

Called Away

About the Songs:

From Buffalo To Troy – There are numerous Erie Canal Songs, and there is evidence that a similar one to this appeared on the Vaudeville stage during the 1880s. The melody is one that shows up in various songs from Bigler's Crew on the Great Lakes to Juber Ju in the Lumber Camps of the Adirondacks and Maine, and even the East coast of England. One of the wonderful things, for me, about the Canal songs is how tongue-in-cheek they are. The irony of the Canalers equating themselves with the deep-sea sailors, and facing the same dangers, always provides a good chuckle.

Chris – vocals, guitar, banjo, washboard John- vocals, fiddle, mandolin
Curt – hammered dulcimer Dan- vocals

Orion-Dan Berggren is one of the most genuine human beings I know, and I am honored to call him my friend. This was one of his first songs I heard from him, and one that talked to me in so many ways. Orion was the first constellation I was able to identify, and when I left the “city thrills,” the solace I found in the woods began to speak to me. Thanks Dan.

Chris – vocals, guitar John - fiddle

Hard Times of Old England - One from the amazing collection of songs sung by the Copper Family of Rottingdean, England. This was a song sung by Ron Copper, probably dates back to the Napoleonic Wars, proving once again, that the more things change...

Chris - vocals

Staines Morris/Rochdale Coconut Dance- These are two Morris Dance tunes; one well known, and the other less so, at least to me. The Rochdale Coconut Dance came to me through Alan Whitbread of the U.K., who I met when the Shellback Chorus was touring the U.S. I have come to understand that Rochdale does not, in fact, have a Morris team that does the coconut dance, and may not even have actual coconuts growing there naturally; the coconuts may, however, have been carried there by swallows.

Chris-English concertina, guitar, percussion

Young But Daily Growing - Tells the story of a young Scottish Lord who is betrothed to an “older” woman (twenty five). This practice seems to have been not all that uncommon in the 17th and 18th centuries. Although the woman starts out by questioning her father's choice of a husband for her, she soon finds that she has genuine affection for the young Lord. It is related to a number of songs found in the UK and Canada, which go by the name “Oh, The Trees are Getting High,” as well as other names too numerous to list, and dates back to at least the 1600s. This version is from the Frank and Anne Warner Collection, and given to them by Lena Bourne Fish. (Laws O35)

Chris – vocals, guitar, lap dulcimer

Pretty Polly – I first heard this murder ballad from Pete Seeger. The variants are found all over the folk world. What a wonderful surprise to find out that because of its connection to the “Cruel Ship’s Carpenter” and the “Gosport Tragedy,” the song has maritime roots.

Chris – vocals, banjo Joy – vocals

Press Gang – This was given to me by Roy Harris of the UK. I heard him sing it at the Lancashire Maritime festival, and had to have it. The English crown, as I understand, kept the Royal Navy at a bare minimum during peacetime, but felt it their right during war to “impress” young sailors into service. Large gangs of navy officers and enlisted men would press fishermen, and other maritime tradesman, in public houses, off the street, or sometimes, right out of their beds.

Chris -vocals

Home Boys Home – I first learned this variation of a very common theme in maritime songs from the Dubliners. Some variants, like Amble Town, have references to the officer class. I prefer the version where the boy will “climb the rigging...” like the regular sailors do. This seems to be a mix of a number of different versions as evidenced by the change in perspective and narrative. It fluctuates from the first person in the beginning to third person in the middle, and finally has the last verse back to the first person, but this time, from the woman’s perspective. There is some evidence that parts of this version are from Yorkshire, England. Either way it is one that I have great fun singing, and hope you do, too.

Chris – vocals, banjo, bones Dan, Danny - vocals

Away – Lud Fiedler was a husband, father, and fisherman from eastern Long Island. He and his brothers fished up and down the East Coast for many years. One afternoon he and I were sitting in his living room, and I asked, “so, Uncle Lud, what was the fishing like?” Two short hours later, I had a collection of stories, and his very tasty recipe for Long Island Clam Chowder. Lud’s stories inspired me to cook up this song.

Chris – vocals, guitar John – fiddle, vocals Joy, Dan- vocals

William Taylor – Another song about the Press Gangs with a very different ending than the previous song. This is a variant of the version from the Oxford Book of Sea Songs. I particularly like the ending of this one, as it proves the adage: Never cross a woman with access to swords and pistols.

Chris – vocals, English concertina, percussion

Walking Boss – This song comes from the singing of Clarence Ashley, and is one of the West Virginia railroad workers' songs. The Walking Boss, as I understand it, was similar to a foreman who would walk the track line making sure all was right. I first heard this from one of my earliest influences, Jeff Davis. Thanks Jeff.

