

You Don't Know Jack Liner Notes

Many, many thanks to the wonderful folks who gave their time and talent to this project, above all to **William Pint and Felicia Dale** as producers, performers and supreme friends for sticking by Paul and me through all the ups and downs of the recording process (and there were many; bladder cancer and brain surgery aren't the half of it); Alfred Goodrich for his wizardry at **Silverstone Studios**, where he generously worked us into his schedule and showed us the myriad options for music such as ours, opening our ears to a new way of listening and the importance of hearing, *really* hearing what things sound like (it's *all* about communication); to Jay Olszewski and Eamon Loftus for launching this project at C&C Studios and staying on it in an effort to get us out the door with a completed package before their landlord pulled the plug and made C&C Studios dissolve into the mist; and Jay Kenny at **Audio Logic**, where we did the final bits—we'll use a click track next time, we promise (as long as we can find one that doesn't keep speeding up and slowing down).

Cheers,
Janie Meneely

The Players:

William Pint	harmony vocals, guitar	Rowan Corbett	bones
Felicia Dale	harmony vocals, hurdy-gurdy, whistle	Glen McCarthy	bass
Alfred Goodrich	cello, mandolin, bass, didgeridoo	Scott Robinson	concertina
Avery Coffee	electric guitar	Paul DiBlasi	guitar, vocals, harmonica
Matt Hepler	drums	Janie Meneely	guitar, vocals, concertina, whistle
Gilberto	hand percussion		
Campello			

Give Me a Ship

vocals: Janie Meneely, Paul DiBlasi, William Pint, Felicia Dale
guitar: William Pint
electric guitar: Avery Coffee
whistle: Felicia Dale
harmonica: Paul DiBlasi
bass: Alfred Goodrich
drum kit: Matt Hepler
hurdy-gurdy drone: Felicia Dale

I wrote this song years ago; it was one of the last songs that Crab Alley actually started thinking about performing, so that puts it at the over-twenty-year mark, anyway. It doesn't relate to anything historically, except as it refers to our intrinsic longing for the sea (some of us possess an intrinsic longing for the sea, no matter what Paul says). Beyond that, I've always loved the sound of three-part songs—like rounds, only with different words. There's probably a formal name for such contrivances, but I haven't the foggiest notion what it might be. At any rate, I thought, at first, that these three parts would work in harmony with one another, but try as I might, I couldn't get it right, so I shelved the song until William, Felicia, Paul and I hammered out the arrangement that you hear on the album. I'm betting that once the song is "out there" it will grow and evolve on its own; who knows what might happen.

To Sea

vocals: Janie Meneely, Paul DiBlasi
guitar: Janie Meneely, Avery Coffee
harmonica: Paul DiBlasi
bass: Alfred Goodrich

There are so many reasons why a sailor might have gone to sea. This song names just a few and offers a suggestion as to why more than one tar volunteered for ship duty when his vessel was in port.

For those wondering what's going on with the guitar, I drop my high E string to a D to create a drone as I play.

Brigantine

vocals: Paul DiBlasi, Janie Meneely
guitar: William Pint

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electric guitar: Avery Coffee
mandolin: Alfred Goodrich
concertina: Janie Meneely
bass: Alfred Goodrich

I asked my father one time if he had ever seen the Flying Dutchman, the beleaguered mariner who did something so unspeakably naughty, he is condemned to sail his ship till Judgement Day. His is a spectral vessel, charging along with a full press of sails while the witnesses lie nearly becalmed. Oh yes, my dad said. And he knew of others who had seen it. You see a lot of things when you're standing watch in the wee hours, he added. Having stood watch in the wee hours, I know exactly what he means. There's a long lingering space of time when the darkness thins and the early daylight begins to lick at the wave tops, like a cat cleaning its kittens. Anything can emerge from that mystic curtain. You just hope it won't be a container ship bearing down on you. That's when you unscrew the cap on the little flask you carry and take another sip—to warm yourself up, dontcha know. Some might say that little sip bolsters your courage, but I wouldn't know about that (my little flask had coffee in it).

I wrote this song in a contemporary style, deliberately. I didn't want the casual listener to mistake it for something traditional. The Flying Dutchman is alive and well, plying the seas and terrifying young sailors even as we speak. The bully mate who sees her today might well be a female sailor like myself, and she'd be bellowing orders accordingly. Go ahead, laugh. Hide your guffaws in your sleeves. You'll find out for yourself one of these days, mark my words.

You Don't Know Jack

Vocals: Janie Meneely, Paul DiBlasi, William Pint, Felicia Dale

The title song for the album just fell into my notebook during one particularly prolific plane trip from Seattle. I jotted down the bones of three songs on that flight (*Jack, Napoleon's Last Stand* and *The Ballad of Berkeley Muse*; may all such journeys be so productive). Chelle Fulk, dear friend and fiddlist extraordinaire, had asked for something her Molly character could sing with the Pyrates Royale. Molly is sweet and naïve, she said, like the hero in "Pirates of Penzance." She needed a simple song that could underscore Molly's good nature. Bang! There it was. This song speaks for itself, and has continued speaking long after its debut on the Pyrate's *Black Jack* album. You'll hear some different verses in this version. In all likelihood, there are even more verses out there. What's yours?

