

The Ladies Go Dancing

Jil Chambless

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12. Gipsy Lass (Violet Jacob) 3:50
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Total Time = 52:49

Musicians

Jil Chambless: Vocals, flute

Brian McNeill: Fiddle, concertina, guitar, bouzouki, mandocello

Scooter Muse: Guitars, 5-string banjo

Lorne MacDougall: Highland pipes, Scottish small pipes

Produced by Brian McNeill, www.brianmcneill.co.uk

Engineered by Jimmy Nutt, www.jimmynutt.com, with assistance from Dixon Keel

Recorded, mixed, and mastered at The NuttHouse Recording Studio, Sheffield, AL

Additional recording at Kevock Digital, Lasswade, Scotland

Graphics: Mike McCracken, mcdesign@dbtech.net

Photos: Jacqueline France, Mack Barham, Dan Vogt, Angi Nutt, Hannah Elizabeth Fisher, & Amy Brady

Disc Art: Hand cut paper dolls by Cindy McCollum (Cinderee)

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Tracks:

1. When First I Came to Caledonia

Traditional, arr: J. Chambless, B. McNeill, & S. Muse

I first heard this sung by Norma Waterson on a Waterson : Carthy album and assumed Caledonia referred to Scotland. But the song actually comes from Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, and all of the place names (except Pennsylvania) are from that area. The Caledonia Coal Mines were near Glace Bay; Number 3 was one of the pits.

When First I came to Caledonia
I got loading at Number Three
And I got lodging at Donald Norman's
He had a daughter could make good tea

And it was me and my brother Charlie
Two bigger shavers you ne'er did see
We're spearing eels in the month of April
As starving slaves out on Scataree

I went to Norman's for a pair of brogans
A cake of soap and a pound of tea
But Norman said that I could not have them
Till fish got plenty on Scataree

So I went over to the Big Harbour
I only went for to see the spray
I spied a maid from Boularderie over
She looked to me like the Queen of May

If I had pen from Pennsylvania
If I had paper of purest white
If I had ink of the rosy morning
A true love letter to you I'd write

I wish I was on the deepest ocean
As far from land as once I could be
For sailing over the deepest ocean
A woman's love would never trouble me

I'd set my head to a cask of brandy
And it's a dandy I do declare
For when I'm drinking I'm seldom thinking
How I can gain that young lady fair

When first I came to Caledonia
I got loading at Number Three
And I got lodging at Donald Norman's
He had a daughter could make good tea

2. Follow the Heron (Karine Polwart)

Arr: J. Chambless, B. McNeill, & S. Muse

Ed Miller introduced me to the fabulous music and singing of Karine Polwart. Thanks Ed! He tells me that she wrote this song while up in the Shetland Islands. There's a pond in front of my house and a grey heron who fishes there every day. Every spring a white heron is also there for a while. This song makes me think of them.

The back of the winter is broken and light lingers long by the door
The seeds of the summer have spoken in gowans that bloom on the shore
By night and day we'll sport and we'll play and delight as the dawn dances over the bay
Sleep blows the breath of the morning away and we'll follow the heron home

In darkness we cradled our sorrow and stoked all our fires with fear
Now these bones that lie empty and hollow are ready for gladness to cheer

So long may you sing of your salmon and the snow-scented sands of your home
Where the North Wind delivers its sermon of ice and salt water and stone

3. ANACHIE GORDON (Child #239)

Traditional, arr: J. Chambless & B. McNeill

I can't remember when I first heard this song, but I'm sure it was Mary Black singing. Thanks to Mary Anne and Ricky Stone, Kevin, and Trudy for reminding me of this one – another tragic tale of parents marrying off their daughters for money.

