



London '69

Phil Sney-Brockhaus



Chorley Wakes Folk Festival, Lancashire (1976)  
Kate McGarrigle, Chaim Tannenbaum

### Notes on Chaim Tannenbaum by Loudon Wainwright III

In 1971 Kate McGarrigle and I made the mistake of having our honeymoon in Copenhagen, that “friendly old girl of a town,” where the sheer number of Nordic beauties on street corners waiting for lights to change had a profoundly unsettling effect on me. There was a screaming, drunken, crying fight, and my bride fled, first to Amsterdam, and then on to England. Of course, at that point, I was consumed with guilt and remorse and desperately wanted her back, and after a long distance phone call to her sister (or maybe it was mine), I found out that Kate was staying in London, at 29 Percy Street, with her friend Chaim Tannenbaum. I’d been hearing about “Tannenbaum,” as she always called him, for some time but had never actually met the guy. He and Kate had become pals at McGill in the mid-1960s, and it was their love of music, especially the playing and singing of it, that had drawn them together. But Chaim was no folkie bohemian. No, he had a rather exotic gig at University College, London,

pursuing a Ph.D. in something called the Philosophy of Mathematics, which sounded pretty scary to me since I had always been completely confused and ultimately defeated by any sort of math whatsoever. In the 11th grade I got a 6% on a final algebra exam. That's 6% out of a 100%. As for Philosophy, I wasn't even quite sure what it was.

When I showed up to retrieve my runaway wife at Chaim's flat, I was expecting him to play the role of the aggressively protective older brother. I fantasized about getting a punch in the nose or, at the very least, a forceful "fuck off," but instead, the tall, rail-thin, slightly balding but strikingly handsome young man was quite pleasant to me. He seemed mostly embarrassed about the situation, and right away it became clear that he was rooting for a reconciliation, ready, I suppose, to have his broken-hearted friend off his hands for a while.

Happily (though sadly not for ever after), Kate and I got back together, and we went off to live in a bedsit

in Kennington. Pretty soon after that the three of us banded together and formed a banjo, guitar, and fiddle trio, and on Saturdays, for the fun of it, we would busk in the Portobello Road, belting out bluegrass and old-timey hits like “Roll in My Sweet Baby’s Arms” and “If I Lose” for antiquing tourists.

Chaim and I became “fast” friends, which is to say close and permanent ones. When Kate and I finally split for good, in 1976, he somehow managed to remain loyal to us both, always willing to defend the one against the other. In the mid-1980s, I moved back to London for a while, and that’s when Tannenbaum and I really got tight. Along with “Fiddlin’” Alan Dunn (an accordion player) we toured all over the UK and many a night I crashed in the basement bedroom of the house where Chaim and his wife Susannah lived, in Chesterton Rd. I became a kind of foster son to the Tannenbaums and occasionally they referred to me by my boyhood nickname “Loudie.” Apart from my siblings, the only other living people who get away with that are Sally

and Van Dyke Parks. For more than 30 years, Chaim has been my closest musical cohort and confidant, whether on the road, in the recording studio, or just kibbitzing from the sidelines. He's been a tough but fair and perceptive critic of my work, and in a way I consider him my musical conscience.

How do you explain the fact that Tannenbaum's chops are still all there, preserved, as it were, in some strange aspic? Maybe it's because, due to ambivalence, fear, mathematical philosophy, or sheer stubbornness, he's managed to not have a career in the music business, thus avoiding all the wear and tear that goes with that territory. I have never in my life come across a less ambitious, yet more talented singer, player, and songwriter than Chaim. However, I don't mean to imply that he's some sort of nonchalant dilettante. He rigorously works at it, whether "it" is practicing Charlie Parker solos on the saxophone for hours on end or trekking three miles downtown to find just the right bridge for his five-string banjo. And being the exacting, precise

professional that he is, the guy is an absolute nightmare at soundchecks.

For many years Chaim Tannenbaum has been bugged by his friends and loved ones to step out and shine, which is to say, make a record, his own record. Now, thanks to the good graces, determination, and solid sense of his producer, Dick Connette, that has finally come to pass. It's a wonderful thing.

