

a life  
of  
song

AFRICAN  
AMERICAN  
LEGACY  
RECORDINGS  
SERIES

ella jenkins

NATIONAL MUSEUM of  
AFRICAN AMERICAN  
HISTORY and CULTURE



*Ella singing with children (1970s)*

**This recording is dedicated to all children around the world.**

—Ella Jenkins

# ella jenkins a life of song

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All songs written or arranged by Ella Jenkins, Ell-Bern Publishing Co., ASCAP, except where noted.

*This recording is part of the African American Legacy Recordings series, co-produced with the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.*



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

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## African American Legacy Recordings

**T**he *African American Legacy* recording series is a joint production of the Smithsonian's National Museum for African American History and Culture and Smithsonian Folkways Recordings. Each recording is an “exhibition in sound” in which the audio is the artifact on display and the accompanying notes place it in its cultural, social, and historical place in American life. Music and oratory have long played a central role in African American life and were shaped by the unique African American experience. In turn, these expressions have been major tributaries to the ongoing creation of the American experience as a whole. This series marks these contributions through recordings of signature sounds of the African American legacy.

The series as a whole is an audio mosaic in the making, comprised of reissues and compilations drawn from the Smithsonian Folkways archival collections and new recordings of living bearers of diverse African American traditions. It launched in 2007 with *On My Journey: Independent Recordings*, featuring historic recordings of the giant of 20th-century American music, Paul Robeson. Robeson stood tall against racism, McCarthyism, and blacklisting to proclaim the majesty of African American culture, a fitting first cornerstone for the series. Recordings that followed have showcased sounds of regional blues traditions, a cappella quartet sacred music, actor Ossie Davis interpreting oratory of Frederick Douglass, and children's music with Ella Jenkins. We look for many more recordings to come, portraying an ever grander picture-in-sound of this vital vein of American creativity.

In this album, Ella Jenkins, known to many as “The First Lady of Children’s Music,” offers stories and songs that speak to her years growing up as an African American child in the multicultural world of Chicago. Her pioneering career spans more than a half century and earned her the first Lifetime Achievement Grammy award for a children’s music artist from the Recording Academy. Her more than thirty recordings embrace many cultures and languages and teach us all to learn from one another while taking pride in our own particular heritage. Generations of Americans of all backgrounds carry with them Ella Jenkins’ legacy, rooted in her African American upbringing, yet filled with delight for the traditions of others.

Lonnie Bunch, Director  
National Museum of African American History and Culture



## Singing with Children *Ella Jenkins*

**T**his recording is very special to me because it helps me to re-experience and share a portion of my African American musical background. I love that the children involved in it are so relaxed and so full of fun and seriousness (when a song or chant required it). I enjoyed the sound of their voices and they seemed to enjoy one another's company. The children also related well to the adult singers and musicians (Rita and me). What I enjoyed most was the fact that they truly sound like children—children having a good time, exploring African American culture.

The children were from two different schools: Donoghue Elementary on the south side of Chicago and Horace Greely Elementary from the north side. “Cool Classics” is an after school program directed by Mara Tapp. She is very dedicated to the children and has a close relationship with their parents. That relationship aided the recording sessions running smoothly—with no discipline problems.

These are not children with a lot of choral experiences; they are simply children who enjoy singing and experimenting with new songs, sounds, and rhythms.

We did not rehearse a lot in the studio. We just explored many new and old ideas—trying out new techniques that eventually worked. I enjoyed the contrast of the songs and their voices—some of the children were quite young and had high-pitched voices, but the mixture of high, low, and in-between ranges made the singing comfortable for everyone.

Now let us all listen—and I hope everyone will be encouraged to sing along with us.

