



AMERICAN FOLK FANTASIES
Written and Arranged by Dick Connette

Young Berlin 98. To things immortal time
can do no wrong. and that which never is for old -
fashion must be





You are all dying, every man, every woman and child is dying; from the instant you are born you begin to die and the calendar is your executioner. That, no man can change or hope to change. It is nature's law that there is no escape from the individual great finale on the mighty stage of life where each of you are destined to play your farewell performance. Ponder well my words then ask yourselves the questions: Is there a logical course to pursue? Is there some way you can delay, and perhaps for years, that final moment before your name is written down by a bony hand in the cold diary of death? Of course there is, Ladies and Gentlemen, and that is why I am here.

- T. P. Kelley's *Medicine Show* pitch

TOO SAD FOR THE PUBLIC VOL. 1 - OYSTERS ICE CREAM LEMONADE

Dick Connette *harmonium, piano, vocals, bass, bass drum*

featuring

Suzzy Roche *vocals*

Ana Egge *vocals, guitar*

Rachelle Garniez *vocals*

Gabriel Kahane *vocals, piano, harmonium*

with

Jay Berliner *guitar*

Steve Elson *saxophones, flute*

Erik Friedlander *cello*

Rayna Gellert *fiddle*

Chaim Tannenbaum *harmonica*

and

Jeff Berman *lap dulcimer, drum set, hand percussion*

Ralph Farris *violin*

Kevin Kehrberg *bass*

Kevin Kuhn *guitar, banjo*

Dorothy Lawson *cello*

Dan Levine *trombone, bass*

Tim Lüntzel *bass*

Rob Moose *violin, viola, guitar*

Todd Reynolds *violin*

Mary Rowell *violin*

Bill Ruyle *hammer dulcimer, hand percussion*

Alex Sopp *flute, piccolo*

Black River Falls

We stand here with reluctant feet
Near where the brook and river meet.
Who reaps the wheat with sickle keen
And cuts the flowers in between?

(chorus)

It's the same old man, working at the mill.
The wheel goes around of its own free will.
With a hand in the hopper and the other in the sack,
The ladies step forward and the gents fall back.

The fiddler at the Shanghai House
Won't sing until the bottle's out
And the only song he ever plays
Is "Oysters, Ice Cream, Lemonade."

The men go out to bucket shops,
Get drunk and fight - it never stops.
They stumble home, where, like as not,
There's arsenic in the coffee pot.

Dr. White has put down roots
With his Gold Cure Institute.
It costs exactly what you make
To take the cure that doesn't take.

(chorus)

Miss Sweeney took herself to task
To cure her craze for breaking glass.
She's since exhausted her reserves
And takes cocaine to calm her nerves.

A. J. Dayton's got a scheme
To build a miracle machine.
He's filed plans and patent claims -
Most folks 'round here think he's insane.

A Ph.D. has lately come
With his sanitarium.
Magnetic healing, if you please,
Would raise the dead, if they believed.

The reason why I fly by night
Is 'cause I've lost my heart's delight.
The one I love, the one I choose,
Has all forsworn my yes-I-do's.

(chorus)

The deaf girl had a little shack
Just across the railroad track.
She never saw the narrow gauge
And that took care of her old age.

Alexander Gardapic
Went to his local drinkery.
He ordered gin with soda side,
Asked for the time, sat down and died.

The funeral home just opened shop.
They've even started selling stock.
It's riding high on market trends
And paying monthly dividends.

Lost my partner. What'll I do?
It's a little red wagon, painted blue.
Sweet William knows that's how it goes -
The briar always with the rose.

(chorus)

A bachelor courted spinster twins.
He loved the one that didn't love him
And so they all just stayed good friends -
True to each other 'til the end.

The Werner brothers used to swear
There's nothing they could not repair.
So we all we paid our money down.
They made a fortune and left town.

A hotel room, the break of day,
Black and white and shades of gray,
A shaft of light and dancing dust -
My darling what's to come of us?





