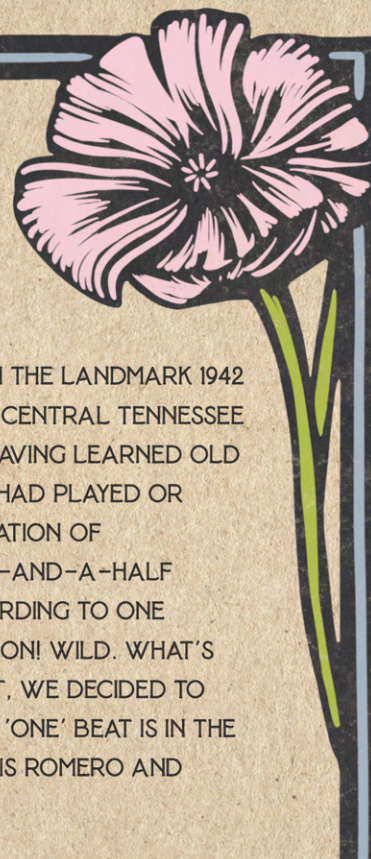


TALL POPPY STRING BAND

LINER NOTES



1. OLD COW DIED (02:50)

SO HERE'S WHAT HAPPENED. I FIRST ENCOUNTERED THIS TUNE WHEN LISTENING THROUGH THE LANDMARK 1942 RECORDINGS OF NATHAN FRAZIER AND FRANK PATTERSON, TWO BLACK MUSICIANS FROM CENTRAL TENNESSEE WHO WERE BROUGHT TOGETHER AND RECORDED BY THE MUSICOLOGIST JOHN WORK III. HAVING LEARNED OLD COW DIED DIRECTLY FROM THIS SOURCE RECORDING, I LATER SOUGHT OUT OTHERS WHO HAD PLAYED OR RECORDED IT, AND TO MY SURPRISE FOUND AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT RHYTHMIC INTERPRETATION OF THE TUNE - ALL THE SAME NOTES IN THE SAME ORDER, BUT FEELING THE 'ONE' BEAT ONE-AND-A-HALF BEATS LATER THAN WHERE I FELT IT. AS A RESULT, NOTES THAT WERE ON THE BEAT ACCORDING TO ONE INTERPRETATION END UP AS SYNCOPATED NOTES ACCORDING TO THE OTHER INTERPRETATION! WILD. WHAT'S AMAZING IS THAT THE TUNE TOTALLY WORKS EITHER WAY, AND IN SUPPORT OF THAT POINT, WE DECIDED TO RECORD THE TUNE IN THE WAY I'D INITIALLY HEARD IT. (TO HEAR AN EXAMPLE WHERE THE 'ONE' BEAT IS IN THE OTHER PLACE, CHECK OUT THE GREAT VERSION ON BACK UP AND PUSH BY JASON & PHARIS ROMERO AND FRIENDS, FEATURING DAVE MOUNT FIDDLING.)

TL;DR I LEARNED THE TUNE WRONG AND MADE MY BANDMATES PLAY IT THE WRONG WAY TOO.

-MARK HARRIS

TUNINGS:

CAMERON - BDGBD

GEORGE - GDAE

MARK - DGDGBE

2. CUMBERLAND GAP (03:46)

I LEARNED THIS TUNE FROM JANN GLIDER AT THE WEEKLY JAM IN PHILLY WHEN I WAS FIRST LEARNING OLD TIME MUSIC. IT TOOK PLACE ON THE SECOND FLOOR OF GOJJO, AN ETHIOPIAN BAR THAT SPECIALIZED IN ETHIOPIAN CHEESESTEAKS. JANN TAUGHT ME A LOT OF MY FIRST TUNES AND THIS ONE REALLY BROKE MY BRAIN. HE GOT IT FROM THE FLY BY NIGHT STRING BAND, WHO GOT IT FROM POSSUM TROT STRING BAND. MY MEMORY OF THE TUNE HAS WARPED A BIT THROUGHOUT THE YEARS. FOR THIS RECORDING, WE COMBINED THE GRUMPIEST FLOATING VERSES I COULD FIND WITH THE ALBUM'S MOST SENTIMENTAL ARRANGEMENT. WHEN I PLAY THIS CUMBERLAND GAP, I THINK ABOUT THE PEOPLE FROM THE TOWN WHERE I LEARNED IT. PHILLY IS A CITY FULL OF RUDE SWEETHEARTS, AND I MISS THEM DEARLY.