Harking is bonnie and there lives my love
My heart lies on him and will not remove
It will not remove oh for all that I have done
I never will I forget me love, Anachie
For Anachie Gordon he's bonnie and he's rough
He'd entice any woman that ever he saw
He'd entice any woman and so he has done me
Oh I never will forget me love Anachie

Down came her father and he standing by the door
Saying Jeannie you're trying the tricks of a whore
You care nothing for a man who cares so very much for thee
You must marry Lord Sultan and leave Anachie
For Anachie Gordon he's barely but a man
Although he may be pretty but where are his lands
For the Sultan's lands are broad and his towers they run high
You must marry Lord Sultan and leave Anachie

With Anachie Gordon, I'd beg for my bread
But before I'll marry Sultan it's gold to my head
With gold to my head and gowns fringed to the knee
Still I'll die if I don't get me love Anachie
And you that are my parents to church you may me bring
But unto Lord Sultan I'll never bear a son
To a son or a daughter, I'll never bow my knee
And I'll die if I don't get me love, Anachie

Jeannie was married and from church she was brought home
And when she and her maidens so merry should have been
When she and her maidens so merry should have been
She went into her chamber and cried all alone

Come to bed now Jeannie me honey and my sweet
For to style you my mistress it would be so sweet
Be it mistress or Jeannie, it's all the same to me
But in your bed, Lord Sultan, I never will lie
And down came her father and he's spoken with renown
Saying you that are her maidens go loosen off her gowns
But she fell down to the floor so close down by his knee
Saying, Father, look, I'm dying for my love, Anachie

The day that Jeannie married was the day that Jeannie died
And the day that young Anachie came home on the tide
And down came her maidens all wringing of their hands
Saying, oh it's been so long you've spent, so long on the sands
Oh so long on the sands, so long on the flood
They have married your Jeannie and now she is dead

You that were her maidens, go take me by the hand
And take me to the chamber that my love she lies in
And he's kissed her cold lips 'til his heart has turned to stone
And he's died in the chamber that his love she lies in.

4. Newry Highwayman (trad.) / Lexy McAskill (J. McAskill)

Arr: J. Chambless, B. McNeill, S. Muse, & L. MacDougall

I learned this great story song from a Solas album. Brian suggested using this pipe tune for the breaks. Pipes and banjo – I love it!!

In Newry town I was bred and born
In Stephen's Green now I lie in scorn
I served my time at the saddler's trade
I always was a roving blade

At seventeen I took a wife
I loved her dearer than I loved my life
And so to keep her in fine array
I went out robbing on the king's highway

I never robbed a poor man yet
Nor lately caused anyone to fret
But I robbed lords and ladies bright
And carried the gold home to my heart's delight

I robbed Lord Golding, I do declare
And Lady Mansell up in Grosvenor's Square
I closed my shutters, bade them good night
And carried the gold home to my heart's delight

To Covent Garden I made my way
With my dear wife for to see a play
Lord Fielding's men there did me pursue
And I was taken by that cursed crew

My father cried oh my darling son
My wife she cried now I am undone
My mother tore her grey locks and cried
It's in the cradle I should have died

When I am dead and before my grave
A flashy funeral pray let me have
Six highwaymen for to carry me
Give them broad swords and sweet liberty

5. Dancing at Whitsun(John Austin Marshall) / The Battle of the Somme (Pipe Major William Laurie)

Arr: J. Chambless, B. McNeill, & L. MacDougall

I learned this song from my friend Trudy Callaghan. I never heard a recording of it until people told me about the great version by Tim Hart.

It's fifty long springtimes since she was a bride
But still you can see her at each Whitsuntide
In a dress of white linen and ribbons of green
As green as her memory of loving

The feet that were nimble tread carefully now
As gentle a measure as age will allow
By groves of white blossom and fields of young corn
Where once she was pledged to her true love

The fields they stand empty, the hedges grow free
No young men to tend them, their pastures ghostly
They've gone where the forests of oak trees did fall
They've gone to be wasted in battle

Down from the green farmlands and from their loved ones
Marched husbands and brothers and fathers and sons
There's a fine roll of honor where the maypole once stood
And the ladies go dancing at Whitsun

There's a straight row of houses in these later days
All covering the downs where the sheep used to graze
There's a field of red poppies and a wreath from the queen
But the ladies remember at Whitsun
And the ladies go dancing at Whitsun

6. Foxy Devil (Joe Dolan)

Arr: J. Chambless, B. McNeill, & S. Muse

I heard this song on two different recordings - one by Rosalie Sorrells, another by Christie Moore - and liked it right away.

