folksongs of four continents

sung by Pete Seeger

with The Song Swappers

Pete Seeger, arranger and director

Bring Me a Little Water, Silvy  LOUISIANA  Ah, Si Mon Moine  QUEBEC
Bimini Gal  BAHAMAS  The Greenland Whalers  NEW ENGLAND
Mi Caballo Blanco  CHILE  Oleanna  NORWAY  Baniwa Yo  LIBERIA
Ragupati Ragava Rajah Ram  INDIA  Hey, Daroma  ISRAEL
The revival of interest in folksinging in America centered about the role of the solo ballad singer. Yet many of the world's greatest folk songs require more than one person to do them justice. How can fewer than two sing many of the beautiful songs of Latin America? And at least four are needed for the fine choral chants of Africa. A small chorus is needed to give the proper feeling for many Slavic songs. And a roomful must rock and swell when we sing gospel songs and spirituals like "When The Saints Go Marching In" or "We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder."

Why is it that when glee clubs and well-trained choruses attempt folk songs, the result is often less than successful? Perhaps it is that folk songs, born in fields and kitchens, feel ill at ease on the concert stage. More often, possibly, it is that arrangers and conductors lack close basic acquaintance with folk song choral idioms, techniques, and attitudes.

In the United States we have many wonderful traditions of folk music, brought here from every continent under the sun. Some of them, such as the Irish and the Scottish, are primarily solo. Others, stemming from Africa, and from Slavic nations, are primarily choral. In addition, new idioms have developed which borrow both from Europe and Africa. For example, through-
out the southern states we find a style of harmony which stresses fourths and fifths, rather than thirds and sixths, and a hard, flat, vocal tone which emphasizes their bare strength.

The songs in this record were selected with a view to encouraging group singing among lovers of folk music, amateur and professional. Even more, it is hoped that it can contribute to the slow rise in the standards of ‘community singing,’ beyond its present unison state (effective as that may be at times).

The Song Swappers is purposely composed of ‘average’ voices, of limited range and little training. Yet they agree with Bela Bartok, when he said that a folk song may be on as high a plane of art as a symphony . . . it is simply a shorter form, with a more limited range of expression. In this first collection of Folk Songs Of Four Continents The Song Swappers have explored just a few of the rich traditions that are the heritage of all.

BRING ME A LITTLE WATER, SILVY

A field cry, developed into a song and story by the great Negro folk singer, Huddie Ledbetter, from whom this arrangement was learned.

Bring me a little water, Silvy
Bring me a little water now,
Bring me a little water, Silvy
Every little once in a while,

Don’t you hear me calling?
Don’t you hear me now?
Don’t you hear me calling
Every little once in a while?

(3) Don’t you see me coming? (etc.)
(4) Don’t you hear me coming? (etc.)

(5) Bring it in a bucket, Silvy (etc.)
(6) Bring me a little water, Silvy (etc.)

AH! SI MON MOINE

One of the most popular French-Canadian folk songs. A girl sings: “Ah, if my top would spin for me (here, the words ‘top’ and ‘monk’ being the same in French, she goes on) I would give him - a hat, a coat (etc.)”. In the last verse she sings: “If he had not taken the vows of poverty, there are many other things I would have given him.”
THE GREENLAND WHALERS

This arrangement combines two distantly related versions of a whaling ballad. The prologue and epilogue were sung recently in the Bahaman Islands. The narrative verses are the New England version of the song.

When the whale gets strike and the line run down
And the whale makes a flunder with his tail,
And the boat capsizes, and I lost my darling man
No more, no more Greenland for you, brave boys -
No more, no more Greenland for you.

'Twas in eighteen hundred and fifty-three
On June the thirteenth day,
That our gallant ship her anchor weighed
And for Greenland sailed away, brave boys -
And for Greenland sailed away.

The lookout in the croasstrees stood
With a spy glass in his hand,
There's a whale, there's a whale, there's a whalefish, he cries
And she blows on every span, brave boys -
And she blows on every span.

We struck that whale and the line played out
But she gave a flunder with her tail,
And the boat capsized and four men were drowned
And we never caught that whale, brave boys -
And we never caught that whale.

"To lose a whale," our captain cried,
"It grieves my heart full sore,
But to lose four of my gallant men
It grieves me ten times more, brave boys -
It grieves me ten times more."

O, Greenland is a dreadful place
It's a land that's never green,
Where there's ice and snow
And the whalefishes blow
And daylight's seldom seen, brave boys -
And daylight's seldom seen.

When the whale gets strike and the line run down
And the whale makes a flunder with his tail,
And the boat capsizes, and I lost my darling man
No more, no more Greenland for you, brave boys -
No more, no more Greenland for you.

SIDE II

MI CABALLO BLANCO

From the pen of a popular contemporary Chilean songwriter, Francisco Floro del Campo.