-CAMERON DEWHITT

TUNINGS:

CAMERON - ADADE

GEORGE - GDAD

MARK - EADGBE

3. THE COO COO (03:08)

THIS VERSION OF THE COO COO/CUCKOO COMES FROM A 1974 SOLO RECORDING OF JOHN SNIPES, A BLACK BANJO PLAYER FROM NORTH CAROLINA. AS SNIPES PLAYS IT, THE TUNE IS ALMOST UNRECOGNIZABLE WHEN COMPARED TO THE 'STANDARD' OLD TIME VERSION OFTEN ASSOCIATED WITH CLARENCE ASHLEY. IT'S RIFE WITH AMBIGUITY, BOTH OF THE TONAL (WHAT KEY ARE WE IN?) AND RHYTHMIC (WHAT METER IS THIS?) KINDS, AND IT'S DIFFICULT TO TELL WHEN ONE SECTION ENDS AND THE NEXT BEGINS. I WAS CURIOUS TO SEE WHAT DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THE TUNE COULD BE BROUGHT OUT IN A GROUP CONTEXT, AND THOUGH SOME INTERPRETIVE CHOICES HAD TO BE MADE (SUCH AS HOW TO STANDARDIZE THE CROOKED PHRASE LENGTHS), WE TRIED TO HONOR THE TUNE'S UNIQUELY ENIGMATIC CHARACTER.

-MARK HARRIS

TUNINGS:

CAMERON - GDGBD

GEORGE - GDAE

MARK - DGDGBD (CAPO 5TH FRET)

4. PRIDE OF AMERICA (03:20)

THIS ONE IS FROM THE HAMBLER COLLECTION, A SET OF "VIOLIN TUNES, POPULAR DURING THE EARLY 1800'S AS PLAYED BY DAVID RUSSEL HAMBLER (1809-1893) AND HIS SON WILLIAMSON (1846-1980) ARRANGED AND COPIED BY A. PORTER HAMBLER (1875-1950) SON OF WILLIAMSON. THE HAMBLERS MOVED FROM CUMBERLAND GAP, VIRGINIA, TO BROWN COUNTY, INDIANA IN 1857. NO AUDIO RECORDINGS EXIST, ONLY A BOOK OF TRANSCRIPTIONS AND, AS FAR AS I KNOW, THE ONLY AVAILABLE DIGITIZATION OF THE MANUSCRIPT IS A LOW-RES SCAN OF CHRISTIAN WIG'S DOG-EARED, MARGIN-FILLED, HIGHLY EDITORIALIZED COPY. IN THE MARGINS OF PRIDE OF AMERICA, CHRISTIAN WRITES, "WEIRD! I RECOMMEND PLAYING AS IF IN A MINOR OR RATHER A MODAL. USE A C NATURAL AND G NATURAL INSTEAD OF SHARPS. VERY STRANGE B PART BUT IT WORKS. SORT OF. SO - WE DID JUST THAT.

AFTER INTRODUCING THE NAME OF THIS TUNE AT SHOWS, I LIKE TO REFER TO IT AS "A RORSCHACH TEST OF A TITLE. WE HAVE NO WAY OF KNOWING WHETHER IT WAS ORIGINALLY INTENDED TO BE JINGOISTIC, CONDEMNING, OR GAY. YOU DECIDE!

SHOUT OUT TO DAN MACDONALD, AKA SPITZER SPACE TELESCOPE, FOR INTRODUCING ME TO THIS TUNE AT A BARBEQUE IN CHICAGO BEFORE THE MIDWEST SING & STOMP.

-CAMERON DEWHITT

TUNINGS:

CAMERON - AEAC#E

GEORGE - GDAE

MARK - EADGBE

5. THE TRAIN THAT CARRIED MY MAN FROM TOWN (02:37)

THE FIRST VERSION I HEARD OF THE TRAIN THAT CARRIED MY GIRL FROM TOWN WAS DOC WATSON SINGING WITH SOLO FINGERSTYLE GUITAR. I FELL IN LOVE WITH THE RECORDING AND GOT TO WORK ARRANGING - SO QUICKLY THAT I NEGLECTED TO HAVE MY SENSIBILITIES OFFENDED (WHICH I'M USUALLY QUICK TO DO). AFTER BOMBARDING MY HOUSEHOLD FOR A FEW WEEKS, MY PARTNER BECCA SAID, "I REALLY DISLIKE THAT SONG. IT'S MISOGYNISTIC. MY HEART SANK. I IMMEDIATELY KNEW THEY WERE RIGHT. I STOPPED PLAYING IT FOR A FEW YEARS UNTIL IT OCCURRED TO ME THAT WITH A SIMPLE PRONOUN CHANGE, I COULD STILL DEPICT THE INTERESTING IDEAS IN THE ORIGINAL WITHOUT ENDORSING ITS MISOGYNY.

THIS IS A SONG ABOUT THE INTERSECTION OF FINANCIAL AND SEXUAL CAPITAL, MALE FRAGILITY, AND HOW ECONOMIC SYSTEMS DISRUPT PLEASURE AND CONNECTION BY SIMULTANEOUSLY MANDATING AND DISCOURAGING FIDELITY. OH, AND WE THREW IN SOME FUN TRAIN NOISES.