When I was young and handy in my prime
In taverns I would sit and bide my time
It's there I met your company, I'd sit and drink my fill
It's there that you took hold of me, I think you've got me still

You're the foxy devil when you like
You set my mind at ease and then you strike
You set my head a-reelin', you make me shout and sing
My memory flees, I get no ease 'till I have another drink

You're the crafty rogue and that's for sure
And for your company there is no cure
I've squandered all my money and the best years of my life
All on your charms in spite of harm, in spite of peace and strife

Whiskey in the morning or at night
Gives strength to sing and dance, to love and fight
And so despite misfortune, I'll take you as you are
The best of friends and enemies, the best I've known by far

7. Independence Trail (Alasdair Fraser)/The Tuscaloosa Cardinal (Brian McNeill, MCPS / PRS)

Arr: J. Chambless, B. McNeill, & S. Muse

I always liked the first tune, which I heard on some recording of Alasdair with Chris Norman. Brian wrote the second tune while sitting with his wife Jacqueline on my back patio one morning, inspired by the local fauna. Thanks Brian!

8. Helen of Kirkconnel

Trad., arr: J. Chambless, B. McNeill, & S. Muse

I first heard this on the famous Kornog album. Such gruesome lyrics set in such a sweet melody.

I wish I was where Helen lies
For night and day on me she cries
I wish I was where Helen lies
On fair Kirkconnel Lea

Cursed be the heart that thought the thought
Cursed be the hand that fired the shot
When in my arms poor Helen dropped
And died for sake of me

So I looked down, my sword did draw
And I hacked him in pieces small
Oh I hacked him in pieces small
For her sake that died for me

I wish I was where Helen lies
For night and day on me she cries
Out of my bed she bids me rise
Says haste and come to me

Oh Helen, fair beyond compare
I'll make a garland of your hair
To bind my heart forever mair
On fair Kirkconnel Lea

I wish I was where Helen lies
For night and day on me she cries
And I am weary of the skies
On fair Kirkconnel Lea

9. Maid on the Shore

Trad., arr: J. Chambless, B. McNeill, & S. Muse

I learned this from a Solas recording. It's a great story of a woman who sings, and then steals, for her living – or maybe just for sport!

There once was a maid, she lived all alone
She lived all alone on the shore
No one could she find for to calm her sweet mind
She wandered alone on the shore

There was a brave captain who sailed a fine ship
The weather being steady and fair
I shall die, I shall die, this captain did cry
If I can't have that maid on the shore

After many persuasions they brought her on board
He seated her down in his chair oh
He invited her down to his cabin below
Farewell to all sorrow and care

Shall I sing you a song, this fair maid did cry
And the captain was weeping for joy
She sang it so sweetly, so soft and completely
She sang captain and sailors to sleep

Then she robbed them of jewels, she robbed them of wealth
She robbed them of costly fine fair
And the captain's broad sword she used as an oar
She rowed her way back to the shore

Now the men they were mad, the men they were sad
They were deeply sunk down in despair
To see her row away with her booty so gay
Her rings and her things and her fine fair

Now don't be so sad and sunk down in despair
For you should have known me before
I sang you to sleep and I robbed you of wealth
Now again I'm a maid on the shore

10. Travelers' Moon (Brian McNeill, MCPS / PRS)

Arr: J. Chambless, B. McNeill, & S. Muse

Thanks, Brian, for suggesting this song for me.

He sat by the window and waited a while for the moon of the travelers to rise
Though the shadow of parting lay over her smile a love light shone deep in her eyes
She knew the heart of the traveler is torn whenever the time comes to part
For the road is the rose and the road is the thorn that stems from the traveler's heart

I would sing amber and I would sing gold
I'd sing of my true love to have and to hold
And if there's a wee bird to show me the tune
I would sing the road homeward by the light of the travelers' moon

The road never questions, the road never lies, the road's neither woman nor wife
But the road knows the light in a traveler's eyes that means he's a lover for life
She's a ribbon of grey through the gold of the cornfield, a ribbon of brown through the trees
By the light of the moon, she's a ribbon of silver that binds my true love to me

So if you should chance to be taking the air when a traveling man passes by
You can see that he's bound for god only knows where by the far distant look in his eye
Walk out beside him a mile of the way, help him to carry his load
For he'll ne'er be at ease till the end of the day when the moon rises over the road

11. Mistress (Nancy Nicholson)

Arr: J. Chambless, B. McNeill, & S. Muse

I learned this from an Ed Miller recording. I think of it every time I see the new moon.