Chris – vocals, banjo, percussion Joy –vocals

Yo Ho Little Fish – The Rudyard Kipling book, *Captains Courageous*, was translated into a number of different languages, one of which was German. A little boy named Hans, living in Hamburg, Germany, saw and fell in love with the film, and knew by heart, the song that Manuel sang to the “little fish” he had caught. The little boy from Hamburg eventually grew up to become my father, and imparted the same love for the sea, the song, and the film. This version is largely Australian and was learned from Danny Spooner.

Chris – vocals, English concertina

Good Ale – Another great song from the Copper Family of Rottingdean. I first heard this from the singing of Greg Clarke from the Albany area. I had a delightful time singing this with my two mates Danny Spooner, and Dan Berggren. No bottles of actual Ale were injured or killed in the recording of this song, and any resemblance to Ale consumption, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

Chris, Dan, and Danny – vocals

Pretty Sylvia - I just love this song from the Frank and Anne Warner Collection; given to them by Lena Bourne “Grammy” Fish from Jaffrey, New Hampshire. Mrs. Fish sang, over three hundred gems, for the Warners, as well as for Helen Hartness Flanders from Vermont. The story is well known: “Sovay, Sovay,” or “The Female highwayman” as it’s know in the UK, is a female testing her love’s faith by dressing as a highwayman and trying to rob him of the ring that she had given him. On pain of death he magnanimously refuses, and she happily rides away secure in her love’s fortitude. Ah, love.

Chris –vocals, guitar, percussion John -fiddle

Yarmouth Town – There are a great number of songs that deal with this particular aspect of sailors’ time ashore. Probably more wishful thinking than actual occurrence, this particular version comes from the singing of the late Peter Bellamy via another of my influences, Jeff Warner. Thanks Jeff.

Chris – vocals, guitar, mandolin, bass, banjo John-vocals, fiddle
Joy, Dan ~ vocals

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The Cast

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Joy Bennett (vocals, production assistance, incomparable partner) - has been singing, folk songs in particular, for many wonderful years. Her performing groups include Watersign and The Johnson Girls. She has remained extremely dedicated to traditional folk music in many diverse capacities, and her contributions to the same are without peer. Her singing with The Johnson Girls (the finest female a cappella Chantey and Work song group in my humble opinion) is particularly good. I highly suggest you check out their CDs...now...
...I'll wait. www.thejohnsongirls.com

Weren't they great!? Now, on to the rest:

John Kirk (fiddle, mandolin, humanly impossible overdubs, and vocals) - A rarity among multi-instrumentalists: He is wonderfully, and equally proficient on them all. He is the consummate musician, vocal and instrumental, and he's a lot of fun at parties.

John appears courtesy of Quickstep music: www.johnandtrish.com

Dan Berggren (vocals production assistance, and second audio engineer)- is a wonderful singer of old songs, and writer of new ones that sound old. He sings of the important things in life: Love, Peace and the Human condition. His music speaks volumes.

Dan appears courtesy of Sleeping Giant Records: www.berggrenfolk.com

Danny Spooner (backing vocals, production assistance) - Now a native of Australia, and formerly from London, he has done just about everything in his life from Bargeman, Tug Boat Captain, to playing Teveye in an Aussie version of Fiddler on the Roof. ("G'Daiy Digger Teveye") He is the genuine article, and is the finest East End Gentleman's Gentleman I know.

Danny is strictly "top drawer" in my book, and appears courtesy of himself. Read more about Danny at: www.dannyspooner.com

Curt Osgood is a wonderful Hammered Dulcimer player who has more stamina, and can play longer than almost anyone I know. His dedication to the promotion of dulcimer music also knows no bounds. He resides in the Southern Tier of New York State, but rarely stays anywhere, in one place, long. He can be heard on his own CD The Newfield Sessions.

Find his music at: www.curtosgood.com

Jim Briggs – Mixing and Mastering, and Production Assistance. Jim is just amazing. He is one of the finest recording engineers around, understands traditional music and uses his skills to bring that love and understanding out in the mix. He has done extensive work with PBS, and I am truly honored that he agreed to work on this project.

Jim's studio is Mt. Rainier Audio: jim@mtraineraudio.com

Jeff Stachyra – Audio Engineer, Production Assistance, Tea and Sympathy – Jeff, and his studio New Clear Studios, made my first project a much more pleasant endeavor than it otherwise could have been. He has a great way of making one feel comfortable in an otherwise unnatural, and nerve-racking situation. Jeff is terrific on so many levels, and the environment he's created at New Clear Studios is wonderful.

Find the studio at: www.newclearstudios.com

Dr. Dick Gilman, DB (Doctor of Banjology) – Dick is the man who made the Lap Dulcimer used on Young But Daily Growing, and keeps my Banjo, Fred, healthy, and happy. He and his wife, Carmen, are the “Folk Parents” of Fredonia, NY, and all of us who went through the Fredonia School of Folk Music owe them quite a debt.

Tim Reilly and David Iler – two workmates and friends from Mystic Seaport, and fine musicians in their own right. They each made a pair of the bones used on Home Boys, Home.