- New York City, January 2016

**Farther Along 2:01**

(Reverend W.A. Fletcher)

*"Farther along we'll know all about it." Alas. The time of revelation is forever somewhere else, in the future, farther along.*

Chaim Tannenbaum *guitar, vocal*

**Ain't No More Cane on the Brazos 2:43**

(Traditional)

*There's a persistent belief that Leadbelly recorded this somewhere. I wouldn't know about that. I learned it from a much less august source, Lonnie Donegan.*

Chaim Tannenbaum *piano, lead vocal, back vocal*

Margaret Glaspy *back vocal*

Loudon Wainwright III *back vocal*

David Mansfield *violin, slide guitar*

Dick Connette *bass drum, snare drum, tambourine*

**Coal Man Blues** 2:55

(Traditional)

*For the most part, anyone who knows this song knows it from a recording by Peg Leg Howell. In my part of the world, it was made famous by John Knowles.*

Chaim Tannenbaum *guitar, vocal, whistling*

David Mansfield *violin*

**Moonshiner** 2:19

(Traditional)

*Try as I may, with the exception of a single line, I can't find a source for this song. It seems an absurd thing for me to have written, however, so I don't believe I did.*

Chaim Tannenbaum *vocal*

Dick Connette *harmonium*

**Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit 2:28**

(Traditional)

*There was a time in my life during which people stayed away from my home out of fear that I would make them listen yet again to Luther Magby sing this song.*

Chaim Tannenbaum *vocal*

C.J. Camerieri *trumpet*

Will Holshouser *accordion*

Matt Munisteri *guitar*

Marcus Rojas *tuba*

Ben Perowsky *taps*

Dick Connette *bass drum, cymbals*

**Mama's Angel Child 2:56**

(Traditional)

*From a recording by Sweet Papa Stovepipe.*

Chaim Tannenbaum *guitar, mandolin-banjo, vocal*

David Mansfield *violin, slide guitar*

Tim Lüntzel *bass*



Convocation Hall, Toronto (1978)  
Anna McGarrigle, Serge Bougie, Chaim Tannenbaum



The Bottom Line, New  
Joel Zifkin, Anna McGarrigle, Chaim Tannenbaum, Rufus



New York City (1999)  
Rufus Wainwright, Loudon Wainwright III, Kate McGarrigle

**London, Longing for Home** 9:49

(Chaim Tannenbaum)

*Homesickness is not a condition that can be resolved by  
going home.*

Chaim Tannenbaum *guitar, vocal*

Will Holshouser *accordion* Robert DeBellis *clarinet*

Wayne du Maine *cornet* C.J. Camerieri *flugelhorn*

Marcus Rojas *euphonium*

Arrangement by David Mansfield

**Business Girls** 2:08

(John Betjeman/Erik Satie/Tom Gilbert)

*"The quickest way to start a punch-up between two  
British literary critics is to ask them what they think of  
the poems of Sir John Betjeman."*

*(Phillip Larkin)*

Chaim Tannenbaum *guitar, vocal*

Dick Connette *melody piano*

Will Holshouser *bass/chord piano*

C.J. Camerieri *french horn*

David Mansfield *violin*

Erik Friedlander *cello*

**Brooklyn 1955** 4:45

(Chaim Tannenbaum)

*Just so you know - I was a Yankees fan.*

Chaim Tannenbaum *guitar, vocal*

**It's Only a Paper Moon** 1:30

(E. Y. Harburg/Billy Rose/Harold Arlen)

Chaim Tannenbaum *rhythm guitar, vocal*

Will Holshouser *accordion*

Matt Munisteri *lead guitar*

Marcus Rojas *tuba*

**(Talk to Me of) Mendocino** 2:54

(Kate McGarrigle)

*I met Kate McGarrigle when I was sixteen years old.  
She remained a treasured friend, until her death, six  
years ago.*

Chaim Tannenbaum *banjo, vocal*

Loudon Wainwright III *back vocal*

Will Holshouser *accordion*

Matt Munisteri *guitar*

Marcus Rojas *tuba*

**Belfast Louis Falls in Love** 8:01

(Chaim Tannenbaum)

