

PETE SEEGER
at the gate
and
MEMPHIS SLIM
PIANO
WEE WILLIE DIXON
BASS

PETE SEEGER
THE VILLAGE GATE

MEMPHIS SLIM and
WEE WILLIE DIXON

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Photo by DAVID GAHR



PETE SEEGER
AT THE VILLAGE GATE

I'M ON MY WAY
HIELAND LADDIE
TINA SINGU
SWEET POTATOES
WORRIED MAN BLUES
OH MARY DON'T YOU WEEP
DON'T YOU WEEP AFTER ME
PRETTY POLLY
JACOB'S LADDER
TIMES ARE GETTING HARD
BAYEZA
THE QUIZMASTERS
NEW YORK CITY
MIDNIGHT SPECIAL

HIGHLIGHTS OF

PETE SEEGER at the VILLAGE GATE

with MEMPHIS SLIM and WILLIE DIXON

ON SINGING FOLK SONGS IN A NIGHT CLUB

by Pete Seeger

It is good practice for any singer to try singing in a saloon occasionally. The very difficulties are instructive. The danger comes, I suppose, when you get to like it too much.

Once upon a time folk songs in night clubs were considered too, too esoteric. However, the folksong revival has now developed to the point where night clubs have been founded precisely upon the growing city audience for folk music of various sorts, rather than, as in the past, upon jazz, or dancing, or comedy and girl shows (I do not include liquor; there are cheaper places to get drunk).

The result now is that when I sing folk songs in a night club, I no longer have to battle the noise, the drunks, the consternation and perplexion that I faced fifteen years ago. Then, patrons of night clubs were totally unprepared for listening to "Come All Ye Fair and Tender Ladies."

And in 1951, when The Weavers tried singing "Follow the Drinking Gourd" in Ciro's of Hollywood, the manager bustled over to us. "Here, here," said he, "people come in here to forget their troubles. They don't want to hear those old slave songs. Sing 'Good Night Irene.'"

We were trying to sing songs to deepen people's consciousness of life; this just ran counter to the purposes of his night club.

Nowadays, at least in certain clubs, the audience will be intent and still, and request numbers ranging from "Barbara Allen" to "Talking Union" and "Die Gedanken Sind Frei."

Night club work has another advantage: the audience is smaller than in a concert hall. They are usually grouped more informally around the mike and the atmosphere is more relaxed, thus more conducive to good singing.

There are disadvantages too: most night clubs cost an arm and a leg to get out of. Thus many working people cannot afford to come. Furthermore, they are all too hot, smoky, and one still has to compete with noise from the kitchen. But all this is petty carping. I repeat: it is good practice for a singer to try singing in a saloon occasionally.

NOTES ON THE SONGS

I'M ON MY WAY - This now well-known spiritual might have been made up back in slavery days. It might not. I don't know. I learned it in 1941 from Arthur Stern of New York City. The Almanac Singers changed a few words ("thank God" became "Great God") and added a couple of verses ("I asked my boss to let me go -- if he says 'no' I'll go anyhow) -- and the song has taken a new lease on life.

HIELAND LADDIE - Some may know this song as "Donkey Riding." It is also in the excellent Burl Ives Sea Song book. But Joe Hickerson of Oberlin College changed the melody and rhythm in subtle but important ways, and changed it from a good song to a magnificent song. It probably was created in the 19th Century.



Photo by Ed Berman

TINA SINGU - This song comes to us through one of the little songbooks published by that extraordinary publishing outfit, the Cooperative Recreation Service of Delaware, Ohio. The song is from South Africa, where people love to sing in harmony. The words mean: "We are a flaming fire; be careful, you'll burn, you'll burn."

SOON AS WE ALL COOK SWEET POTATOES - learned from the singing of Bess Hawes and Odetta, L.A. 1956. They sang it low and sweet - it never sounded more lovely. Descant is by Hector Spaulding. I've added two new verses.

