

## Come Dance and Sing Study Guide

### About this CD

My friend and musical mentor the late Jimmie Driftwood once discussed with me the transformations that had taken place in America during his lifetime. Among the most unfortunate changes, he felt, was the loss of family singing. Whether the songs had been passed down from previous generations or were learned from newer sources, the sharing of music bonded the age groups within the family, lending a continuity of experience to the different generations. He also observed that group singing had generally disappeared from social gatherings as well. As result he had noticed a loss of community spirit.

It has been our experience in concerts we present that it is often difficult to move an entire audience to join in on a song, even well-known melodies like *Oh! Susanna* or simple refrains like that in *The Fox*. The exception, of course, is when all the members of the audience feel comfortable with each other or when most of them are members of a Folk Song Society. Maybe our modern America has become too much of a spectator society. Or perhaps people are reluctant to participate for fear of the judgement of their fellows. Whatever the reason, it is a great loss to the pleasure of life not to pour forth that "joyful noise" which is such a distinguishing human characteristic.

With that in mind here is a small collection of songs that have been in the general popular repertoire for many years. Some are perhaps more familiar to you than others but each has the only stamp of approval necessary to be considered a "good" song. They are time-tested, often requested and perfectly appropriate for nearly any occasion; whether in the living room or around a campfire, on a long car ride or just in the shower.

Ruth Crawford Seeger in her marvelous *American Folk Songs for Children* points out that traditional music is an integral part of our cultural heritage. And it is not a static body of material but an ever increasing repertoire of music for further growth and enjoyment. She uses the analogy of a savings account that is begun early and added to over the years.

It is our hope that you will use *Come Dance and Sing* as a starting point to begin building your own "musical savings account" and continue depositing additional songs as they come to you. It is a lifelong investment in enjoyment and self expression that will yield many hours of pleasure as a return.

## About the Songs and Activities

Out of the hundreds of songs we know, and the possibly many thousands we haven't heard yet, these are the songs we often have sung with our families and other folks who enjoy singing traditional music as much as we do. Mainly these songs are easy to sing. The lyrics are simple as are the melodies which easily fall within the vocal abilities of most people. You needn't be a professionally trained or even a particularly talented singer to enjoy singing these songs. Just open your mouth and as noted in the liner notes to the recording, "Sing as though your heart can't hold it back."

The arrangements presented here are not intended to be "authentic", "original" or otherwise "set in stone" versions of the songs. Traditional singing has always involved a process of interpretation as each singer, or each generation of singers, added to the lyrics or modified the melody to suit their tastes. We encourage everyone to express themselves freely by inserting their own words and making up new versions of the songs to pass on to other people.

The background information provided and the activities suggested are guidelines only. Use them to pursue your own interests as you follow the trail of traditional American music and culture wherever it may lead you. We would be interested to hear about your experiences, comments or even criticisms. Please contact us with your observations on our Face Book page <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Suzanne-and-Jim/162539132614>

Have Fun and Keep Singin'

Suzanne and Jim

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## 1. Animal Fair

We have known this song for a very long time, certainly since our elementary school music classes. It can be found in *The American Song Bag* by Carl Sandburg, a fantastic resource for additional songs to sing. (Note- be sure to refer to **Sources** at the end of this section.)

Notice that we sing "the monk" only once at the end of the verse. Sandburg shows it sung 2 times. Try to sing it twice with the recording.

What instruments are played? (Penny whistle, bamboo jaw harp, kazoo, guitar, 5-string banjo) Try to identify when each instrument plays. Describe the sound of each instrument.

Make up gestures or actions to go along with the song. For example, be the big baboon combing his hair.

Suzanne plays the penny whistle, bamboo jaw harp and kazoo. Jim plays guitar and 5-string banjo.

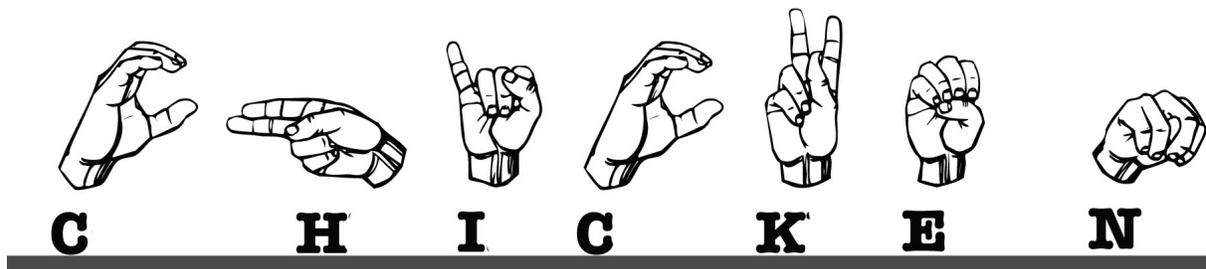
## 2. C-H-I-C-K-E-N Spells Chicken

This vaudeville song from 1902 was recorded in 1903 on the first type of recording, the cylinder record, which was first developed in 1888 by Thomas Edison.

