

Folkways Records FA 2416

California Folk Concert with Rolf Cahn

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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Brown Skin Girl
Ain't No Grave
Yarrow
Seguiriyas
Willow Tree
Howje Do
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Call Me Your Dog
Four Maries
German Song
Titanic

FOLKWAYS RECORDS Album No. FA 2416

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CALIFORNIA CONCERT

WITH



ROLF CAHN

ROLF CAHN has collected his music through several trips to Europe, the Caribbean, and Mexico, through study and travel in most of the United States, and by just "being around" in folk music circles for the past thirteen years. In 1952 he started his programs on radio station KPFA with the children's series, "Come Sing With Me". Two series, one on Flamenco and the other on the history of the Negro Spiritual, were purchased by the National Association of Educational Broadcasters who distributed them to over fifty radio stations in the United States and Canada. The United States Information Agency later broadcast the Negro Spiritual Series world wide.

Mr. Cahn composed and played the music for the University of California production of Federico Garcia Lorca's "Blood Wedding", the Drama Guild's production of Tennessee Williams' "Camino Real", and the opener of the KRON TV series, "Barrier". He was accompanist for the famous Flamenco singer Chinin de Triana, and the dancers Guillermo del Oro and Ilona de Herrera.

Two of his scores were played last year at the Brussels World Fair. He has been previously recorded on two other labels.

This recording is part of a composite concert representing the programs of the 1958 concert season which I shared with Carl Granich and Doug Brown. The performances were actually recorded on various stages, starting in Sacramento and ending in Los Angeles. Slowly, as the season progressed, I changed the programs; sometimes to get a better feel of motion, occasionally because a song no longer held its former excitement for me.

At all times I was concerned with creating an exciting movement of different tone-colors and textures. For me the idea of presenting one sound, one culture, has always been frustrating. In the Blues and other rhythmic American songs and instrumentals much of the excitement came from the work of the brilliant young guitarist, Carl Granich, and the bass playing of the singer-instrumentalist, Doug Brown, now the leading spirit of the successful singing group, "The Coachmen". We used the ideas (and, I hope, the feeling) of the men and women we admired most in the traditional Blues: Blind Lemon Jefferson, Brownie McGhee, K.C. Douglas, Jimmy Yancey, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, and others. In the more lyrical songs I often consciously abandoned the settings and textures in which I first heard them. Brown Skin Girl sounds wonderful with a steel drum orchestra; but I wanted to explore the lovely melody and therefore softened the rhythm. Kentucky Moonshiner, Yarrow, and The Four Maries have also been altered to explore the melodies and the poetry. In all cases where original feeling, textures, and tone colors were abandoned I tried to replace them with my own heritage and particular feeling for voice and guitar for these songs. The changes were made regretfully; and I still enjoy these songs most when I hear them in their own setting.

The Seguiriya, on the other hand, represents my devotion to the musical values of Flamenco. To me any changing, prettyfying, or "cleaning up" would be as tragic here as in the Blues. So this recording does not try to give a consistent approach to performance, because there is none. This vast musical phenomenon which has been labeled for us as "Folk Music" is so varied, and represents so many feelings, peoples, and levels of musical maturity and artistry, that a search for a consistent approach leads to inartistic verbiage, with the vital thread to the music cut off.

We hope you will share with us the many emotions, stories, tragedies which created these songs; and let them bring warmth and some feeling of recognition into your lives.

Rolf Cahn

SIDE ONE

Evil Blues - with Carl, takes its text from a rhythmical performance by Mississippi John Hurd. The instrumental introduction is taken from the piano of Jimmy Yancey, and the first verse comes from the performance of Blind Boy Fuller.

I get evil when the sun, when the even' sun goes down;
I get evil baby, when my woman can't be found.

Got the blues, and I can't be, Lord I can't be satisfied;
Keep the blues, catch that train and ride.

Bought my baby a great big diamond ring.
Come back home, found her shaking that thing.

Took my gun, and I broke the barrel down.
Put my woman six foot underground.

I get lonesome, when the sun, when the even' sun goes down.
I get lonesome baby, when my woman can't be found.

Keys to the Highway, with Carl and Doug.

Both Brownie McGee and Big Bill Broonzy have done wonderful things with this song, as has my teacher, K. C. Douglas. The verses are interchangeable so don't take the particular order too seriously, since it changed in every concert.

I got the keys to the highway, and I've got to go;
I'm gonna leave here running, because walking's most too slow.

I'm going down to the border, where I'm better known,
You ain't done nothing baby, but drive a good man away from home.
(K.C. used to sing "Big fat mama")

Just give me one more kiss mama before I say goodbye,
I'm gonna roam this old highway till the day I die.

Soon as the moon meet the mountain I'll be on my way
I'm gonna walk this old highway till the break of day

So long, so long babe, I have got to go
When I come back here baby my head be white as snow.