## Ella Jenkins: A Life of Song *Patricia Shehan Campbell*

**T**he legacy of Ella Jenkins is a musical one. Born in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1924, she spent her childhood on the south side of Chicago. Her parents had come up from the south, a part of the Great Migration of black southerners who sought economic freedom in the North. From the 1920s on into the 1940s, her Chicago neighborhood was rich with live music—singing games, rhymes and rhythms, blues, blues-flavored folk songs, and the spirituals and gospel music of the local churches. Ella was surrounded with song from her earliest years, and she grew up under the influence of her “Uncle Flood,” who played blues harmonica and introduced her to the music of T-Bone Walker, Memphis Slim, and Big Bill Broonzy. She also heard live the music of Cab Calloway and Count Basie, who played at The Regal Theater, an important music venue in Chicago’s Bronzeville neighborhood.

Ella couldn’t keep from singing, not in her youth and not in all the years she worked with children and the parents and teachers who raise them. She studied sociology, child psychology and recreation at San Francisco State University, and was drawn to the music of her own and other cultures. While working in youth camps and then as a YWCA program director for teens in the early 1950s, she led singing sessions that featured folk and traditional songs from her neighborhood, songs she was learning from Spanish-speaking friends, songs she happened across in Hebrew, Arabic, and French, and from India and the African continent, and songs she’d written. Ella had learned to play harmonica from her uncle, and could play an assortment of percussion instruments, along with the guitar and the ukulele. She could recall the rhythms she had internalized from her own child-



hood, and she set them in motion in her work with children at “the Y.” She was invited to appear on a Chicago public television show, and soon became the host of a program for children called “This is Rhythm.”

It was Ella’s decision to become a children’s singer, and thus she began her career as a professional touring musician, performing for school assemblies across the nation. She loved the children, and had the magic touch for inspiring their engagement in song and rhythm. Her singing was melodious, her percussive rhythms were crisp and clear, and her descriptions and directions for participatory musical experiences were always straightforward. Word spread about this childsong-singer who could make her way into groups of children and set them to singing and “rhythmicking.” Ella was composing and arranging songs and chants that she knew would entice and motivate singing in schools and preschools, and at teachers’ conferences and family concerts. She sought and succeeded in developing children’s musical repertoire and skill, even as they also gained in cultural understanding through the music they learned.

At Folkways Records in New York, Moses Asch was already committed to recording children’s music when he heard Ella’s songs, and he worked in 1957 to release her first album, *Call-and-Response: Rhythmic Group Singing*—a collection of eight chants created by Jenkins and inspired by West African traditions featuring conga drums, wood blocks, and other instruments typical of school classrooms. Ella’s strong and melodious voice carried the chants and songs with warmth and enthusiasm to her listeners, and directed them to a participatory experience in selected melodies and rhythms.

This was the beginning of Ella's legacy of 32 recordings of music for children over the next half-century, where one Folkways recording led to another, then to Smithsonian Folkways Recordings beginning in 1987, and then to CD reissues and anniversary (and *Cellabration*) collections. Her recorded repertoire resounds with nursery rhymes, bilingual songs, African American folk songs, and international songs, and nine recordings that pay tribute to "rhythm"—non-pitched rhythmic chants, rhythmic movement, and the rhythm instruments of classroom use. Some of her best-known tunes seeped into the standard school repertoire for children, too, so that children and their teachers have been singing for several generations the likes of "You'll Sing a Song and I'll Sing a Song" and "Did You Feed My Cow?" Ella also popularized African American heritage songs like "I'm On My Way to Canaan Land," "Hambone," "This Train," and "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands," bringing them into her recordings and live performances for children, their families, and their teachers.

Through all her engagements, Ella remains thoroughly at home with children. She has long valued their inherent expressive ability, and she recognized early on that children have something to sing about. She has helped others see that children's ways may be expressed through song, and that much of what they need to know of their language, heritage, and cultural concepts may be communicated to them through song. Her interest in children's learning their world is genuine, and her understanding of how they learn is apparent in her lively and engaging interaction with them—live and on her recordings. Ella's songs are replete with phrases short enough for children to remember and repeat.