Jonah

vocals: Paul DiBlasi, Janie Meneely, William Pint, Felicia Dale
guitar: William Pint
cello: Alfred Goodrich
mandolin: Alfred Goodrich
concertina: Janie Meneely
bass: Alfred Goodrich
whale: Gilberto Campello
drum: Matt Hepler

This is the song that started it all. I began writing songs when I was in my early teens and had nailed my first three guitar chords. The lyrics were whiny self indulgences that I blanch to think about now, but I was pretty prolific and managed to pick up beer and string money with my talent. Then I turned into a working mom and my life went in a different direction. Singing my daughter to sleep was the order of the day (and night) and my dreams of a musical career seemingly went bust. Not to worry; we all make choices and I don't regret the choice I made back then.

Fast forward about ten years. My daughter was in school, I was ensconced on the Eastern Shore and proprietor of my very own burgeoning publishing business. One of my advertising clients was Steve Bunker of China Sea Marine Trading Company, then housed in the old livery stable on Thames Street in Baltimore's Fell's Point. His shop was a wonder of maritime junque and I hung out there whenever I could.

Steve was involved with Greenpeace, and when that group arrived in Baltimore, I was impressed by their sincerity and their willingness to fling caution to the winds in the name of doing what they thought was right. I'd been on that wagon myself a time or two, before I'd settled into my more bourgeois existence as a capitalist piggette. One evening I was noodling with my guitar while daughter Lindsay was upstairs doing homework. The words to *Jonah* appeared in my notebook (it's like that sometimes; seriously, my lyrics often just happen) and a

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tune took flight on my guitar. I called to Lindsay to listen to it, and her response was and has remained the strongest catalyst for all the songs that happened thereafter: "You wrote that? Just now? That is so cool!" What parent wouldn't move mountains to be considered cool by her kid?

The floodgates opened (song number two was *Islands*; I lost track after that . . .) and songs have been spilling out of my notebook ever since. The version of *Jonah* recorded here has been modified a bit from the first Crab Alley recording: "down to the last Leviathan" replaces the original line "so ladies can wear lipstick." We no longer use whale oil in cosmetic products to any degree, but there are still rogue nations hunting whales for the dinner table. Japan leads the charge, followed by Iceland, Norway, Peru and Latvia. I've never seen a whale in the wild; neither had my father. I wish they were as easy to spot as the Flying Dutchman.

P.S. In case you didn't recognize it, the little concertina bit is from the tune: *Pique la Baleine*.

Anne Bonney

vocals: Janie Meneely, Paul DiBlasi
guitar: William Pint
whistle: Janie Meneely
hand percussion: Gilberto Campello
bass: Glen McCarthy

When I was managing editor at *Chesapeake Bay Magazine*, I had the opportunity to work with a wonderful writer named Jerry Renniger. Jerry was an ardent supporter of my music, and let me know it in no uncertain terms. ("How's that CD coming?" "Finished yet?" "How 'bout now?" "Screw your day job; your songs are important.") Besides sending along bottles of liquid inspiration now and then to grease the wheels, he also sent me the words for a little ditty he called *Pirate Janie*. "Put this to music," he said. His song was personally flattering (I'm easy), but not something I could have sung in public; nor was I keen on developing a song that had no bearing on either the Chesapeake Bay or the realities of maritime life. When he asked me about it, I diplomatically told him that I wasn't touching his song with a ten-foot pole. Then Jerry died, suddenly.

Weeks passed. Months. A year. I was alone one afternoon, riffling through an old notebook, when a copy of Jerry's "Pirate Janie" fell to the floor. I read through it again and began messing with it. I tweaked it here and there, I replaced a verse or two, I added a chorus, and I changed the protagonist's name to Anne Bonney, the real pirate lady (and Calico Jack cohort) who mysteriously disappeared from her Caribbean prison. By some accounts, the notorious Ms. Bonney resurfaced in the Charleston area (having been ransomed by her wealthy father) and lived out her life following more mundane pursuits, like raising kids. But suppose, just suppose, she cut loose now and then, picked up old habits and If the song makes just one kid decide to read up on Anne Bonney or the lives of pirates in general, I will consider it a whopping success; I think Jerry would be pleased as punch. "They say she stole Black Caesar's rig" is his line, and a lovely opening salvo at that. If I can ever lay my hands on his original lines, I will post them on my website. I'm sure they haven't vanished . . . they linger somewhere in one of many boxes.

Nasty Nell

vocals: Paul DiBlasi and Janie Meneely

I doubt that all mermaids are young and beautiful. I'm betting they come in all shapes and sizes like any other of Earth's creatures. I pictured Nasty Nell, hard-boiled and feisty, fresh from the grimy grease-slicked waters that lap against the Baltimore docks. In my imagination she's beer bellied and beehived. The only reason she's chomping a cigar is because it rhymes with lard (sort of); otherwise, she'd have been chewing gum, which sort of rhymes with Hon . . . but I couldn't make it work. There's another spot in the song where we sing "As sure as Bud is beer . . ." and that should, by all rights, be "as sure as Boh is beer," referencing National Bohemian, a local brew. But so few people know about Natty Boh that we stuck with Bud—it's all about communication (I mentioned that before). Baltimore allusions aside, Nell could hail from anywhere. So could Bunky, my ill-fated fisherman. And perhaps that's why the song has such appeal.