Spelling songs are a fun way of learning the alphabet and the individual letter sounds. Start by just singing the letters along with the recording. Work up to singing along with the whole chorus.

In concert we also use this song as a vehicle for introducing the basics of American Sign Language (ASL) or finger spelling.

Here are the signs for the letters that spell C-H-I-C-K-E-N. It is a fun challenge to spell the letters with the fingers while singing the chorus.



Suzanne plays guitar. Jim plays 5-string banjo.

### 3. A Cowgirl's Red River Valley

This song is a variation on the standard Red River Valley but the story is told from the lady's point of view. The last line is "And the GIRL who loves you so true," instead of the more usual " And the COWBOY who loves you so true".

There are at least four Red Rivers in the US. There is one between Texas and Oklahoma, one between Minnesota and North Dakota, one in Kentucky and a smaller one in Wisconsin. Find each of these on the map. Are there more Red Rivers? (See **SOURCES**)

Which of these rivers do you think the song is about?

The ringy, stringy sounding musical instrument is an autoharp. Autoharps were first made in this country in 1871 and are still made today. They were often played by teachers in small schools that didn't have the resources to buy a piano or even the space to put one. Autoharps can simply play accompaniment, as in this song, or are capable of playing complicated melodies and harmonies. The autoharp is a wonderful instrument to sing with and is an enjoyable first musical instrument for beginners.

Make the sound of clomping of horse hoofs to the rhythm of the music by clapping, patting on your knees or tapping your feet.

Suzanne plays autoharp. Jim plays guitar.

### 4. Hop Along Peter

This is such a fun song of nonsense lyrics.

Sing the chorus with us and hop along every time you hear the word "hop".

Suzanne plays guitar. Jim plays 5-string banjo.

### 5. When Pa

This is a kind of call and response song. The call is the first line of the song, the response is a repetition of a part of the call. Sing with Jim for the call or with Suzanne for the response.

Varmint is an old word meaning a wild animal that causes trouble. A trouble causing person was compared to a wild animal and so the word was applied to people as well.

Often the characteristics of an animal are applied to humans as in "sly as a fox" or "wise as an owl". Think of other animal-like characteristics people may show.

## 6. There Ain't No Bugs on Me

This is an old song that has been used recently for a TV commercial. Some of the words are from the original recording by Fiddlin' John Carson in 1928 and some have been added later. Suzanne wrote the verse about the butterfly.

Have you ever watched a grasshopper? Dance to the song the way a grasshopper might. What kind of insects have you seen lately? Name them and dance like they might. What about worms? How would a worm dance?(Worms are not insects. Why?)

Some kinds of insects are helpful to us and some are hurtful, but each has its place in nature. Find out about insects that benefit mankind and ones that cause problems (for example bees, mosquitos or house flies).

Suzanne plays guitar. Jim plays 5-string banjo.

## 7. Hagdalina, Magdalena, Hootensteiner, Waltendeiner

Tongue twisters can really help to improve language skills. As familiarity with the words increases it becomes easier to speed up at the last.

The idea of rhyming words also adds to early language skills. Make up new verses about Hagdalena like,

She was so cute that the fellas all SAY,

"I'd date her in winter or even in MAY"

Notice how the last words rhyme?

Try this one.

On her hands ten fingers she found,

Five pointed up and the other five \_\_\_\_\_(Fill in the blank. Hint- the word doesn't exactly rhyme.)

Make up other funny verses to fit the song pattern.

Try to sing the chorus as fast as possible but still be able to say the words correctly.

Suzanne plays guitar. Jim plays 5-string banjo.

## 8. Polly Wolly Doodle All Day

In concert we sing Polly Wolly Doodle to introduce the musical idea of "the beat".