WORRIED MAN BLUES - I learned this from Woody Guthrie, who adapted it, I think, from a 1935 recording of the Carter Family. The song may also go back to slavery days.

O MARY, DON'T YOU WEEP - The finest example I can name of an old song which takes on new poetic life with every new generation. In 1860 the verses meant one thing. In 1960 they take on additional meanings.

DON'T YOU WEEP AFTER ME - Charlotte Daniels, a fine singer in Washington, D.C., passed this fine song on to me. She said it came from the Bahamas.

PRETTY POLLY - A classic American ballad, known by every old-time Kentucky banjo-picker. I learned this mainly from an old Victor recording by B. F. Shelton.

JACOB'S LADDER - Again, a song which grows in meaning with every new generation ("... every new rung on the ladder.")

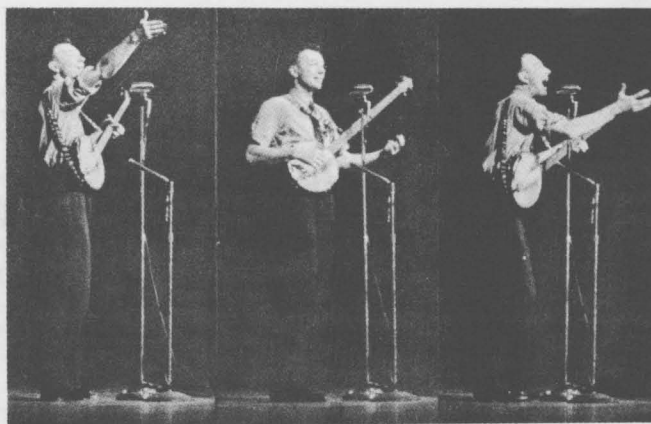
TIMES A-GETTING HARD - Lee Hays got this from Carl Sandburg's "The American Songbag" and added a new last line. The genius of simplicity.

BAYEZA - A ritual song from South Africa, an invocation to a spirit known as "Oonomathotholo." I learned it from a songbook edited by Mr. Joseph Maselwa for St. Matthews Missionary College in South Africa. Complete words and music are in the brochure accompanying the Folkways LP "Bantu Choral Folksongs" (FW6912) and also in the forthcoming folio, African Choral Folksongs, to be published in 1961 by G. Schirmer, 3 W. 43rd St., NYC.

THE QUIZMASTERS - Written in October, 1959, by Ernie Marrs, prolific verse writer and good stonemason. The tune, obviously, is "Sweet Betsy From Pike" (nee "Villikins and His Dinah.")

NEW YORK CITY - Huddie Ledbetter improvised this in 1935. The Almanac Singers and Woody Guthrie changed and added to it in 1941, and since then it has incorporated further changes.

THE MIDNIGHT SPECIAL - A song well-known in South Texas prison camps, this also was first sung to me by Huddie Ledbetter. I've since heard it in many places and have incorporated changes into it.



SIDE I, Band 1: I'M ON MY WAY

I'm on my way (I'm on my way)
To Canaan-land (To Canaan-land)
I'm on my way (I'm on my way)
To Canaan-land (To Canaan-land)
I'm on my way (I'm on my way)
To Canaan-land (To Canaan-land)
I'm on my way,
Great God I'm on my way.

I asked my brother) 3
To come with me)
I'm on my way)
Great God I'm on my way.

I asked my sister) 3
To come with me)
I'm on my way,
Great God, I'm on my way.

I asked my boss) 3
To come with me)
I'm on my way,
Great God, I'm on my way

If he says, "No") 3
I'll go anyhow)
I'm on my way,
Great God, I'm on my way.

I'm on my way) 3
And I won't turn back)
I'm on my way,
Great God, I'm on my way.

SIDE I, Band 2: HIELAND LADDIE

Was you ever in Quebec,
Bonnie Laddie, Hieland Laddie
Stowing timber on the deck,
Bonnie Hieland Laddie.

