

# In My Tradition: Ballads and Folk Lyrics

Rosaleen Gregory

Here are four more songs from my repertoire.

## **Cairistiona** Unaccompanied.

I learned this beautiful Hebridean lament with its haunting tune from Maggie MacInnes' singing on *Cairistiona*, a 1984 LP by George Jackson and Maggie MacInnes (Iona Records). Maggie sings the entire song in Scottish Gaelic, but English translations of the one-line verses are to be found on-line in Celtic Lyrics Corner, together with the chorus (in Gaelic).

## **Down by the Salley Gardens** With guitar.

Words by W.B. Yeats, to a traditional Irish melody.

## **Just as the Tide was Flowing** Unaccompanied.

A song I learned as a musical illustration for a paper given by Dave in 2010 at the International Ballad Conference, which was held on the Dutch island of

Terschelling. The theme of the conference, appropriately, was "Water", and Dave's paper was on "Sea Songs from Two Oceans", comparing maritime songs collected by Frank Kidson in Yorkshire and Phil Thomas in British Columbia. "Just as the Tide was Flowing" was collected by Kidson on the Yorkshire coast and printed in his book *Traditional Tunes* (1891).

## **The Sweet Nightingale (alias The Wild Rippling Water)** Unaccompanied.

This song is generally known as "The Sweet Nightingale", but, oddly enough, when I learned it many years ago at Keele University in the English Midlands, it was in this rather hokey Americanized version known as "The Wild Rippling Water". However, it has a nice tune, which is why I've kept on singing it.

**Cairistiona** Anon

Voice

Wont you answer, Cair - is - t - on - a, E ho hi hu ru bhi i, Ho ro

o hi ho ho ro — ho, E — ho, hi — hu ru bhi i.

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Cairistiona'. It features two staves of music in 4/4 time. The first staff is labeled 'Voice' and contains the lyrics: 'Wont you answer, Cair - is - t - on - a, E ho hi hu ru bhi i, Ho ro'. The second staff continues the melody with lyrics: 'o hi ho ho ro — ho, E — ho, hi — hu ru bhi i.' The word 'Cairistiona' is written in green at the top, and 'Anon' is written in green on the right side.

Won't you answer, Cairistiona?

CHORUS:

E ho hi (pronounced 'hee') hu ru bhi i

Ho ro o hi, ho ho ro ho

E ho hi hu ru bhi i.

VERSES:

If you'd answer, I would hear you  
Ships I see in the sound of Islay  
They are seeking Cairistiona  
Not to make a wedding for her  
In deep clay they're going to lay her  
To Glencoe I once did journey  
The waves were high, and deep the channel  
I cannot judge my leap in distance  
And if I could, I would gain nothing  
Cairistiona for me won't be waiting.

## Down By the Salley Gardens

Anon/Yeats

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Down By the Salley Gardens'. It consists of four staves of music in G major, 4/4 time. The first staff is labeled 'Voice' and contains the first line of the song. The second staff continues the melody. The third and fourth staves provide accompaniment. Chords are indicated by letters above the notes: D, F, C, F, G7, C, F, C, Am, Em, F, Dm, C7, D, C, F, G7, C.

Voice

Down by the Sal - ley Gard - ens, My love and I did meet.

She passed the Sal - ley Gard - ens on dear lit - tle snow - white feet. She bid me take

life eas - y, as leaves grow on the tree, But I be - ing young and fool - ish,

with her would not a - gree.

Down by the Salley Gardens my love and I did meet;  
She passed the Salley Gardens on dear little snow-white feet.  
She bid me take love easy, as the leaves grow on the tree;  
But I, being young and foolish, with her would not agree.

In a field down by the river my love and I did stand,  
 And on my leaning shoulder she laid her snow-white hand.  
 She bid me take life easy, as the grass grows on the weirs;  
 But I was young and foolish, and now am full of tears.

**Just As the Tide Was Flowing**

Anon

Voice

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Just As the Tide Was Flowing'. It consists of four staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff begins with 'One morning in the month of May, down by a roll - ing riv - er, A'. The second staff continues with 'jol - ly sail - or, he did stray, and there beheld a — lov - er, She care-less - ly a -'. The third staff continues with 'long did stray, a - view-ing of the dais-ies gay, She sweet-ly sang a round-e - lay, just'. The fourth staff concludes with 'as the tide was flow - ing'.

One morning in the month of May, down by a roll - ing riv - er, A  
 jol - ly sail - or, he did stray, and there beheld a — lov - er, She care-less - ly a -  
 long did stray, a - view-ing of the dais-ies gay, She sweet-ly sang a round-e - lay, just  
 as the tide was flow - ing

One morning in the month of May, down by a rolling river,  
 A jolly sailor he did stray, and there beheld a lover,  
 She carelessly along did stray, a viewing of the daisies gay;  
 She sweetly sang a roundelay, just as the tide was flowing.

Her dress it was as white as milk, and jewels did adorn her skin,  
 It was as soft as any silk, just like a lady of honour.  
 Her cheeks were red, her eyes were brown, her hair in ringlets hanging down,  
 Her lovely brow without a frown, just as the tide was flowing.

I made a bow and said, "Fair maid, how come you here so early?  
 My heart by you it was betrayed, and I could love you dearly.  
 I am a sailor come from sea, if you'll accept my company,  
 To walk and see the fishes play, just as the tide is flowing."

No more was said, but on her way we both did gang together;  
 The small birds sang, the lambs did play, and pleasant was the weather.  
 We both being weary sat us down, beneath a tree with branches round;  
 Then to the church we soon were bound, just as the tide was flowing.

# The Sweet Nightingale

Anon

Voice



As I was a - walk - in' and a ramb-lin' one day, I — spied a fair  
coup - le a - mak - in' their way, And — one was a lad - y and a fair one was  
she, And the oth - er was a cow - boy and a brave one was he.

As I was a-walkin' and a-ramblin' one day,  
I spied a fair couple a-makin' their way;  
One was a lady and a fair one was she,  
An' the other was a cowboy an' a brave one was he.

“Oh where are you goin' my pretty fair maid?”  
“Jest down by the river, jest down in the shade,  
Jest down by the river, jest down by the spring,  
See the wild ripplin' water, hear the nightingale sing.”

They hadn't been there but an hour or so,  
Till he drew from his satchel a fiddle and bow,  
He tuned up his fiddle all on the high string  
And he played his tune over and over again.

“Now,” said the cowboy, “I should have been gone.”  
“No, no,” said the pretty maid, “jest play one more song.  
I'd rather hear the fiddle played and all on that one string  
Than to see the waters glide and hear the nightingale sing.”

She said “My dear cowboy, will you marry me?”  
He said “My dear lady, that never can be,  
I've a wife in Arizona and a lady is she,  
One wife on a cow ranch is plenty for me.”

“Oh I'll go to Mexico, I'll stay there one year,  
I'll drink the sweet wine and I'll drink lots of beer,  
If I ever return, it will be in the spring  
To see the bright ripplin' water, hear the nightingale sing.”

“Come all you young maidens, take warning from me,  
Never place your affections on a cowboy so free.  
He'll go away and leave you, as mine did to me,  
And you'll rock the cradle, sing 'Hush-a-bye baby'.”