Her eyes are dark her breast is deep that steals a wedded woman's sleep
Who tempts good men into her keep and will not let them be
The moon upon her shoulder gleams, the siren of the ocean streams
Who whispers in a seaman's dreams, "No mistress have but me."

My father was a skeely skipper, kind as he was brave
He claimed his friends the tide and wind; his brother was the wave
His vessel she was klinker built, stout and strong and sound
But they were taken by the sea. No man nor boat was found.

My brother joined a merchant man to travel foreign lands
He smiled and said don't worry as my mother wrung her hands
But in shorter than a twelve month she wrung her handkerchief
For her Billy was washed overboard ta'en by the brazen sea

I wouldn't court a sailing lad a welder is my man
But he's gone to the oil rigs and here in dread I stand
For I see an ancient omen, a sign of dual and care
I see the new moon sailing with the old moon in her arms

12. Gipsy Lass (words by Violet Jacob; tune by Dave Whyte)

Arr: J. Chambless & B. McNeill

Ed Miller first introduced me to the work of Violet Jacob, a poet from Angus who makes great use of the Scots language in her poetry. This tune was written by Dave Whyte, as I heard it on a Jean Redpath recording. (That's where I also got the translations given below.) I feel that the dialect is important for this song, so I choose to sing it as it was written rather than trying to translate it. Hopefully no one will be too bothered by my Alabama accent on these Scots words.

The road I traivel's no' for thee, Sandy, Sandy
The weird that's mine ye maunna drie, Sandy dear, my lad destiny; must not endure
Ye mauna link your life wi' shame, nor think tae tak' intae your hame must not
A gipsy lass withoot a name, Sandy dear, my lad

I never kent wha faithered me, Sandy, Sandy knew
For mither's been wi' twa or three, Sandy dear, my lad
The gipsy hert maun ever range, an' sae it's mebbe no' that strange heart
That I, like her, am fond o' change, Sandy dear, my lad

I couldna tholl a hoose o' stane, Sandy, Sandy bear, endure
For me the bracken's up the lane, Sandy dear, my lad
Your een sae bonnie blue an' clear wad tine their cheery look I fear eyes; would lose
Afore we had been wad a year, Sandy dear, my lad wed, married

An' tho' I lo'e ye weel the noo, Sandy, Sandy just now
I doobt I'd gi'e ye cause tae rue, Sandy dear my lad
Sae gang your ways. They'll ne'er be mine, for you and me that kissed maun twine must part
(But oh I'm wae my lad to tine, Sandy dear, my lad) grieved

13. Aragon Mill (Si Kahn, Joe Hill Music, ASCAP)

Arr: J. Chambless, B. McNeill, & S. Muse

A song about a mill town once bustling and now almost dead. Henri's Notions used to do this, but slow and sad. We decided to go more upbeat and angry for this version. Thanks to Kevin Nicholson for reminding me of this one.

At the east end of town, at the foot of the hill
Stands a chimney so tall that says Aragon Mill
But there's no smoke at all coming out of the stack
The mill has shut down and it ain't coming back

And the only tune I hear is the sound of the wind
As it blows through the town, weave and spin, weave and spin

Well I'm too old to work and I'm too young to die
Tell me where shall we go, my old man and I
There's no children at all in the narrow empty streets
The mill has closed down, it's so quiet I can't sleep

Yes the mill has shut down, it's the only life I know
Tell me where will I go, tell me where will I go

Thanks:

To my family - Dan, Sophie, and Jack Vogt: for your love and continued support and for allowing me this indulgence.

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