CHORUS:
Hey ho, away we go,
Bonnie Laddie, Hieland Laddie
Hey ho, away we go,
Bonnie Hieland Laddie.

Was you ever in Baltimore
Bonnie Laddie, Hieland Laddie
Dancing on that sanded floor,
Bonnie Hieland Laddie.

(CHORUS)

Was you ever in Mobile Bay
Bonnie Laddie, Hieland Laddie,
Loading Cotton by the day,
Bonnie Hieland Laddie.

(CHORUS)

Was you ever in Merrimashee
Bonnie Laddie, Hieland Laddie
There you tie fast to a tree
Bonnie Hieland Laddie.

(CHORUS)

Was you ever on the Brummalow
Bonnie Laddie, Hieland Laddie

Yankee boys are on the go,
Bonnie Hieland Laddie

(CHORUS)

Was you ever in Callao
Bonnie Laddie, Hieland Laddie
There the girls are never slow,
Bonnie Hieland Laddie

(CHORUS)

Was you ever in Quebec,
Bonnie Laddie, Hieland Laddie,
Loading timber on the deck
Bonnie Hieland Laddie

SIDE I, Band 3: TINA SINGU

Tina Singu, Lelu vu-ta-yo
Watcha, watcha, watcha
Tina

Tina Singu, Lelu vu-ta-yo
Watcha, watcha, watcha
Watcha, watcha, watcha, watcha

1st voice - La, la, la
2nd voice - Watcha, watcha.

SIDE I, Band 4: SWEET POTATOES

Soon as we all cook sweet potatoes,
Sweet potatoes, sweet potatoes,
Soon as we all cook sweet potatoes,
Eat 'em right straight up.

(Descant)
Roo, roo, roo, roo
Hoo-roo, sing ho de ing-dum
Roo roo roo roo, hoo roo, roo roo

Soon as supper's et, mommy hollers,
Mommy hollers, mommy hollers,
Soon as supper's et, mommy hollers,
Got to go to bed.

Soon's we touch our heads to the pillow,
To the pillow, to the pillow, (ho di-ing dum)
Soon's we touch our heads to the pillow,
Go to bed right smart.

Soon's the rooster crow in the morning,
In the morning, in the morning,
Soon's the rooster crow in the morning,
Got to get out bed.

Soon's the school bus comes on the highway,
On the highway, on the highway,
Soon's the school bus comes on the highway,
Got to go to school.

Soon's its' 3 o'clock in the afternoon,
In the afternoon, in the afternoon,
Soon's its' 3 o'clock in the afternoon,
Then we all come home.

Soon's we all cook sweet potatoes,
Sweet potatoes, sweet potatoes,
Soon's we all cook sweet potatoes
Eat 'em right straight up.

SIDE I, Band 5: WORRIED MAN BLUES

Well, it takes a worried man
To sing a worried song,
It takes a worried man
To sing a worried song,
It takes a worried man,
To sing a worried song,
I'm worried now,
But I won't be worried long.

I went across the river) 3
I lay down to sleep)
When I woke up,
I had shackles on my feet.

It takes a worried man) 3
To sing a worried song)
I'm worried now,
But I won't be worried long.

There's 29 links) 3
Of chain around my leg)
On each link,
An initial of my name.

It takes a worried man) 3
To sing a worried song)
I'm worried now,
But I won't be worried long.

I asked the judge,) 3
"Tell me what's gonna be my fine?")
21 years
On the Rocky Mountain Line

It takes a worried man) 3
To sing a worried song)
I'm worried now,
But I won't be worried long.

I looked down the track) 3
Far as I could see)
Little bitty hand,
Was a-waving after me. I said -

It takes a worried man,) 3
To sing a worried song)
I'm worried now,
But I won't be worried long.

It takes a worried man) 3
To sing a worried song)
I'm worried now
But I won't be worried long.