William and Felicia suggested the melody we use, borrowed from the traditional *Jim Jones at Botany Bay*, when I was having trouble finding a melodic direction for Nell's story. Paul grabbed hold of the tune and off he went. Nasty Nell went public at one of the local chantey sings and hasn't looked back. Ironically, William and Felicia began performing the song to the tune of *Strike the Bell*. Now we have an East Coast version and a West Coast version, and the race is on to see which one gains the ascendancy in the great wide world of folk music. Singers, start your tuning forks.

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Someday Paul and I will figure out an instrumental arrangement for this song, just you wait.

Bonney Ship the Diamond

vocals: Paul DiBlasi, Janie Meneely, William Pint, Felicia Dale, Rowan Corbett

guitar: Paul DiBlasi

whistle: Janie Meneely

bass: Jay Kenny

This song comes straight from what I like to refer to as the “chantey canon”—that copious container ship of songs that spring from the maritime traditions. Paul and I perform it a little differently than most, and it seemed fitting to add it to the set list for this album. That it happens to be one of my favorites is beside the point.

Scotland once launched a major whaling fleet (there's a bit about Glasgow in the song *Jonah*). This song celebrates that tradition and possibly references ships lost in the Greenland ice back in 1830 (there remains debate about that).

China Sea

vocals: Janie Meneely, Paul DiBlasi

guitar: Paul DiBlasi

concertina: Scott Robinson

bones: Rowan Corbett

I've already told you about Steve Bunker and the China Sea Marine Trading Company (see *Jonah*). Bunker had filled his shop with navy surplus from around the world, plus bits and pieces of nautical detritus off of ships, yachts, tugs and tenders. Pictures and photographs lined the walls. Old books and salty curios lined the cabinets. The smell of hemp and old canvas lined the corners (this on top of the smell of horse poop and straw, still wedged tight in the cracks of the cobbled floor). One time when my charming and best beloved ex-husband Clint, daughter Lindsay and I had spent the afternoon peeking into the shop's nooks and crannies, we discovered what looked to be the missing running light (or some such piece of whatever—I don't really recall) off our boat *Mae S.*, the Pearson Invicta yawl we lived aboard at the time. Happy find! Over all this reigned Steve Bunker. He had two good eyes at the time (no telling now; his shop has moved to Portland, Maine, so all bets are off), but he had tattoos to spare and kept parrots. In short, this song simply begged to be written, though it took me ages to get it right. There's not a grain of truth to it, and I never lie.

Horizons

vocals: Paul DiBlasi

guitar: Paul DiBlasi

cello: Alfred Goodrich

Our good buddy Ramblin' Bob Zentz wrote this song, and Paul loved it from the moment he first heard it. We had joined Bob on stage at the Deltaville Maritime Museum, right after the family boatbuilding week. It was when Paul and I had just begun singing together—I'm not even sure we were Calico Jack yet.

In case you were wondering, that's me, smiling in the background.

Come a Summer Night

vocals: Janie Meneely, Paul DiBlasi, William Pint, Felicia Dale

didgeridoo: Alfred Goodrich

hand percussion: Gilberto Campello

hurdy gurdy drone: Felicia Dale

synthesizer: Jay Kenny

thunder/rain: Mother Nature

I went to Girl Scout camp when I was a kid, and singing was always a big part of the camping picture. Some of the songs we sang around the campfire were as corny as they come; others were more erudite. Girl Scouts is an international organization, so there were countless opportunities to meet girls from other parts of the world.

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Singing was a common denominator between cultures, and it always seemed as if Girl Scout leaders deliberately introduced us to songs without words so everyone could join in and not worry about meaning or pronunciation.

The structure and melody of *Come a Summer Night* was influenced by one such song, called *Tumba ta Tumba*. I'd like to learn more about this particular tune, and will relay information as I find it. Meanwhile, folks who know it from their campfire sing-arounds can try adding it to the mix. It makes an interesting layer.

The song I offer here tells the story of a storm building up along a river, something that happens often enough on the waterfront, especially on the heels of a sweaty hot day. The crash of thunder and patter of rain you hear is real. It actually began to storm when we were in Les Lentz's LSP Studio one day, and he literally stuck a microphone out the window and caught the sound on tape. Fortunately he missed the lightning.

Alfred Goodrich begins the sequence with a didgeridoo. My dear friend GeeBear, aka Brazilian percussionist Gilberto Campello, brings a variety of hand percussion into the picture. Felicia added a hurdy-gurdy drone, and Audio Logic engineer Jay Kenny layered in a bit of synthesizer. I do the "lead" vocal, backed up by Paul, William and Felicia. I already told you about the thunder.