She playfully works in call-and-response exchanges, the sort of classroom “first me and now you” repartee between effective teachers and their young students. She supplies songs that allow for children’s penchant to imitate and to sink into the musical matter when, verse by verse, as little as a single word will change while the melody stays precisely the same. She tells stories about her songs, too, giving them context and further meaning. Her songs beckon children to lift their voices in song, to share in the rhythms, and to join in a full and enthusiastic musical participation.

Ella Jenkins wears well the title of “First Lady of Children’s Music.” She has been a familiar voice—and face—on TV, including *Barney and Friends*, and *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*. She earned a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 2004, and her recordings have received numerous awards from the likes of *Parents’ Choice* and *ASCAP*. Ella continues with energy and verve well into her ninth decade as a leading singer of children’s songs, and as a rare model of the music that best suits the lives and learning styles of children.

Ella’s legacy is wrapped in a vast treasury of children’s music from near and far, and it reaches across cultural boundaries while also holding to the songful expressions of her own African American heritage. As she recalls her own childhood memories on Chicago’s south side, and her visits with grandparents still living in the rural south, Ella Jenkins sings and plays her way through some of the rich repertoire that have made her who she musically is. Ella’s legacy is her music and the child-centered ways in which she communicates it now, as she always has.

## Track Notes

*The following children appear throughout these songs: Rachel Adu-Gyamfi, Lawal Basirat, Alex Chavez, Melissa Leon, Orpheus McElrath-Bey Zanke, Samantha Montaleza, Nathaniel D. Nash, Angela Palmares, Eduardo Palmares, Taylor M. Ragland, Trinity M. Ragland, Emma Wall, Vera Wall, Martha Wondowassen*

## 1. Pick a Bale of Cotton

Ella Jenkins, baritone ukulele, vocals; Rita Ruby, guitar; Solos: Alex Chavez (Alabama); Eduardo Palmares (Mississippi); Trinity Ragland (Carolina); Emma Wall (Georgia), Vera Wall (Louisiana)

Ella tells the story of her family trip as a child, traveling from Chicago to just outside Grenada, Mississippi, where her mother's mother lived on a farm. There she was fascinated by the quick and nimble fingers of people who picked cotton, and she and her brother were sent out by her grandmother with a purple bag with shoulder straps to join the fieldworkers in their cotton-picking.

"Pick a Bale of Cotton" is a work song popularized by Lead Belly and Sonny Terry. Alone and together with the children, Ella sings, sometimes in call-and-response style, and individual children are featured solo singers in verses that name some of the southern states. The refrain, "Oh, Lordy, pick a bale of cotton," is joyful with the sound of a chorus of children.

*Oh, Lordy, pick a bale of cotton*

*Oh, Lordy, pick a bale a day*

*Pick-a pick-a pick-a pick, pick-a bale of cotton*

*Pick-a pick-a pick-a pick, pick-a bale a day.*

*Me and my friend can't pick a bale of cotton*

*Me and my friend can't pick a bale a day*

*Oh, Lordy...*

*I'm going to Louisiana, to pick a bale of cotton*

*I'm going to Louisiana, to pick a bale a day*

*Oh, Lordy...*

*I'm going to Georgia, to pick a bale of cotton*

*I'm going to Georgia, to pick a bale a day*

*Oh, Lordy...*

*I'm going to Carolina, to pick a bale of cotton*

*I'm going to Carolina, to pick a bale a day*

*Oh, Lordy...*

*I'm going to Mississippi, to pick a bale of cotton*

*I'm going to Mississippi, to pick a bale a day*

*Oh, Lordy...*

*I'm going to Alabama, to pick a bale of cotton*

*I'm going to Alabama, to pick a bale a day*

## 2. One Two Three O'Leary

Ella Jenkins, vocals; Rita Ruby, guitar; Solo: Angela Palmares (counting Spanish)

In Ella's childhood, this was a popular song in her Chicago neighborhood, sung in English from one to ten, and then reversing from ten to one. In this rendition, a child sings the numbers in Spanish. The call-and-response form comes shining through, with the group of singing children always at the ready for "O'Leary."