Kentucky Moonshiner I first heard from Dave Zeitlin in Los Angeles. Since then I have heard several variations of the song all in the beautiful harsh, wailing style of the area. I have tried to capture the deep loneliness and sadness of the song in my own way.

I've been a moonshiner for seventeen long years
I spent all my money on whiskey and beers.
I'll go to some holler and set up my still,
I'll sell you a gallon for a two dollar bill

I'll go to some grocery and eat with my friends,
Where the women can't follow and see what I spend.
God bless those pretty women, I wish they was mine;
Their breath is as sweet as the dew on the vine.

Red meat when I'm hungry, moonshine when I'm dry,
Greenbacks when I'm hard up, and religion when I die.

The whole world's a bottle and life's but a dram;
When a bottle is empty, it ain't worth a damn.

Brown Skin Girl -- I heard this so often in the forties in the Caribbean that it almost seemed like a popular song. The pointed and cynical words were sung with great cheer, and it took me a long time to realize how often people use song to laugh at misery and degradation. The calypso singers and steel-drum bands do this with a heavy 4/4 rhythm, almost like a samba, and give it a wonderful wide, swinging feeling. I have slowed the thing down to explore the melody, and shifted the rhythm to a more gentle 8/8. In the Bahamas, I heard the melody deliberately sung behind the rhythm, just this side of syncopation. My choice of words was an arbitrary selection of the many variations.

Everything to keep me from sleeping
All the sailor boys they were leaving (this line
often sung as: when I heard the steel
bands all beating)
You should hear the noise they were making.
All the young people on the wharf they was singing;

CHORUS:

Brown Skin Girl stay home and mind baby
Brown Skin Girl stay home and mind baby
I'm going away in a sailing boat
And if I don't come back, stay home and mind,
baby.

The Americans made an invasion
They said it was for the help of our island
But then they took a vacation;
They left their brown skin du-du's to mind their
children

(CHORUS)

I better tell you the story of Milly;
I say she made a nice Blue eyed baby.
The home (or name) it stand for the mother,
But I tell you that baby aint see the father.

(CHORUS)

Everybody was to their pleasure,
While the music was playing with leisure,
Then the music got louder,
And the Yankee boys were the chorus singing:

Ain't no grave Can Hold My Body Down: with Carl
and Doug.

There is a wonderful performance of this collected
by John Lomax in the Library of Congress Archives
collection, and an entirely different one recorded
by Sister Rosetta Tharpe.

Ain't no Grave can hold my body down.
Aint no Grave can hold my body down.
When the first trumpet sound
I'll be getting up, walking 'round (also sung:
out of the ground)
Ain't no grave hold my body down.

It was early one Monday morning, right around the
break of day,
Angels came from glory, rolled the stone away.
When the women came along, and found that their
saviour was gone.
Ain't no grave can hold my body down.

Go yonder Gabriel, stand on the land and sea
I don't want you to blow that trumpet, till you
get orders from me.
The end of the night is almost done, and the day
is coming on,
Ain't no grave can hold my body down.

Yarrow is ballad number 214 in the Child collection.
This performance was adapted from the singing of the
great Ewal McColl. (Is this the right spelling,
Manny?) One of the earliest collected Scottish
ballads, it has appeared in the Percy's Reliques,
and Scott's Minstrelsy.

There was a lady in the North, I ne'r could find
her morrow
She was courted by nine gentlemen, and a Plowboy
lad frae Yarrow.

These nine sat drinking in the wane, sat drinking
wine in Yarrow,
They made a vow amongst themselves, they fecht for
her in Yarrow.

As he walked up yon high higg hill, and down to
the Houms of Yarrow
There he spied nine armed men, come to fecht
with him in Yarrow.

There's nine o you, there's one o me, it's an
unequal marrow,
But I'll fecht ye all one by one, on the dowy
dens o Yarrow.

And there they flew, and there he slew, and there
he wounded sorely,
Till her brother Jock come in beyond, and wounded
him most foully.

As she walked down yon high higg hill, down to
the houms of Yarrow,
There she spied her lover Jon, lying cold and wan,
on Yarrow.

Her hair it been three quarters long, the color it
was yellow,
She wrapped it round his middle so small, and bore
him down to Yarrow.

Seguiriyas, one of the deepest of the Flamenco forms.
Passages have been taken from the playing of many
guitarrists, as well as my teachers, Mariano
Cordova, Guido Daunic, Miguel Garcia, and Juan
Hidalgo. The piece is improvised on the basis of my
own feeling of the form and I change its feeling and
composition with every performance.

SIDE TWO

Instrumental medley with Carl, consisting of the song
Bury me Beneath the Willow, done in the style of the
Carter Family, Eight more Miles to Louisville,
fingerpicking style, and back to the first song.