We must treat people as if they are real, because who knows? Perhaps they are.

– *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

All Along

There's times in life when nature seems to slip a cog and go
Just a-rattling down creation like an ocean overflow.
When the electric light of heaven seems to settle on the spot,
That is when you get confused between what is and what is not.

Upon certain stipulations all fairy tales depend -
After happily ever after, it always says the end
And none but the disenchanting can be ever truly free.
If this isn't any fairy tale, it sometimes seems to be.

(chorus)

The first, the last, the always,
The always and forever never gone.
All along the ever changing, never changing,
Never changing in the ever all along.

There are days when you don't even sneeze and still receive a blessing.
It's not Christmas or Thanksgiving. It's not March the thirty-second.
It's when life's the stuff of dreams and dreams the life of stuff,
So don't you worry what it means, 'cause maybe singing it's enough.

(chorus)

The Flying Zacchini was asked what's it like
getting shot out of a cannon three times a day.
"It's like anything else," he replied.

Kind of Dumb

I hardly ever leave the house,
But yesterday I got locked out.
Forgot my keys, went out the door -
I don't know what I was going for.
It's real, one more time - I'm too dumb to live.

I tried to get back with my old girlfriend.
She fooled me once and then once again.
Like I put bad milk back in the 'frigerator
And hope somehow it's gonna get good later.
It's real, one more time - I'm too dumb to live.

If I'm not shortsighted, it's 'cause I'm blind.
Sometimes I think I think too much sometimes.
I try to keep my options open, but
My mind is like a steel trap - shut.
It's real, one more time - I'm too dumb to live.

I'll go and make a mistake and then I'll make it again.
I know I'll learn my lesson, but I don't know when.
When it comes to dumb I outdo Heinz -
I got more than 57 kinds.
It's real, one more time - I'm too dumb to live.

The major 3rd got a gun, the minor 7th got a knife.
It used to be my living - now I do it for my life.
How it all adds up, I got no way of knowing.
I'll never understand it and that keeps me going.
It's real, one more time - I'm too dumb to live.

I wrote the book on ignorance - I didn't need help
And this song just about wrote itself.
What's it all about? What it is. What it is.
It's got a little rhythm and it goes like this.
It's real, one more time ...



Old Alabama

You can stomp down the flowers all around my grave,
But they'll rise and bloom again.
Yes, they'll rise and bloom again.

I'm going away to a world unknown.
I'm worried now I won't be long.
Too sad, too sad for the public.
A dark cloud's coming - hope I don't get caught.
Beat it, Bill - Alabama country rock.

Two lane blacktop, railroad track,
I won't grow weak from holding back.
Too sad, too sad for the public.
The line I draw's the line I'll never cross.
Beat it, Bill - Alabama country rock.

Trying to find some peace on earth
Can put you in a world of hurt.
Too sad, too sad for the public.
I asked for trouble, trouble's what I got.
Beat it, Bill - Alabama country rock.

The road to wisdom leads through pain.
Well, nothing ventured, nothing gained.
Too sad, too sad for the public.
The mind in chains is on the auction block.
Beat it, Bill - Alabama country rock

I may be crazy, might be right.
A leaky roof lets in the light.
Too sad, too sad for the public.
The time of night is chiming on my watch.
Beat it, Bill - Alabama country rock.

If you trust and never doubt,
Your kingdom come will find you out.
Too sad, too sad for the public.
The rock of ages only cleft for some.
Beat it, Bill, up until the angels come.

You can stomp down the flowers all around my grave,
But they'll rise and bloom again.
Yes, they'll rise and bloom again.

Someday they're gonna write a blues song just for fighters.
It'll be for slow guitar, soft trumpet, and a bell.