*One, two, three, O'Leary*

*Four, five, six, O'Leary*

*Seven, eight, nine, O'Leary*

*Ten, O'Leary postmaster.*

*Ten, nine, eight, O'Leary*

*Seven, six, five, O'Leary*

*Four, three, two, O'Leary*

*One, O'Leary postmaster.*

*Uno, dos, tres, O'Leary*

*Cuatro, cinco, seis, O'Leary*

*Siete, ocho, nueve, O'Leary*

*Diez, O'Leary postmaster.*

### 3. Calling a Square Dance

Ella Jenkins with children, call-and-response

One of many long-standing folk dances, the square dance is a social dance that features four couples in square formation who perform an array of traditional steps and figures. The modern western square dance features a caller to cue the dancers to a particular movement, such as to bow, alle-mande, or do-si-do. Ella sings the calls to a melody that may be familiar as a drill-tune, and the children join in, repeating her every line.

*Everybody up and bow  
Back in place and you know how  
Right hand 'round and back across  
Left hand 'round and don't get lost  
Both hands 'round and I'm the boss.*

*Do-si-do out to your right  
The other way 'round with all your might  
Back in place and now you stand  
Stamp your feet and clap your hands.*

### 4. Black Royalty

Ella Jenkins, drum, vocals

Drumming a constant rain of rhythms, Ella sets the tempo for a rhymed chant about African American musicians who comprise an elite group, a musical royalty of singers and players of blues, jazz, and popular music forms. From Earl “Fatha” Hines to Queen Latifah, Ella’s litany of performers honors leading musicians who comprise an African American heritage.

*We have a count  
We have a duke  
We have an earl  
We have an empress  
We have kings  
And we have queens.*

*We have Count Basie  
We have Duke Ellington  
We have Earl “Fatha” Hines  
We have Nat King Cole  
We have Queen Latifah  
We have the empress of blues, Bessie Smith*

*We have the king of rock and roll,*

*Little Richard*

*We have the queen of soul music,*

*Aretha Franklin*

*We have the queen of Motown, Diana Ross*

*We have the queen of gospel music,*

*Mahalia Jackson*

*We have the queen of jazz, Ella Fitzgerald*

*And we have the king of soul music,*

*James Brown.*

*Little Sally Walker*

*Kneeling in the water*

*Rise, Sally, rise*

*Wipe your weeping eyes.*

#### **VERSION 1:**

*Turn to the east*

*Turn to the west*

*Now turn to the one that you like the best.*

#### **VERSION 2:**

*Put your hand on your hip*

*Let your backbone slip*

*Aw, shake it to the east*

*And shake it to the west*

*Now shake it to the one that you love the best.*

## **5. Little Sally Walker**

Ella Jenkins with children, call-and-response

A popular singing game for children, “Little Sally Walker” is best known in the two versions that Ella chants, the second of which derives directly from her childhood memory of playing it on the south side of Chicago. Ella’s chant is immediately repeated by a lively group of children. The words invite children to move, and this they do, typically in a circle with “little Sally” in the center.

## 6. Cotton-Eyed Joe

Ella Jenkins, vocals; Rita Ruby, guitar, vocals

Aside from its popularity as a tune for a heel-and-toe dance in southern Texas called by the same name, “Cotton-Eyed Joe” predates the American Civil War and is commonly known throughout the American South. Ella sings it with a friend, who repeats her every phrase.

*Where did you come from?*

*Where did you go?*

*Where did you come from?*

*Oh, cotton-eyed Joe.*

*I come for to see you*

*I come for to sing*

*I come for to show you*

*My diamond ring.*

## 7. I Want to Be Ready

Ella Jenkins, vocals; Rita Ruby, guitar, vocals

Out of the loudspeaker of the church across the street from her childhood home, Ella heard “a lot of good music,” including the well-known spiritual, “I Want to Be Ready.” Here Ella sings, and is joined by a friend, in the response “Walking in Jerusalem just like John,” and in the refrain that slides in between the verses of this traditional spiritual.

