

CDSS Sings

A new song column, introduced by Lorraine Hammond



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You may enjoy knowing that along with all the serious work the CDSS Board does at the annual meeting, we also make time for a little singing and dancing. Each of us savors our connection with song and dance and each of us holds a serious commitment to our mission statement: “Continuing the traditions. Linking those who love them.”

I smile to recall last year’s meeting, my first, when Board president David Millstone asked that I lead a song to start things off. I chose Jubilee,* a lively Appalachian song that I learned at an early CDSS Folk Music Week, at Pinewoods, from Kentucky treasure Jean Ritchie. The chorus said it all, “Swing and turn, jubilee, live and learn, jubilee.” How fine it is when a traditional song speaks our own thoughts and feelings, and how fine it is to be joined together by our shared singing.

Here’s another song from the Southern Appalachians, Sail Away Ladies.* Like Jubilee, it has a great chorus. The melody doubles as a lively dance tune, and the lyrics are just plain fun. The late, great, banjo picker, Uncle Dave Macon, recorded this on a 78 rpm for Vocalion records in 1927, but there are other early versions as well. I especially enjoy the call and response element, something often found in African-derived American folksongs. The song leader sings lines one and three of the verse, and the group responds; “Sail away, ladies, sail away” before everybody sings the chorus.

For a strong, rhythmic accompaniment I usually frail the banjo or play Appalachian dulcimer, but the song is equally fine sung a cappella. This is my own version, drawing from the Uncle Dave Macon early recording, coupled with decades of jam sessions.

CDSS Board members Lorraine Lee Hammond, Jesse Pearlman Karlsberg and Natty Smith will be creating and hosting this new column in the newsletter. Lorraine, who has written the first column, is a noted Appalachian dulcimer player and traditional singer. She brings a lifetime of teaching, performing, recording and organizing folk music events to her position on the CDSS Board. The newsletter editor’s thanks to Lorraine, Jesse and Natty for volunteering to help lift our voices in song.

* WEB EXTRAS!

Sail Away Ladies:

- 1) Lorraine Hammond singing the lyrics with Linnea Bardarson and Amanda Lapham (video by Bennett Hammond)
- 2) Uncle Dave Mason playing the tune
- 3) banjo notation (courtesy Lorraine Hammond)

Jubilee:

- 4) audio of Jean Ritchie singing
- 5) tune notation (courtesy Lorraine Hammond)
- 6) notation for fretted dulcimer (courtesy Lorraine Hammond)

Sail Away Ladies

Appalachian Traditional

C G C C
If ev - er I get my new house done. Sail a - way la - dies

C C G C C
sail a - way. I'll give the old one to my son. Sail a - way la - dies,

C C F F
sail a - way. Don't you rock 'em Die - dee - o, don't you rock 'em

C G
Die - de o, don't you rock 'em Die - de o Sail a - way la - dies

C
sail a - way

Ain't no use to weep and cry, sail away ladies, sail away.
We'll all be angels bye and bye, sail away ladies, sail away. (Chorus)

Come along boys and go with me, sail away ladies, sail away.
Way down yonder to Tennessee, sail away ladies, sail away. (Chorus)

I chew my tobacco and spit my juice, sail away ladies, sail away.
Love my doney (sweetheart) but it ain't no use, sail away ladies, sail away. (Chorus)