-CAMERON DEWHITT

TUNINGS:

CAMERON - EBEG#B

GEORGE - GDAE

MARK - EADGBE (CAPO 4TH FRET)

6. LAST OF SIZEMORE (03:42)

I FIRST HEARD THIS TUNE FROM THE PLAYING OF KENTUCKY FIDDLER HIRAM STAMPER WHILE I WAS ON AN INTERNET DEEP DIVE TO FIND INFORMATION AND RECORDINGS OF HIS UNIQUE FIDDLING. HIRAM'S PLAYING IS JAUNTY, ROUGH AND ENIGMATIC. IT TOOK A LONG TIME TO PIECE TOGETHER MY INTERPRETATION OF WHAT HE WAS PLAYING ON THE 1977 RECORDING COLLECTED BY BRUCE GREENE. IT'S JUST SUCH AN INTERESTING PUZZLE, ESPECIALLY THE SIGNATURE HALF BEAT IN THE THIRD PART THAT FLIPS THE DOWN BEAT TO AN OFF BEAT. A TRULY WILD MUSICAL MOMENT TO EXPERIENCE WHEN ONE IS CAUGHT UNAWARE. CAMERON AND MARK SO BEAUTIFULLY MATCHED THE MOOD AND LONESOME ROLLING TONE OF THIS TUNE WITH THE FIDDLE ON THE RECORDING: IT'S ONE OF MY FAVORITES TO PLAY WITH THEM.

-GEORGE JACKSON

TUNINGS:

CAMERON - GCGCD

GEORGE - GCGD

MARK - DCGGBE

7. SPRINGTIME OF LIFE (05:32)

THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE OLA BELLE REED SONGS. IN ADDITION TO WRITING A MELODY THAT'S DECEPTIVELY COUNTERINTUITIVE AND COMPLEX, REED DRAWS ON HER DEEP IMAGINATIVE EMPATHY TO TELL A TRAGIC STORY OF DESIRE, BETRAYAL, AND THE PRESSURE TO FORFEIT PLEASURE AND FULFILLMENT TO SATISFY NORMATIVE VALUES. THE LAST VERSE IS PARTICULARLY DENSE WITH MEANING: IT COULD BE READ AS A DISMISSAL OF NAIVE, YOUNG LOVE, BUT I SEE IT AS AN EXPRESSION OF GRIEF. THE RELATIONSHIP SHE DESCRIBES IS YET ONE MORE CASUALTY OF CULTURAL DEMANDS.

WHILE I RELATE TO THE ORIGINAL FEMININE PERSPECTIVE IN SPRINGTIME OF LIFE, I CHOSE TO SING IT IN MY MOST MASCULINE REGISTER. WHEN WE PERFORM THIS SONG, I IMAGINE A SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIP, WHICH I THINK ONLY ITALICIZES AND UNDERLINES THE THEMES ALREADY IN THE LYRICS. IN HER LIFE AS A SONGWRITER AND BALLAD SINGER, REED FREELY SANG FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF MULTIPLE GENDERS AND SHE HAD A HISTORY OF DEEP CONNECTIONS WITH QUEER FOLKS. SPRINGTIME OF LIFE CALLED FOR A QUEER RETELLING, AND I LIKE TO THINK THAT REED WOULD APPROVE.

-CAMERON DEWHITT

TUNINGS:

CAMERON - BEAC#E

GEORGE - GDAE

MARK - EADGBE (CAPO 2ND FRET)

8. KISS ME QUICK MY PAPA'S A COMING (02:48)

BRUCE GREENE COLLECTED THIS TUNE FROM THE KENTUCKY FIDDLER SAMMIE WALKER AND SUBSEQUENTLY RECORDED IT ON HIS FIVE MILES OF ELLUM WOOD RECORD, WHICH IS WHERE I FIRST CAME ACROSS IT. THE TITLE IS DELICIOUSLY TO THE POINT, AND WE TRIED OUR BEST TO INFUSE OUR VERSION WITH ALL URGENT NAUGHTINESS WE COULD MUSTER. I'M REALLY PLEASED WITH THE TEXTURE WE GOT ON THIS ONE - I PARTICULARLY LOVE THE COMBINATION OF GEORGE'S HIGH, SKITTERY FIDDLE LINES AND THE OMINOUS PLUNK OF CAMERON'S LOW-TUNED TACKHEAD.