*I want to be ready*

*I want to be ready*

*I want to be ready*

*Walking in Jerusalem just like John.*

*If you get there before I do*

*(Walking in Jerusalem just like John)*

*Tell all my friends I'm coming, too.*

*(Walking in Jerusalem just like John)*

*Never been to heaven but I've been told*

*(Walking in Jerusalem just like John)*

*The streets up there are paved with gold.*

*(Walking in Jerusalem just like John)*



## 8. He's Got the Whole World in His Hands

Ella Jenkins, vocals; Rita Ruby, guitar, vocals; children, vocals

Ella is joined by an exuberant group of young children in the performance of this spiritual, a favorite of gospel singer Mahalia Jackson. In the way of a teacher, Ella cues the children as to what is to come, calling out “little bitty baby,” “Martin Luther King,” and the names of various others who are the focus of the refrain that immediately follows.

*He's got the whole world in His hands  
He's got the whole world in His hands,  
He's got the whole world in His hands  
He's got the whole world in His hands.*

*He's got the little bitty baby in His hands...*

*He's got Martin Luther King in His hands...*

*He's got Rosa Parks in His hands...*

*He's got Sacajawea in His hands...*

*He's got John F. Kennedy in His hands...*

*He's got everybody here in His hands...*

## 9. Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

Ella Jenkins, vocals; Rita Ruby, guitar, vocals

Ella gently sings this spiritual, and a second singer joins in harmony with her. The Fisk Jubilee Singers first recorded it in 1909, and it is attributed to Wallis Willis, who also composed “Steal Away” prior to the Civil War. Both of these songs contain hidden lyrics that refer to freedom at the end of the journey by slaves traveling north by way of the Underground Railroad.

*Swing low, sweet chariot  
Comin' for to carry me home  
Swing low, sweet chariot  
Comin' for to carry me home.*

*I looked over Jordan and what did I see  
Comin' for to carry me home?  
A band of angels comin' after me  
Comin' for to carry me home.*

## 10. Rock My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham

Ella Jenkins, vocals; Rita Ruby, guitar, vocals;  
children, vocals

A song sung in churches and around campfires, “Rock My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham” takes on a special flavor with the sounds of Ella and the lively singing children. The repeating text makes learning it a simple task, and mention of ‘high,’ ‘low,’ and ‘wide’ inspire meaningful gestures while singing.

*Rock-a-my soul in the bosom of Abraham*  
*Rock-a-my soul in the bosom of Abraham*  
*Rock-a-my soul in the bosom of Abraham*  
*Oh, rock-a-my soul.*

*So high, you can't get over it*  
*So low, you can't get under it*  
*So wide, you can't get around it*  
*Oh, rock-a-my soul.*

## 11. Standing in the Need of Prayer

Ella Jenkins, vocals; Rita Ruby, guitar, vocals

Christianity established a strong presence among enslaved African Americans from their earliest years in the new world, and prayer continues to be an important component of African American identity today. Ella’s voice flows easily in this song, and the harmony is a fitting complement.

*It's me, it's me, oh Lord*  
*Standing in the need of prayer*  
*It's me, it's me, oh Lord*  
*Standing in the need of prayer.*

*Not my sister or my brother, but it's me, oh Lord*  
*Standing in the need of prayer*  
*Not my sister or my brother, but it's me, oh Lord*  
*Standing in the need of prayer.*

*Not my father or my mother, but it's me, oh Lord*  
*Standing in the need of prayer*  
*Not my father or my mother, but it's me, oh Lord*  
*Standing in the need of prayer.*

## 12. Amazing Grace

Rita Ruby, vocals

Whether sung by a massive choir or a single voice, “Amazing Grace” is probably the most famous of all folk hymns in the English language. It began as a Christian hymn of storm and conversion, and was embraced by African Americans as a spiritual with a universal message of the transformation of sin into grace and salvation.