Chaim Tannenbaum *guitar, vocal*

Will Holshouser *accordion*

Erik Friedlander *cello*

Marcus Rojas *tuba*

String arrangement by Erik Friedlander

**Paddy Doyle** 0:58

(Traditional)

*From the wonderful recording of A.L. Lloyd and  
Ewan MacColl.*

Chaim Tannenbaum *vocal*

Loudon Wainwright III *vocal*



Country Music Hall of Fame, Nashville (2009)  
Chaim Tannenbaum, Loudon Wainwright III

## Notes on Chaim Tannenbaum by Joe Boyd

One way to describe Chaim Tannenbaum's voice is by listing the great singers whose echoes one can detect: Josef Rosenblatt, John Roberts, Bill Monroe and Pete Seeger. A pretty arcane list, I admit, but Chaim's voice actually does seem to blend Eastern European cantorial, Bahamian fishermen's gospel, Appalachian "high-lonesome," and the impassioned melodic side of his early hero, America's most famous political balladeer.

I first encountered the remarkable instrument that is Chaim's voice in 1976, when he provided the high harmonies for the first Kate & Anna McGarrigle record. Hearing Chaim, Kate and Anna blend in the studio and on stage was a sublime experience that has stuck in my memory for 40 years. Harmonies have been his calling card; in recent years, audiences have seen him step out from the shadows to take a solo turn in Loudon Wainwright's Grammy-winning tribute to Charlie Poole, in a series of

tributes to his late beloved friend Kate and in some recently curated concerts in the UK.

At Celtic Connections' tribute to Ewan MacColl in early 2015, it was generally agreed that Chaim and Norma Waterson stole the show. It would have been expected of Norma, who has been stealing shows since the Sixties. But for many hearing Chaim's lived-in yet angelic tenor for the first time, his luminous vocals came as shock. Who is this guy? And where has he been all these years?

He's been teaching logic in Montreal, that's where, occasionally popping up to enliven tours of his old friends the McGarrigles and Loudon Wainwright. And, more recently, enriching the occasional retrospective that recognizes Chaim's ability to bring the best out of a good song and bring down the house with a great one.

I, meanwhile, have never ceased pining for the Chaim Tannenbaum record that might have been



Studio Morin Heights, Québec (1976)  
Kate McGarrigle, Dane Lanken, Chaim Tannenbaum,  
Anna McGarrigle, Peter Weldon

in the 1990s on my label, Hannibal, but which ran afoul of an ever-narrowing corporate brief that was clipping my A&R wings. So God bless Dick Connette and StorySound Records.

Unlike to some of those audiences, Chaim's brilliance comes as no surprise to me. What is startling is the discovery that Chaim is a songwriter of great power and poignancy. Like those audiences in London, Glasgow, New York and Nashville (where an elderly devotee of old-time country gospel singing expressed astonishment that she could have been so moved by the singing of "a Jew-boy"), the purchasers of this recording are in for a treat.

- London, February 2016

Produced by Dick Connette

Recorded September - December 2015 at 2nd Story Sound, NYC

Engineered by Alex Venguer, Scott Lehrer, and Jeff Cook  
except "Farther Along," 1993 London home recording by  
Chaim Tannenbaum

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Bottom Line photo by Arthur Pollock

Country Music Hall of Fame photo by Donn Jones

Studio Morin Heights photo by Herbert Aronoff

## Notes on the songs by Chaim Tannenbaum

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“(Talk to Me of) Mendocino” published by Garden Court  
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“London, Longing for Home,” “Brooklyn 1955,” and  
“Belfast Louis Falls in Love” published by Seasplitter Music  
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“Farther Along” is Public Domain and, as adapted and  
arranged by Chaim Tannenbaum, published by Seasplitter  
Music (ASCAP)

All other songs are Traditional and, as adapted  
and arranged by Chaim Tannenbaum, published by  
Seasplitter Music (ASCAP)

Board of Directors - Loudon Wainwright III



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