ASLEEP

For several centuries this song has been attributed to Anne Boleyn, another of Henry VIII-ths doomed wives. Tradition has it that she composed it while confined in the Tower awaiting execution. A lovely and accomplished woman, and one with a great sense of drama, (she spent hours at her toilet, holding up the ravening mob waiting to see her lovely head roll) there is no doubt in Mr. Summers' mind that she is the author of this song. For those doubting that a woman in such extremity could have brought herself to write such a magnificent song, helping to memorialize herself to posterity, Mr. Summers suggests again the reading of Huizinga on the ritual of public executions contained in his "Waning of the Middle Ages." Aside from the facts surrounding the composer and the events which supposedly brought it into being, it is, in the opinion of many, one of the great "Art-Songs" in our language, and many, many decades ahead of its time.

O death, O death rock me asleep
Bring me to quiet rest.
Let pass this weary, guiltless ghost
Out of my troubled breast.

Toll on the passing bell -
Ring out the doleful knell -
Let the sound my death tell -
Let the sound my death tell.
For I must die.
There is no remedye.
For now I die;
For now I die,
I die, I die, I die
I die, I die.

This great tragic Ballad, here recorded in its entirety, is almost as widely distributed and sung in the U.S. as "Barbara Allen." Dozens and dozens of variants exist, some even in "hill-billy" idiom. In completeness of physiological motivation, suspense, and tragedy Mr. Summers considers it the peer of any of our great ballads. From among five or six tunes which he knows for this ballad, he has chosen the one here recorded, from Kentucky, as his favorite.

Come riddle, come riddle to me, dear mother,
Come riddle us all as one.
O, should I marry fair Ellender girl
Or bring the brown girl home?

The brown girl has both houses and land,
Fair Ellender she has none
And my advice would be for you,
To bring the brown girl home.

Go saddle, go saddle my steed, dear mother,
Go catch him up for me,
For I must invite fair Ellender
Unto my wedding day.

He dressed himself in scarlet red
And wore a cloak of green,
And every town that he passed through,
They took him to be some King.

He rode up to fair Ellender's gate -
He jingled, he jingled the ring,
And none was so ready as fair Ellender herself
To rise and let him in.

"What news, what news, Sir Thomas," she cried
"What news do you bring for me?"
"O, I have come to invite you
Unto my wedding day."

Come riddle, come riddle to me dear mother,
Come riddle us all as one.
O, should I go to Sir Thomas' wedding,
Or stay at home and mourn?

There may be many of your foes,
And many more of your friends,
But my advice would be for you
To tarry this day at home.

There may be many of my foes,
And many more of my friends -
But I'll go to Sir Thomas' wedding,
If I ne'er return again.

She dressed herself in scarlet so fine,
And wore a belt of green,
And every Town that she rode through,
They took her to be some Queen.

She rode up to Sir Thomas' gate,
She jingled, she jingled the ring -
And none was so ready as Lord Thomas himself,
To rise and let her in.

He took her by the lily-white hands
And led her across the hall -
And sat her down in a golden chair,
That leaned against the wall.

"Is this your bride, Lord Thomas?" she cried -
"I see she is quite brown -
Once you could have married the fairest young lady,
That e'er the sun shone round."

The brown girl had a little pen-knife
Which was both keen and sharp,
She laid it against fair Ellender's body
And pierced it to the heart.

"What's the matter, what's the matter?" Lord Thomas cried
"What's the matter?" again cried he -
"O, now you see my own heart's blood
Come tinkling down so free."

He took the brown girl by the hand,
And led her across the hall,
He drew his sword and cut her head off
And threw it against the wall.

He placed the handle against the wall,
The point against his breast -
Here ends the life of three true-lovers,
Lord, take them home to rest.

O, mother, O, mother, go dig my grave,
Go dig it both wide and deep -
And place fair Ellender in my arms,
And the brown girl at my feet

Notes by Andrew Rowan Summers

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