*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me  
I once was lost, but now I'm found  
Was blind, but now I see.*

*'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear  
And grace my fears relieved  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed.*

*Through many dangers, toils and snares  
I have already come  
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far  
And grace will lead me home.*

*The Lord has promised good to me  
His word my faith secures  
He will my shield and portion be  
As long as life endures.*

## 13. Somebody's Talking about Freedom

Ella Jenkins, vocals; Rita Ruby, guitar, vocals

Like the American roots singer Odetta, Ella came of age in the 1950s and 1960s, singing folk songs and spirituals to her own guitar accompaniment. Odetta could belt out the blues, jazz, and pop standards, too, and performed for adults over a 50-year period, while Ella sang for children and their families. “Somebody's Talking about Freedom” was one of Odetta's favorites, and it is offered here by Ella in her soft, simple and contemplative style.

*Everywhere I go  
Everywhere I go, my Lord  
Everywhere I go  
Somebody's talkin' 'bout freedom.*

*Martin Luther King  
Martin Luther King, my Lord  
Martin Luther King  
Martin's talkin' 'bout freedom.*

*Mrs. Rosa Parks  
Mrs. Rosa Parks, my Lord  
Mrs. Rosa Parks  
Rosa's talkin' 'bout freedom.*

## 14. Sadie Complete

Ella Jenkins, Atesh Sonneborn, and Helen Lindsay,  
call-and-response vocals

Because of her brother Tom's experience as a Boy Scout, Ella added "Sadie Complete" to her collection of novelty songs early on, when he brought it home to her from camp. Ella sings it playfully, phrase by small phrase, each one echoed by two voices. Over the course of several repetitions, the tempo is increased and the singers' challenge is to squeeze in the final very long phrase that features all the days of the week.

*I know a lady  
Whose name is Sadie  
She has a daughter  
Whom I adore  
I used to court her  
(I mean her daughter)  
Every Monday (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday,  
Friday, Saturday, Sunday) afternoon at  
half past four.*

## 15. Uncle Flood and the Blues

Ella Jenkins, harmonica, vocals

Ella's Uncle Floyd Johnson, whom she called "Uncle Flood," played blues harmonica as relaxation from his work in the steel mills in Gary, Indiana. As she plays on harmonica the melody of "Little Johnny Brown," and sings the verse that begins "I Woke Up This Morning," Ella shares a musical memory of her uncle.

*I woke up this morning  
Blues all around my head  
I woke up this morning  
The blues all around my head  
I went to my breakfast  
The blues were in my bread.*

*I'm going to Chicago  
And I won't be back 'til fall  
I'm going to Chicago  
But I won't be back 'til fall  
If I get myself a good job  
I won't be back at all.*

## 16. Milk Cow Blues

Ella Jenkins, harmonica

Remembering her Uncle Flood, Ella plays a song on her harmonica that he called "Milk Cow Blues." She slides the melody up and down the scale and across the flattened sounds of blue notes.

## 17. Summertime

Ella Jenkins, vocals

This popular jazz standard was first featured as an aria in George Gershwin's 1935 opera, *Porgy and Bess*. The composer had intended it as a spiritual in the style of African American folk music of the period, and it has known multiple interpretations by the likes of Billie Holiday, Janis Joplin, and Nina Simone. Ella begins by speaking the words and then shifts to an expressive *capella* singing style.

*Summertime and the livin' is easy  
Fish are jumpin,' and the cotton is high.  
Your daddy's rich and your mommy's good-  
lookin'  
So hush, little baby, and don't you cry.  
  
One of these mornings you're gonna rise up  
singin'  
You're gonna spread your wings and take to  
the sky.  
But until that morning, nothing can harm you  
While Daddy and Mommy are standin' by.*

## 18. The Cuckoo

Ella Jenkins, harmonica, vocals; Rita Ruby, guitar

Ella's harmonica opens her poignant rendering of "The Cuckoo," a traditional English folk song with a long life among musicians in the Appalachian Mountains. Banjoist Clarence Ashley, along with Doc Watson and Jean Ritchie, are among those who have performed and recorded the song. Ella sings her own expressive variation, threading the sounds of the harmonica between the verses.