- Sonny Liston





We write what we are not. It is not merely that we fail to live up to our best ideas but that our best ideas, and the tone that goes with them, tend to be the opposite of our natural temperament. It's not so much that we are drawn to things that frighten us as that we are drawn to things that we can think of as things – as subjects that exist outside the boundaries of all that is just the way we are. It is not merely that we do not live up to our ideals but that we cannot, since our ideals are exactly the part of us that we do not instantly identify as just part of life.

–Adam Gopnik, *The New Yorker*

Orphée in Opelousas

Let me begin with how it ends,
With what reflection can comprehend.
When I look back, it's the second act,
A fiction fashioned after the fact.
I gave it all I have to give,
So you can visit where I must live.

The night, it was dark and the wind blew cold.
The breakers on the beach were a wonder to behold.
I scanned the starless sky and, much to my alarm,
I saw the new moon with old moon in her arms.

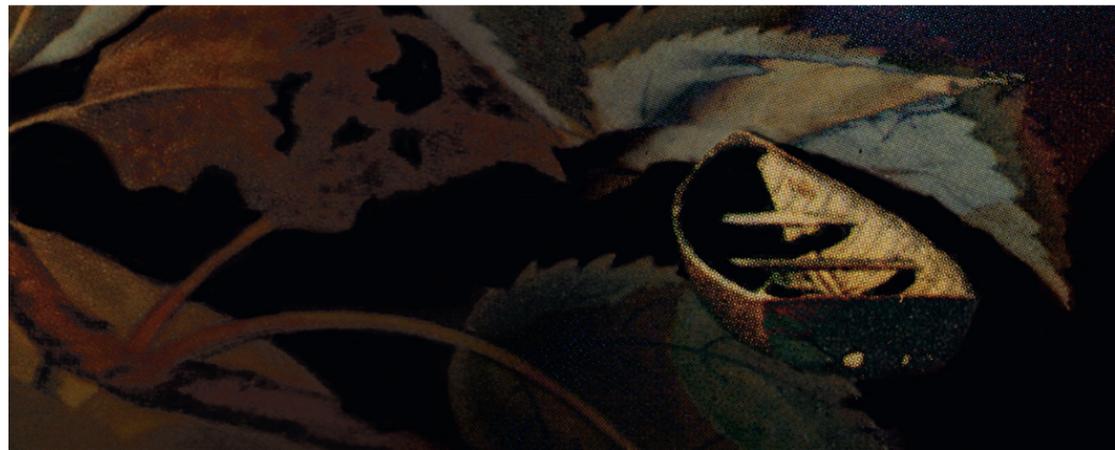
I made my coat a boat and took my love across the sea.
We saw the lilies bloom on the coast of Italy.
We made ourselves a home on an acre of land
Between the ocean and the salt sea sand.

Wise men shook their heads and called me a fool, and worse.
In matters of the heart, we were only amateurs.
It was both the most and the least of my fears –
The reckoning of the reckless – not to end up in tears.

What have I become, now that she has gone before?
Once I was in love – now I'm just a troubadour.
The sunset on the ocean looks like eternity.
My song will ride the river, 'til the river finds the sea.

Out on the ocean a green tree grows
Where milk from springs, like a river, rolls.
The sun and moon dance out on the lee
And honey flows from the hawthorn tree.

Where cockleshells turned to silver bells,
Or ever Eve and old Adam fell.
It snows red roses and rains white wine,
Where my true lover's forever mine.





Workshopping the new songs (l-r) Rayna Gellert, Nathaniel Smith, Chaim Tannenbaum, Kevin Kehrberg

SONG NOTES

Liberty City

Chuck Brown used Jaco Pastorius' "Liberty City" in his song "Eye Candy." We recorded our version during the "Chuck Baby" sessions, featuring the soulfully psychedelic cello stylings of Erik Friedlander.

Black River Falls

Most of the stories told in this song came from Michael Lesy's *Wisconsin Death Trip*, which I recommend unreservedly to your attention, as well as anything else he turns his attention to. The shape of the melody and the banjo/cello part I got from Karen Dalton's version of "Same Old Man." I feel the same way about her as I do about Lesy.