SIDE I, Band 6: OH, MARY DON'T YOU WEEP

CHORUS:
Oh Mary, don't you weep, don't you mourn,
Oh Mary, don't you weep, don't you mourn,
Pharoah's army got drowned,
Oh Mary, don't you weep.

If I could, I surely would
Stand on the rock where Moses stood.
Pharoah's army got drowned,
Oh Mary, don't you weep.

(CHORUS)

One of these mornings bright and fair,
Take my wings and cleave the air.
Pharoah's army got drowned,
Oh Mary, don't you weep.

(CHORUS)

Moses stood on the Red Sea shore,
Smote the water with a two by four
Pharoah's army got drowned,
Oh Mary, don't you weep.

(CHORUS)

Now God gave Noah the rainbow sign,
No more water but fire next time
Pharoah's army got drowned,
Oh Mary, don't you weep.

(CHORUS)

Mary wore 3 links of chain
Every link was freedom's name.
Pharoah's army got drowned,
Oh Mary, don't you weep.

(CHORUS)

If I could I surely would
Stand on the rock where Moses stood,
Pharoah's army got drowned,
Oh Mary, don't you weep.

(CHORUS)

I never will ramble, I never will roam,
But it's about 2 o'clock and I think we better
go home.
Pharoah's army got drowned,
Oh Mary, don't you weep.

(CHORUS)

SIDE II, Band 1: DON'T YOU WEEP AFTER ME

When I'm dead and buried,
Don't you weep after me.
When I'm dead and buried,
Don't you weep after me.
When I'm dead and buried
Don't you weep after me, oh
I don't want you to weep after me.

We are (crossing Jordan's River) 3
Don't you weep after me)
Oh,
I don't want you to weep after me.

You can) 3
Tell my dear old mother)
Don't you weep after me)
I don't want you to weep after me

Well it's) 3
When I'm dead and buried)
Don't you weep after me)
I don't want you to weep after me.

I'll be with you when you're singing) 3
Don't you weep after me)
Oh,
I don't want you to weep after me.

Well it's) 3
When I'm dead and buried)
Don't you weep after me)
I don't want you to weep after me.

When I'm dead and buried) 3
Don't you weep after me)
I don't want you to weep after me.

When I'm dead and buried) 3
Don't you weep after me)
I don't want you to weep after me.

SIDE II, Band 2: PRETTY POLLY

I courted Pretty Polly the live-long night.
I courted Pretty Polly the live-long night,
And left her next morning
Before it was light.

Pretty Polly, Pretty Polly, come go along with me,
Pretty Polly, Pretty Polly, come go along with me.

Before we get married,
Some pleasure to see.
She got up behind him, and away they did go.
She got up behind him, and away they did go.
Over the hills,
To the valley so low.

They went a little farther and what did they spy,
They went a little farther, what did they spy,
But a new dug grave,
And a spade lying by.

Oh Willie, oh Willie, I'm afraid of your way
Oh Willie, oh Willie, I'm afraid of your way
I'm afraid you will lead
My poor body astray.

Pretty Polly, Pretty Polly you've guessed just about
right,
Pretty Polly, Pretty Polly, guessed just about right.
I dug on your grave
Biggest part of last night.

He stabbed to the heart, her heart's blood it did
flow.

He stabbed to the heart, her heart's blood it did
flow.

And into the grave,
Pretty Polly did go.

He threwed a little dirt over her and started
for home,

He throwed a little dirt over her and started
for home,

Leaving nothing behind
But the wild birds to moan.

SIDE II, Band 3: JACOB'S LADDER

We are climbing Jacob's ladder,
We are climbing Jacob's ladder,
We are climbing Jacob's ladder,
Brothers in our land.

Every rung goes higher, higher) 3
Brothers in our land.)
Every new man makes us stronger) 3
Brothers in our land.)

We are black and white together) 3
Brothers in our land.)
We are climbing Jacob's ladder) 3
Brothers in our land.)