*Oh, the cuckoo, she's a pretty bird  
She sings as she flies  
But she never hollers cuckoo  
'Til the fourth day of July.*

*I'm gonna build me a little castle  
In the mountains so high  
So I can hear the cuckoo  
As she goes flying by.*

## 19. The Farmer in the Dell

Ella Jenkins, vocals; Rita Ruby, guitar, vocals

An age-old singing game that dates from the early 19th century, “The Farmer in the Dell” was brought to New York City by German immigrants. Converted to English, it was popular in American kindergartens through the middle of the 20th century. Ella and Rita Ruby sing the succession of characters in a farmer’s life, as they are selected to join the center of the circle in this singing game.

*The farmer in the dell*

*The farmer in the dell*

*Heigh-ho, the derry-o, the farmer in the dell.*

*The farmer takes a wife...*

*The wife takes the child...*

*The child takes the nurse...*

*The nurse takes the dog...*

*The dog takes the cat...*

*The cat takes the mouse...*

*The mouse takes the cheese...*

*The cheese stands alone.*

## 20. This is Your Year, Children

Ella Jenkins, vocals

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) established 1979 as the “International Year of the Child,” and numerous festivals, concerts, and programs on TV and radio celebrated every child’s right to a healthy life and a rock-solid education. Ella was in the thick of her school assemblies for children that year, and the verses she created are an expression of her life-long commitment to children in and through music.

*This is your year, children*

*Stand up and cheer, children*

*This is your year, children*

*Stand up and cheer.*

*We’re going to walk right by your side*

*And let our conscience be your guide*

*And from year to year*

*We’re going to keep you safe from fear.*

## 21. I'm On My Way to Canaan Land

Ella Jenkins, vocals; Rita Ruby, guitar, vocals; children, vocals

The short half-phrases of this traditional American spiritual-cum-Underground-Railroad song are sung first by Ella and then the children. The song dates from the 1800s, and has been called by various titles, including just “I’m on My Way” and “If You Go Don’t Hinder Me.” During the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, it became “Canaan,” and was changed to “Freedom,” although the melody remained the same.

*I'm on my way to Canaan Land*  
*I'm on my way to Canaan Land*  
*I'm on my way to Canaan Land*  
*Glory hallelujah, I'm on my way.*

*If you can't go, don't you hinder me*  
*If you can't go, don't you hinder me*  
*If you can't go, don't you hinder me*  
*Glory hallelujah, I'm on my way.*

## About the Author

Patricia Shehan Campbell is Professor of Music at the University of Washington, where she teaches courses at the interface of education and ethnomusicology. She is the author of numerous publications on children's music, music education, and methods of teaching the world's musical cultures. She has traveled extensively to lecture on the pedagogy of world music and children's musical culture.

## Ella Jenkins Recordings on Smithsonian Folkways

- A Long Time to Freedom.* 1970. SFW 45034  
*Adventures in Rhythm.* [1959], 1989. SFW 45007  
*African-American Folk Rhythms.* [1960], 1998. SFW 45003  
*And One and Two.* [1971], 1990. SFW 45016  
*Call and Response.* [1957], 1990. SFW 45030  
*cELLabration Live! A Tribute to Ella Jenkins.* (DVD) 2007. SFW 48007  
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[1974], 1996. SFW 45017

*Little Johnny Brown with Ella Jenkins and Girls and Boys  
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*Multi-Cultural Children's Songs.* 1995. SFW 45045

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*Nursery Rhymes: Rhyming & Remembering for Young  
Children & for Older Girls & Boys with Special  
Language Needs.* [1974], 1990. SFW 45019

*Play Your Instruments and Make a Pretty Sound.* [1968],  
1994. SFW 45018

*Rhythm and Game Songs for the Little Ones.* [1964],  
1991. SFW 45027

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*Seasons for Singing.* [1970], 1990. SFW 45031

*Sharing Cultures with Ella Jenkins and children from  
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SFW 45058