All Along

Starts with the opening move from "When de Corn Pone's Hot," recorded in 1928 by the Old South Quartette, and goes on from there ...

He's a Bad Boy

Some years ago, I was trying to give John Cohen (if you don't know him, look him up) an improving taste of some music outside his accustomed folk fare, and played him this Goffin/King number. I had the temerity to think I should/could stretch him out some. He immediately identified the song as a take on "Stagger Lee." Well, dammit, he was right, of course, and I got schooled. Turns out Gerry Goffin was shook by the folk scare, primarily as embodied by Bob Dylan, and this was, evidently, an attempt to incorporate. King gave it a sort of Belafonte island/calypso vibe, hardly *au courant*, at best only recently *passé*, and part of that whole 50/60s pop folk radio roots movement, you know - The Weavers, The Limeliters, The Kingston Trio, Peter, Paul & Mary - that crowd. Whatever their intentions, Gerry and Carole reverted to (spectacular) form, and turned a bad man ballad into an expression of lovestruck teenage defiance. For my version, I put Lloyd Price front and back, and Frank Hutchinson in the middle, trying to keep the faith with whatever the fuck is going on here.

Kind of Dumb

Why hasn't this song been written already? Maybe it has. The template was Charley Patton's "Shake It and Break It." The model was me. The ending owes a debt to Margaret Glaspy's "Memory Street." In his song, Patton delivers to the listener a series of encouragements as to just what they can do with "it," including (besides shaking and breaking) snatching, grabbing, hanging on the wall, throwing out the window and catching 'fore it falls. Incongruously (superficially belying that giddy insouciance) Charley choruses on a more personal note - "I ain't got nobody here but me and myself/I stay blue all the time, awww, when the sun goes down." Hard to be sure exactly what to make of it. The recording is old and lo-fi by today's standards. Plus Patton didn't seem overly concerned with enunciation. Blues researchers in the 60s were excited to discover that Son House had actually heard Patton perform, and hoped that he could provide some elucidation. Imagine their disappointment when he told them, "A lot of Charley's words ... you can be sitting right under him ... you can't hardly understand him." Cripple Clarence Lofton covered "Shake It and Break It" under the title "I Don't Know," which is more to the point of my song.

Old Alabama

William Moore was a black ragtime guitar player. His 1928 "Old Country Rock," which provides the backbone of this song, consists of bluesy fingerpicking behind a series of spoken imperatives, e.g. "Old folks rock, young folks rock, boys rock, girls rock, sister Ernestine, show your pappy how you rock." Out of nowhere, in the middle, he says, "Too sad, I mean, too sad for the public." William Moore was also the name of a white postal worker who, in 1963, undertook a one-man freedom walk to deliver a letter, a plea for equal rights, to the Governor of Mississippi. He started in Georgia, and got as far as Alabama, where he was gunned down by a man who didn't share his point of view. Also there's a sideways melodic quote from the American trad. ballad "Willie Moore." The opening and closing lyric come from Tommy Jarrell's "Raleigh and Spencer."

Young Loves to Love

A medley of Van Morrison's "Brown Eyed Girl" and "Sweet Thing," looking back on the albums *Blowin' Your Mind* and *Astral Weeks*, and realizing there wasn't much, there was a lot between them. Jay Berliner, the original guitarist on *Astral Weeks*, is featured.

Orphée in Opelousas

My retelling of the Orpheus legend, set in Louisiana. The two basic melodies come from Cajun country field recordings - "Sept Ans sur Mer" by the Hoffpauir sisters (John and Alan Lomax/1934) and "Aux Natchitoches" by Bee Deshotels (Dr. Harry Oster/1956-1959). I also slid in some Amédé Ardoin and Dennis McGee for the sake of *bon temps*.