Sit so that you have a lap. When you hear the words "Polly Wolly" pat your hands on your legs twice in time with the music. When you hear "Doodle all" clap your hands twice, again in time with the music. Then pat once on your legs when you hear "day". Now you are the rhythm section, you are patting and clapping "on the beat".

This is a simple type of body music called "hambone", slapping and patting the arms, legs, chest, and cheeks in time to the music (with the beat).

After you master the simple hand clapping get creative and start clapping (in time with the music) on different parts of your body. For instance try patting on your legs then on your stomach...hear the different tones?

Try patting four times on "Polly Wolly" and clapping three times on "Doodle all". These rhythms are in a different timing.

If several singers can participate have some pat and clap following the first set of directions (yellow highlight) and another group follow the second set (blue highlight). Different rhythm patterns made at the same time are called polyrhythms. Polyrhythms are often used in traditional music from Africa, India, certain parts of Eastern Europe as well as some types of classical music.

Jim plays 5-string banjo.

## 9. Come Dance and Sing

As the title of this tune says, Come Dance and Sing! This is a chance to feel your inner rhythm and express yourself through body movement. If you are by yourself march along in time to the music or make up your own freestyle dance steps.

If you are with others do a simple circle dance. Join hands and step sideways in a circle, first to the right then back to the left. Drop hands and turn in a circle where you are. Change places with the person across from you and as you meet them shake hands. Make up more figures (planned movements) as you go along.

In the early days of our country simple dances like these were called Play Party games. You can find sources for them and other folk dances to learn.

Suzanne is playing the flute. Flutes are often used in classical music as well as in a great variety of traditional music. Jim plays 5-string banjo.

## 10. Oh! Susanna

Stephen Foster was one of America's first full-time music composers. This was his first song published in 1846. It was very popular and often sung in a type of entertainment called the minstrel show. The minstrel show was the first form of AMERICAN entertainment before TV and before radio.

The words mention a banjo. Foster was talking about the 5 string banjo which was the kind most minstrel banjo players used. If there is one musical instrument that is identified with American traditional music it is the 5 string banjo. In fact, the banjo was invented in America although the idea for it was brought from Africa where they still play musical instruments that look very much like a banjo.

It is worth looking up and learning many of Stephen Foster's other songs.

Suzanne plays the guitar and Jim plays the 5-string banjo. Describe the difference in sound between the two instruments. Identify the different role each takes in the song.

## 11. Molly Malone

*Molly Malone* or, as it's sometimes called, *Cockles and Mussels* seems to have come from the music hall entertainments of 19th Century England. It appears to have been based on a legend from the 18th Century or even earlier but there has been no hard evidence of this produced so far.

Cockles and mussels are edible shell fish like clams and oysters. Molly was a fish monger. That means she was a peddler who sold her fish on the street, not from a store but from a cart she pushed along. Back in those days the mongers informed you that they were coming down your street with their wares by calling out the goods that they were selling. Think of the ice cream truck coming through your neighborhood. You can hear the music playing from blocks away. That is what Molly Malone did to notify people that she was selling her fish.

Sing along with the refrain, "Alive, alive-O! Alive, alive-O!" Crying, "Cockles and mussels, alive, alive-O!"

The whistle-like musical instrument Suzanne plays is called a penny whistle or a tin whistle. It is a kind of flute with a mouth piece on the end and six holes along the front side. Blowing through the mouth piece and placing fingers on the holes creates musical tones. A penny whistle is different from a recorder in that the penny whistle does not have a hole on the back side, the recorder does.

By the way, penny whistles are a great introductory musical instrument. They are portable, sturdy and relatively inexpensive. According to one biography Stephen Foster, at a very young age, picked up a penny whistle and soon began to play a tune. Jim plays guitar.

## 12. The Fox

*The Fox* is a story song or ballad. It has been sung throughout the Appalachian mountains where it was brought from the British Isles by the earliest settlers. It is one of the best known of our traditional songs and is loved all over the country. It is also still sung over in England, Ireland and Scotland.

The song really doesn't have a chorus. Instead the last word of the second line is repeated twice and then the whole second line is repeated (notice when Jim begins singing). This pattern of repeated phrases in music is called a refrain.

Ballads are songs that tell a story. Sometimes the story is sad and sometimes lively and fun like *The Fox*. The **SOURCES** section below has a number of books that will have other ballads you could learn.

Again this song provides a chance to improvise a dance or body movements to act out the story.