Es mi caballo blanco
Como un apanacer,
Siempre juntos vamos
Es mi amigo mas fiel.

Refrain: Mi caballo, mi caballo,
Galopando va,
Mi caballo, mi caballo,
Se va y se va.

En alas de una dicha
Mi caballo corre,
En alas de una pena
El tambien me llevo.

Refrain

AI Taita Dios le pido
Y El lo sabe muy bien,
Si a so lado me llama
En me caballo ire.

(My white horse, he is
my most faithful friend, he is
always by my side.)

Refrain: (My horse, my horse, gallops away
My horse, my horse, away and away.)

(On wings of happiness my horse carries me;
on wings of pain also.)

Refrain

(I will ask God the Father
and He knows it very well,
if He calls me to his side
I will go on my white horse.)

OLEANNA

Around a hundred years ago, the great Norwegian violinist, Ole Bull, was touring in America, and he had the grand idea to start a Norwegian colony in Pennsylvania. But some sharpers sold him a lot of poor land - rocks and trees - and the first colonists nearly starved to death before the project was abandoned. It would all be forgotten now, but that someone in Norway wrote what became a tremendously popular song, satirizing the unrealistic dreams of Norwegians who had "America fever." There were originally thirty or more verses. These are translated by Peter Seeger from Norwegian.

Oh, to be in Oleana, that's where I'd like to be
Than be bound in Norway, and drag the chains
of slavery.

Refrain: Ol-e, ol-e-anna
Ol-e, ol-e-anna
Ol-e, ol-e, ol-e, ol-e, ol-e-anna.

In Oleana land is free, the wheat and corn just
plant themselves
Then grow four feet a day, while on your bed you
rest yourself.
Beer, sweet as Munchener, springs from the ground and flows away
The cows all like to milk themselves, and hens lay eggs ten times a day.
Little roasted piglets rush about the city streets
Inquiring so politely if a slice of ham you'd like to eat.
Aye, if you'd begin to live, to Oleanna you must go
The poorest wretch in Norway becomes a king in a year or so.
Oh, to be in Oleanna, that's where I'd like to be
Than be bound in Norway, to drag the chains of slavery.

BANUWA YO

Liberian students attending Western Reserve University in Ohio taught this to their classmates.
It seems that in the large (250, 000) city of Monrovia, an annual folk festival is held in the football stadium. This song is sung by the entire audience. The words mean, simply: "Don't cry, pretty little girl, don't cry."

Banuwa, banuwa, banuwa yo
Banuwa, banuwa, banuwa yo
A-la-no, nehniyo la-no
A-la-no, nehniyo la-no (repeat)
Neh ni a-la-no
Neh ni a-la-no (Be-ka-chu-wa)

RAGUPATI RAGAVA RAJAH RAM

This song was one of the favorites of Mahatma Gandhi. A devotional song, it says, "Who is Allah" (the Moslem God) ",, and who is Ram" (the Hindu God). They are simply two names for the same thing, and in other words, why are we fighting? Many different versions of the song are known in India. Some of them are slower than this; others have even more of a square dance tempo.

Ragupati ragava rajah Ram
Puhtita bhavana sitaram. (2)
Sitaram je sitaram
Puhtita bhavana sitaram. (2)
Lahubhe Allah tere nam
Tubho sunmuti de bhagawan. (2)
Ragupati ragava (etc.)

HEY, DAROMA

A popular folk tune of present day Israel.
Eilat is a town on the shores of the Red Sea.

The English verse is by Peter Seeger.

Ktasat daroma li-ver-shema
Ru-ach ba-midbar no-sha-vet
Shvil la a ra-vah ya-rad
La-ra-dya-nim ach mi-har-ta
El El Omer chish a-var-ta
Veh-hin-eh hu-chof Eilat.

Refrain: Hey, daroma
Hey daroma
Hey daroma, I'Elilat.

To the southward now we travel,
Through this land of rock and gravel,
Deserts 'round us do we see.
We'll bring life and grass and water.
Life to raise our sons and daughters.
Youth and life is what we bring.

Haufa bineh overet
Al haderech he doheret
Lamidbar hagodud sha-at
Jipim kanta'am karuach
Halochem rosho paruach
Kan bederech I'Elilat.

Refrain

Halochaym ahafe yeayyn
Al ha-arets histareya
Vel-cha-shov hayn kach katoov
Et ha-arets Beenish-ba-ti
Rock la-chem koolah mati
Mesny Dom vah-ad yom sooof.

Refrain

(translation of Refrain: "Hey, southward, hey southward to Eilat.!")

Credits:
Adaptation of "Bimini Gal" by Tom Geraci
Words and music of "Hey, Daroma" by Chaim Chefer
Adaptation and arrangement of "Silvo" by Huddie Ledbetter
Vocal arrangement of "Bi Mon Moine" as learned from La Jeune Equip. of Montreal
Arrangement of "The Greenland Whalers" by Peter Seeger