Chuck Baby

Chuck Brown was the biggest name (and deservedly so) in the Washington D.C. go-go music scene. Some time in the 80s he played a little club called Tramps in downtown New York. They got that go-go going and didn't quit. But I mean didn't quit. I danced for the whole first set and crawled out the door on my hands and knees. Chuck Brown died in 2012 and these sessions were put together as a tribute to him. It's hard to give sufficient credit for "Chuck Baby." Besides Chuck Brown and John Bonham, it couldn't have happened without Alex Venguer, Steve Elson, and Bill Ruyle. I also had a hand, and a duck call.

Then Go Home

The words are by a two-year-old downtown New Yorker named Clarence as published in Brian-Sutton-Smith's *The Folkstories of Children* (1981). The piano accompaniment is from Erik Satie's *Les Trois Valses Distinguées du Précieux Dégouté* (1914).

You can't steal a gift. Bird gave the world his music,
and if you can hear it, you can have it.

- Dizzy Gillespie on the question
of stealing from Charlie Parker

PROJECT NOTES

Most of the material was developed and first performed during a September 2016 residency at The Yard on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, David White (Artistic Director/Executive Producer) aiding and abetting. Thanks to all Yard staff who left us alone to do our work, except when we needed them, which was pretty much all the time when we weren't putting the show together, and sometimes even especially then.

I can't sing for shit. Suzzy Roche, Ana Egge, Rachelle Garniez, and Gabriel Kahane take what I write and make it a song. Without them, there's just about nothing there.

I've been working with engineer Alex Venguer for almost 10 years. I rely on him in ways that maybe you can't imagine. But if you could, you would give him all the credit he deserves for how this sounds.

Tim Lüntzel provided assistance on "Liberty City" way beyond his pay grade.



Engineered by Alex Venguer, Jeff Cook
Recorded at 2nd Story Sound, NYC
Mixed by Alex Venguer at ootermind Studios, Brooklyn
Mastered by Oscar Zambrano at Zampol Productions, NYC

Design by Nathan Golub
Notes by Dick Connette

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One night around 1960 - about the time that songs he had written for the Drifters, Elvis Presley, and Dion and the Belmonts were all topping the charts - Doc Pomus was having dinner with his young *protégé*, an ambitious oddball named Phil Spector. They were, as usual, at the Spindletop steakhouse, in the Hotel Forrest in Midtown Manhattan. Pomus was residing there and holding court nightly in the lobby. Out of the corner of his eye, Spector saw someone in a raincoat and a fedora walk up behind a man at an adjacent table and rapidly fire three shots into his head. Spector refused to set foot in the Spindletop again. Doc nudged him back: "The place is incredible, right, the salads, I mean how about the service in that restaurant? Babe, you always got to look at the upside." But what about the guy who got murdered, Spector protested. "Well," Doc explained in a bit of philosophy that Spector never forgot, "the murder - that's the downside of the restaurant, you understand, that's the downside."

- from Alan Light's New York Times review of Alex Halberstadt's biography of Doc Pomus, Lonely Avenue

TOO SAD FOR THE PUBLIC

VOL. 1 - OYSTERS ICE CREAM LEMONADE

- 1 Prelude *0:36*
- 2 Liberty City (Part 1) *1:35*
- 3 Black River Falls ♦ *6:13*
- 4 All Along ♦ *2:28*
- 5 Liberty City (Part 2) *1:44*
- 6 He's a Bad Boy ♦ *5:08*
- 7 Kind of Dumb ♣ *2:49*
- 8 Liberty City (Part 3) *1:31*
- 9 Old Alabama ♥ *5:05*
- 10 Young Loves to Love ♥ *5:58*
- 11 Orphée in Opelousas ♣ *4:57*
- 12 Chuck Baby *12:13*
- 13 Then Go Home ♦ *2:14*

vocals by

- ♦ Suzzy Roche
- ♣ Rachelle Garniez
- ♥ Ana Egge
- ♣ Gabriel Kahane

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