Suzanne plays guitar. Jim plays 5-string banjo.

## 13. The Barefoot Boy With Shoes On

Nonsense songs, especially ones with jokes, are so much fun. They develop language facility by introducing the concepts of absurdity (what else would his shoes be full of besides feet?) and logic (of course his sister was a girl, his brother a boy; of course he has a birthday once a year).

Jim plays 5-string banjo. The banjo plays important roles in the song. Notice how it supports the voice during the singing, then gives a little space between the verses and takes a turn at the melody as well.

## 14. Buffalo Gals

This song was published in 1844 under the title *Lubly Fan*. Composer credits were to John Hodges a minstrel performer whose stage name was Cool White. Mr. Hodges was one of the early minstrels who was actually of African-American heritage.

The original chorus was, "Lubly fan won't you come out tonight?" but we know the song today as Buffalo Gals. There are versions of the song with different words in the chorus such as *New York gals*, *Alabama gals*", and "Round Town gals". It may be that when the minstrel groups would travel about they inserted the name of the town they were performing in to add some local interest to the program. So the "Buffalo" in our version doesn't refer to the big animal of the American Great Plains, but to the town on the Erie Canal.

Sing the song with the name of your town instead of "Buffalo". If you are able to fit in "Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania", "Walla Walla, Washington" or "Waxahachie, Texas" please let us know how you did it.

This song also could be accompanied by a play party or other dance movements. It has such a catchy melody that it is very hard to sit still.

Suzanne plays guitar. Jim plays 5-string banjo.

## 15. Finger Snappin' Blues

Once, while setting up for an afternoon performance, Jim overheard an adult choir starting this song. It seemed a perfect combination of singing, rhythm and body movement so we adopted it. We never talked to them about where they found the song and we have not heard it anywhere else.

Sit in a chair making sure that your feet touch the floor (at least your toes). Sing along with the first line and in time with the words "toe tappin'" tap your toes on the floor twice. With the words "knee slappin'" slap your knees twice. Then with "hand clappin'" clap your hands twice. Finally with "finger snappin'" snap your fingers twice. At the end respond with "I got the blues".

The second line repeats all this.

The third line is a little more complicated so here it is with the directions in parentheses.

I got blues (tap your toes twice in time with "blues") that I can't (slap your knees twice in time with "I can't") lose (clap your hands three times with "lose"). I got the finger (snap your fingers once with "finger") snappin' (snap once with "snappin'") blues (snap once with "blues" and finish by snapping twice).

Starting the song slowly then speeding up helps to reinforce the relationship between the beat of the music and the body movements.

It can get pretty hilarious as you try to sing and tap, slap, clap and snap faster.

Songs like *Finger Snappin' Blues* are a musical style known as blues. The blues originated within the African-American community near the end of the 19th Century. Many different styles of blues have been identified from different regions of the country, for example Piedmont Blues and Delta Blues.

Find the Delta (hint- think of the Mississippi River) and the Piedmont (hint- piedmont is from a french word for foot of the mountains)

Jim plays guitar.

## 16. Song Of The Doodle Bug

We learned this song from the 1928 recording by a great Georgia string band, The Georgia Yellow Hammers. According to the Victor Record Company ledgers the song was composed by Ernest Moody who was a singer and guitar player with the band.

It's the story of a child's activity common throughout the South during my childhood (Jim). The Doodle Bug was what we called an Ant Lion. It is the larval stage of an insect that looks much like a dragon fly. The Ant Lion lives in the fine dirt or sand and digs a cone shaped hole. When it detects motion in the hole, perhaps an ant has walked past moving some of the dirt, the Doodle Bug begins to stir the sand causing the ant to fall the rest of the way into the hole and become food for the ant lion.

We would take a straw and gently disturb the dirt at the edge of the doodle hole, as we called it, trying to fool the Doodle Bug into thinking an ant had come to dinner. If we were lucky the Doodle Bug would grasp the end of the straw and we could pull him out for a quick peek at him. Hours of fun especially if you don't have any other toys to play with.

To build activities accompanying this song start by singing along with the chorus. Add jumping up on the "up, up, up". This is a good song to finish a session with as it gets everybody up and moving.

Suzanne plays guitar. Jim plays 5-string banjo.