Howjedo -- with Carl and Doug - the song started as
a talking song by Woody Guthrie. I made up the
present idea for a children's program called Music For
Minors, and added a chorus, as well as individual
lines from the wonderful songs of Malvina Reynolds.
The melody is a sort of adaption of the Good Ship
Titanic. Name your own toys and relatives, as I
certainly changed them every time. Just fun.

You stick out your heart and hand to every women,
kid, and man
And you shake it up and down with a howjedo.
On my sidewalk on my street, everybody that we
meet,
Well you shake it up and down with a howjedo.

CHORUS:

Howjedo, howjedo, how's your mother how's your
puppy how are you
I feel glad when you feel good, you cheer up my
neighborhood
Shaking hands with everybody - howjedo

When I walk into my door, you come romping 'cross
the floor
And we shake it up and down with a howjedo,
When you jump up out of bed, out of the window
goes your head
And you bob it up and down with a howjedo

(CHORUS)

When you're buzzing like a bee, when you're standing
like a tree
Turn your branches to the wind with a howjedo.
When you're skating on the ice, when you're thinking
something nice,
Raise your eyebrows up and down with a howjedo

(CHORUS)

Through the valleys through the forests, climbing
up the mountain high
When you see the birds a-flying "howjedo"
When you see a train coming and it makes a rumbling
noise,
Wave your arm in a great big wave, shout howjedo.

(CHORUS)

Where are you going needs no explanation. The song
was written a few years ago by Malvina Reynolds.
Would I were as profound.

Where are you going my little one, little one
Where are you going my sunny my own.
Turn around and I'm two, turn around and I'm four,
Turn around and I'm a young man going out of your
door.

Where are you going, my little one, little one,
Little sunsuits and pettycoats, where have you gone.
Turn around and I'm tiny, turn around and I'm grown,
Turn around and I'm a young wife with babes of my
own.

Call me your dog, with Carl and Doug. I first heard
sung by Frank Hamilton and later by Jack Carson from
West Texas, and others who used it as a catch all for
the Salty Dog type of melody. Many verses from other
songs can of course be thrown in here.

Call me your dog when I'm gone, gone, call me your
dog when I'm gone.
It's when you see me coming with a twenty dollar
bill, it's baby where you been so long.

I've wandered all over ten counties, way down in
old Tennessee,
Wherever I happen to hang up my hat, is home sweet
home to me.

Where was you last Friday night, while I was lying
in Jail,
Walking the streets with another man, wouldn't even
go my bail.

My baby wants a nine dollar shawl, my Molly wants
a nine dollar shawl,
When I come o'er the hill with a five dollar bill,
corn likker was the cause of it all

Where did you get that pretty new dress, shoes you
wear so fine
Got my dress from a brave engineer, shoes from a
driver in the mine.

Daddy taught me drinking and gambling, gamble on
that ace, Jack and trey
Whenever I happen to be down on my luck, I gamble
on that ace, Jack and trey

The Four Maries, is number 173 in the Child Collec-
tion. The origin given here is one of two possibili-
ties. It is equally possible that the incident that
triggered the ballad took place in Russia in 1715
and travelled across Europe.

Last night there were four Maries, tonight there'll
be but three.
There was Mary Eaton, and Mary Seaton, and Mary
Carmichael and me.

Oh often have I dressed my queen, put gold upon her
hair,
And now I've gotten for my reward, the gallows to
be my share.

They'll tie a kerchief around my eyes, they'll not
let me see to die,
But they'll never tell my father and mother, but
that I'm away over the sea.

Oh little did my mother think the day she cradled
me,
The lands I was to travel in, or the death I was to
see

I charge ye all ye sailormen, as ye sail over the
foam,
Don't let my father or mother know, but that I am
coming home.

The little German medley is made up of different
verses each time, as well as different songs. They
are pretty much standard songs found in any book
of German Volkslieder, where you would get more
rounded out form of each song.

Titanic, with Carl -- first adapted from the singing
and playing of Reverend and Versie Smith. We
changed it gradually to a bluezier form, some of it
verging on rock and roll.

On a Monday morning, right around four o'clock
The great Titanic began to reel and rock.
The people screamed and cried, saying
Good Lord we're bound to die,
Wasn't it sad when that great ship went down.

The people on that ship, a long way from home,
The sea all around them, they knew their time had come.
Death come rolling by, sixteen hundred had to die
Wasn't it sad when that great ship went down.

When that ship left England, sailing for the shore,
The rich they said they would not ride with the poor,
They put them down below, where they were the first
to go
Wasn't it sad when that great ship went down

CHORUS:

(Whenever you want to add it to the end of a verse:

Sad when that great ship went down,
Husbands and wives, well the dear little children
lost their lives,
Wasn't it sad when that great ship went down.