-MARK HARRIS

TUNINGS:

CAMERON - AAEAB

GEORGE - AEAE

MARK - EADGBE

9. GONNA MAKE A KILLING (03:56)

THIS STARTED OUT AS AN INSTRUMENTAL TUNE OF MINE, WHICH BOUNCED AROUND IN MY HEAD FOR A WHILE BEFORE I REALIZED IT COULD WORK WITH SUNG VERSES. THE WORDS CAME TOGETHER SOMETIME AROUND MID-2018 - I WAS GETTING READY TO MOVE FROM PHILLY TO FORT COLLINS, COLORADO, AND I BEGAN TO NOTICE THE FAMILIAR VOICE IN THE BACK OF MY HEAD THAT SAID "MAYBE THIS IS THE CHANCE THAT WILL FIX EVERYTHING?" (RELATABLE) I FOUND IT FUN TO WRITE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOMEONE WHO'S FULLY AND OBVIOUSLY IN THE GRIP OF THIS SORT OF MAGICAL THINKING, WHO WE WOULD PROBABLY FEEL MORE SORRY FOR IF THEY WEREN'T BEING SUCH A JERK ABOUT IT.

-MARK HARRIS

TUNINGS:

CAMERON - ADGBD

GEORGE - GDAD

MARK - EADGBE

10. GO AWAY PHARAOH (03:55)

I FIRST HEARD A VERSION OF THIS TUNE AT A JAM SESSION AND WAS COMPLETELY BLINDSIDED BY THE STRANGE AND UNINTUITIVE PHRASES AND CHORDS. I WENT HOME AND IMMEDIATELY SET ABOUT FINDING WHERE THIS TUNE CAME FROM AND CAME ACROSS KENTUCKY FIDDLER DARLEY FULKS FOR THE FIRST TIME. HIS PLAYING HAS ENTRANCED ME EVER SINCE. FULKS OFTEN AUDIBLY STAMPS EVERY BEAT WITH HIS FOOT WHICH MAKES HIS CONSISTENTLY ODD PHRASE LENGTHS ALL THE MORE PRECISE AND STRANGE - ALMOST AS IF HE COUNTS EVERYTHING IN BAR LENGTHS OF ONES. ALL THE RECORDINGS I'VE HEARD OF FULKS PLAYING ARE SOLO WITH HIS FIDDLE TUNED LOW. IN OUR RECORDING, I'M RECORDING DOWN A FULL MINOR THIRD MAKING THE G POSITION AN E. AS A BAND WE LOVE TO SPECULATE ON THE NAME OF THIS TUNE, IS IT A COMMAND OR REQUEST? "GO AWAY, PHARAOH! - WAS IT MISHEARD, WAS IT PERHAPS "GONE AWAY FAR- OR SOME SUCH? PERHAPS IT'S A BIBLICAL REFERENCE? OR WAS FULKS A TIME TRAVELING EGYPTIAN? WE'LL NEVER KNOW.

-GEORGE JACKSON

TUNINGS:

CAMERON - EBEG#B

GEORGE - EBF#C#

MARK - EADGBE (CAPO 4TH FRET)

11. MAN OF CONSTANT SORROW (05:25)

I WAS SURPRISED TO SEE THIS POPULAR SONG LISTED ON A DATABASE OF WEST VIRGINIA FIDDLER ED HALEY'S RECORDINGS. I HAD TO HAVE A LISTEN. I WAS THEN FURTHER SURPRISED TO HEAR THIS MOODY, MINOR, LAMENTING AND MOURNFUL MELODY THAT WAS SO DIFFERENT FROM THE BLUEGRASS VERSIONS WE'VE ALL COME TO KNOW, AND YET SO FITTING FOR THE CONTENT OF THE SONG. MARK PAIRED MY INTERPRETATION OF HALEY'S INSTRUMENTAL MELODY WITH A BEAUTIFUL FINGER PICKED ARRANGEMENT AND WE PUT THE WORDS BACK WITH THE MINOR MELODY TO BRING THIS VERSION TO LIFE.

-GEORGE JACKSON

TUNINGS:

CAMERON - GDGBD

GEORGE - GDAE

MARK - EADGBE

12. KENTUCKY WINDER (03:16)

JOHN SALTER'S TUNES ARE SOME OF THE MOST CATCHY AND WELL KNOWN TUNES IN THE OLD TIME COMMUNITY THESE DAYS AND WE JUST LOVE THIS FUN G TUNE THAT SO PERFECTLY LIVES UP TO ITS NAME THROUGH ITS TWISTY AND SHORTENED PHRASES. THIS TUNE WAS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR US AS A BAND TO EXPERIMENT WITH TWISTING OUR THREE MELODY DRIVEN INSTRUMENTAL SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT, LIKE THREE VINES GROWING ALONG THE SAME BRANCH, EACH WITH SLIGHTLY TOGETHER PATHS TO THE SAME ENDS: THERE'S SOME FUN INTERPLAY IN THIS ONE.

-GEORGE JACKSON

TUNINGS:

CAMERON - GDGBD

GEORGE - GDAE

MARK - DGDGBE