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*Songs and Rhythms from Near and Far.* [1964], 1997.  
SFW 45033

*Songs Children Love to Sing.* 1996. SFW 45042

*This is Rhythm.* [1981], 1994. SFW 45028

*This Is Your Year: Children Songs by Ella Jenkins.* 1978.  
Folkways Records FWFF 302

*This-A-Way, That-A-Way.* [1973], 1989. SFW 45002

*Travellin' with Ella Jenkins: A Bilingual Journey.* [1979],  
1989. SFW 45009

*We Are America's Children.* [1976], 1990. SFW 45006

*You'll Sing a Song and I'll Sing a Song.* [1955], 1989.  
SFW 45010

## Credits

Produced by Bernadelle Richter

Annotated by Patricia Shehan Campbell,

Lonnie Bunch, and Ella Jenkins

Cover photo by Karen Hoyt; inside front and back  
cover photos courtesy of Ella Jenkins; p. 6, back of  
booklet, and tray card by Bernadelle Richter

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Recording Company, Chicago, IL

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Mastered by Pete Reiniger

Executive producers: Daniel E. Sheehy and  
D. A. Sonneborn

Production manager: Mary Monseur

Editorial assistance by Chris Bamberger

Art direction, design & layout by Sonya Cohen Cramer

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archivist; Ronnie Simpkins, audio specialist; John  
Smith, sales and marketing; Stephanie Smith, archivist.

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Another thank-you goes to Chris Shepard (house engineer) who shared his studio, extending his hospitality to me and to others being recorded. We were never rushed or made to feel uncomfortable, and he showed warm compassion for the children.

I heartily extend thank-yous to Helen Lindsay, head customer service representative of Smithsonian Folkways Recordings and Atesh Sonneborn, Associate Director of Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, for their singing (on a moment's notice) on "Sadie Complete." Their voices blended beautifully!

It was very easy and pleasant to work with Rita Ruby. She always knew when to sing along and harmonize with me. Her voice and guitar were just the right blend.

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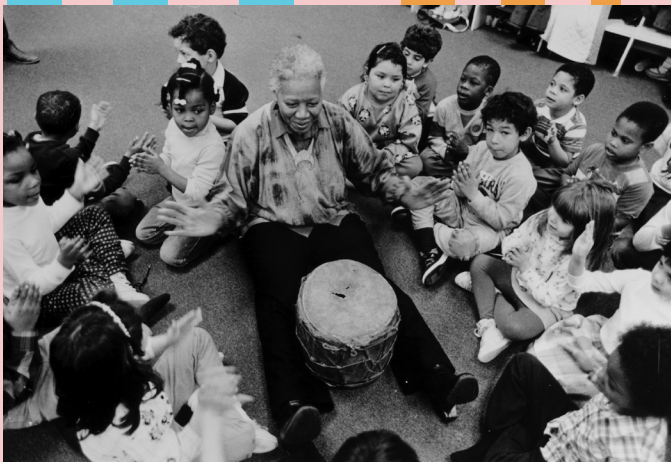
## About Smithsonian Folkways

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*Ella with pre-school class (1970s)*



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# ella jenkins a life of song

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2. One Two Three O’Leary 1:15
3. Calling a Square Dance :40
4. Black Royalty 1:45
5. Little Sally Walker 1:13
6. Cotton-Eyed Joe 1:19
7. I Want to Be Ready 1:37
8. He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands 1:47
9. Swing Low, Sweet Chariot 1:36
10. Rock My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham 1:15
11. Standing in the Need of Prayer 1:06
12. Amazing Grace 3:23
13. Somebody’s Talking About Freedom 1:49
14. Sadie Complete 2:14
15. Uncle Flood and the Blues 2:07
16. Milk Cow Blues :45
17. Summertime 2:20
18. The Cuckoo 2:04
19. The Farmer in the Dell 1:17
20. This is Your Year, Children :59
21. I’m On My Way to Canaan Land 1:35



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