## 17. A Railroad Man for Me

Laura Ingalls Wilder included this song in her book *By the Shores of Silver Lake*. If you haven't read her stories about life on the American frontier we hope you will soon. The books not only give an insight into the lives of Americans during the latter part of the 19th Century when much of our national character was established but they are also full of songs and references to music. In fact a collection of the songs mentioned in her books could be considered to represent a "Hit Parade" of songs enjoyed by our 19th Century ancestors.

Until the latter part of the 20th Century a railroad man's job was considered very glamorous, not to mention well paying. In this song the merits of the railroad man as a husband are compared to men in other occupations and the conclusion is always "a railroad man for me".

Jim plays guitar.

## 18. The Story The Crow Told Me

We learned the Crow song from the New Lost City Ramblers, one of the first modern groups to learn and sing music from recordings made in the 1920s and '30s. They learned it from a 1931 recording on Columbia Records by the Carolina Buddies, a group from northern North Carolina. This is a fun song with some jokes in it that might not be apparent to modern listeners (what's union underwear?). We changed one lyric to say "bought herself a girdle at the Walmart store" to bring some of the words up to date.

This is a good song to introduce the call and response. It's good practice in timing to sing the "Caw, caw" at the right place in each verse.

Suzanne plays guitar. Jim plays 5-string banjo.

## 19. Bill Grogan's Goat

That goat ate Bill's shirts which were hanging on his washing line to dry. It's a common joke that a goat is willing to eat anything it can reach. If you look in very old magazines or newspapers you can probably find a drawing of a goat eating a tin can, which of course it can't. When the goat was tied to the railroad track it was sure going to get killed when the train ran over it.

Back in the olden days of railroading they didn't have our modern automated system of communications with the engineer to let him know of conditions on the track ahead. They relied on a system of colored flags to advise the train man. Even today the engineer knows that if he sees red lights facing him he must stop the train. Back in the old days three red flags meant danger ahead, stop the train immediately. Those red shirts the goat coughed up looked like warning flags and saved the goat's life. A narrow escape.

Enjoy making the sound effects!

## 20. Highway Home

This is one of our favorite songs to sing as the last song of a concert. The jokes are funny and the chorus is so bouncy and fun to sing that often the audience sings it as they leave the hall.

We learned it from the singing of our good friend Judy Domeny of Springfield, MO. Judy is an educator, a collector of old songs and one of the best singers and nicest people we know. She learned the song from a singer who lived near her and who thought it was a song from the minstrel shows. We haven't heard it any place else.

The last verse has a kind of joke called a pun. A pun is a play on words. When the owl hoots, "Hoo, Hoo" and then asks, "Who?" the pun is that the words sound alike but mean different things.

Suzanne plays guitar. Jim plays 5-string banjo.

## Sources

Book:

Carl Sandburg, *American Song Bag* Harcourt Brace & Co. 1927

Book:

Alan Lomax, *The Folksongs of North America*, Doubleday & Company 1960

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Book:

Benjamin A. Botkin, *The American Play Party Song*, Robert E. Krieger Publishing 1937

Book:

Campbell, Olive Dame and Sharp, Cecil J., *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*,  
G. P. Putnam's Sons 1917

Web site:

Topic: Stephen Foster

<http://www.pitt.edu/~amerimus/FosterFAQ.html>

Web site:

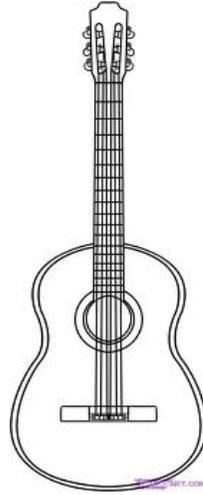
Topic: Red River

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red\\_River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_River)

## Musical Instruments Played



5 String Banjo



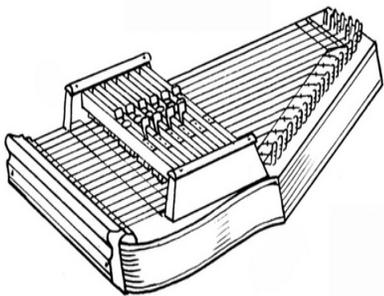
Guitar



Penny Whistle



Flute



Autoharp



Kazoo



bamboo jaw harp

**Suzanne and Jim have a number of other recordings available**

Keep Smilin'

A Victorian Christmas

Song-Chasers

Down by the River: Songs of Inspiration from the American Tradition

as well as this CD Come Dance and Sing

All are available from our website  
[www.suzanneandjim.com](http://www.suzanneandjim.com)