SIDE II, Band 4: TIMES ARE GETTING HARD

Times are getting hard boys,
Money's getting scarce.
If times don't get no better boys,
Going to leave this place.
Take my true love by the hand
Lead her through the town.
Saying good-bye to every one,
Good-bye to everyone.

Times are getting hard boys,
Money's getting scarce.
If times don't get no better boys,
Going to leave this place.
Take my true love by the hand,
Lead her through the town.
Saying good-bye to everyone,
Good-bye to everyone.

SIDE II, Band 5: BAYEZA

Bayeza kusasa Bayeza)
Bayeza kusasa Bayeza) repeated by Chorus to end.

Lead: Oonomathotholo Ekusenina
Oonomathotholo bayeza kusasa

SIDE II, Band 6: THE QUIZMASTERS

A dozen big companies are giving away,
Hundreds and thousands of dollars they say.
They ask you some questions and someone keeps score,
And they slip you the answers a few days before.

CHORUS:

Hoodle dang fol dee die do, hoodle dang fol dee dum
Come along to the quiz show and join in the fun.

Now something for nothing is hard to resist.
Especially when it will never be missed.
And since you're only an average guy,
You're quite taken in by the size of the lie.

(CHORUS)

You act out your part in a natural way.
And then our dear sponsor has something to say.
The millions are buying the things that he makes
You're getting some grease that fried out of his
steak.

(CHORUS)

Now that you're a liar, the company can choose
The minute their puppet will stumble and lose.
And if you like your job and you don't want the
sack,
You'd better give part of the gravy right back.

(CHORUS)

You're a national hero wherever you're seen.
Your face is on every newspaper and screen.
And just like a saucer of milk for a pup,
Those suckers are watching keep lapping it up.

(CHORUS)

Then one day it's over someone smelled a rat
The bag has been ripped and they've let out the
cat.
The companies find out that they're not alone
For Congress is starting a quiz of its own.

(CHORUS)

Now look at the hero exposed to your view
And think of how easy it could have been you.
We were all played for suckers so now he must pay
While the big shot behind him just slithers away.

(CHORUS)

For Congress discovered a long time ago
The profits concealed in a questioning show.
And Congressman Walter can tell you the tale
Of how quizzers get votes and contestants get jail.

(CHORUS)

SIDE II, Band 7: NEW YORK CITY

Cloudy in the West, look like rain,
Spent my last nickel on a subway train.
New York City, in New York City.
In New York City, you really got to know your line.

The Fifth Avenue bus is the best in town.
But if you only got a nickel you got to go
underground,
In New York City, New York City
New York City, you really got to know your line.

A gal came up to Woody, she said to Woody would'e
Woody said he would but the gal said could'e
In New York City, in New York City
In New York City, you really got to know your line.

He sang on the subway, he sang on the train
It didn't matter where, fair or rain
In New York City, in New York City
In New York City, you really got to know your line.

Now there's lots more verses to this song,
Best I'd better be getting along.
In New York City, in New York City,
In New York City, you really got to know your line.

SIDE II, Band 8: MIDNIGHT SPECIAL

Well you wake up in the morning
You hear the ding-dong ring
Go marching to the table
See the same damn thing.

Well it's on the table
Knife, a fork and a pan
And if you say anything about it
You're in trouble with the man.

CHORUS:

Let the midnight special
Shine her light on me,
Let the midnight special
Shine her ever-loving light on me.

Yonder comes Miss Rosie
How'n the world do you know?
Well, I know her by her apron,
And the dress she wore;
Umbrella on her shoulder,
Piece of paper in her hand,
Goes a-marching to the C'aptain,
Says, "I want my man."

(CHORUS)

Now if you go to Houston,
You better walk right.
Oh you better not stagger,
And you better not fight.

Sheriff Benson will arrest you,
He'll carry you down,
And if the jury finds you guilty,
Penitentiary bound.

(CHORUS)