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Arrangements by Ulf Brocksten and Per-Olov Kindgren Played by Federico Piseri (guitar+voice) and Francesco Sblendorio (ukulele)
"Scarborough Fair" is a traditional English ballad about the Yorkshire town of Scarborough. The song relates the tale of a young man who instructs the listener to tell his former love to perform for him a series of impossible tasks, such as making him a shirt without a seam and then washing it in a dry well, adding that if she completes these tasks he will take her back. Often the song is sung as a duet, with the woman then giving her lover a series of equally impossible tasks, promising to give him his seamless shirt once he has finished. As the versions of the ballad known under the title "Scarborough Fair" are usually limited to the exchange of these impossible tasks, many suggestions concerning the plot have been proposed, including the hypothesis that it is about the Great Plague of the late Middle Ages. The lyrics of "Scarborough Fair" appear to have something in common with an obscure Scottish ballad, The Elfin Knight (Child Ballad #2),[1] which has been traced at least as far back as 1670 and may well be earlier. In this ballad, an elf threatens to abduct a young woman to be his lover unless she can perform an impossible task ("For thou must shape a sark to me / Without any cut or heme, quoth he"); she responds with a list of tasks that he must first perform ("I have an aiker of good ley-land / Which lyeth low by yon sea-strand"). The melody is in Dorian mode, and is very typical of the middle English period. As the song spread, it was adapted, modified, and rewritten to the point that dozens of versions existed by the end of the 18th century, although only a few are typically sung nowadays. The references to the traditional English fair, "Scarborough Fair" and the refrain "parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme" date to 19th century versions, and the refrain may have been borrowed from the ballad Riddles Wisely Expounded, (Child Ballad #1), which has a similar plot. A number of older versions refer to locations other than Scarborough Fair, including Wittingham Fair, Cape Ann, "twixt Berwik and Lyne", etc. Many versions do not mention a place-name, and are often generically titled ("The Lovers' Tasks", "My Father Gave Me an Acre of Land", etc.). Lyrics
As a popular and widely distributed song from 1946-1968, there are many versions of the lyrics. The one here, intended as a duet by a man and a woman, includes the place after which it is named:
Male part:
Are you going to Scarborough Fair?
Parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme;
Remember me to the one who lives there,
For once she was a true love of mine.
Tell her to make me a cambric shirt,
Parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme;
Without any seam or needlework,
Then she shall be a true love of mine.
Tell her to wash it in yonder well,
Parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme;
Where never sprung water or rain ever fell,
And she shall be a true lover of mine.
Tell her to dry it on yonder thorn,
Parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme;
Which never bore blossom since Adam was born,
Then she shall be a true lover of mine.
Female part:
Now he has asked me questions three,
Parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme;
I hope he'll answer as many for me,
Before he shall be a true lover of mine.
Tell him to buy me an acre of land,
Parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme;
Between the salt water and the sea sand,
Then he shall be a true lover of mine.
Tell him to plough it with a ram's horn,
Parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme;
And sow it all over with one peppercorn,
And he shall be a true lover of mine.
Tell him to sheer't with a sickle of leather,
Parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme;
And bind it up with a peacock's feather,
And he shall be a true lover of mine.
Tell him to thrash it on yonder wall,
Parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme,
And never let one corn of it fall,
Then he shall be a true lover of mine.
When he has done and finished his work,
Parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme:
Oh, tell him to come and he'll have his shirt,
And he shall be a true lover of mine.
Alternate refrains
The oldest versions of "The Elfin Knight" (circa 1650) contain the refrain "my plaid away, my plaid away, the wind shall not blow my plaid away". Slightly more recent versions often contain one of a group of related refrains: Sober and grave grows merry in time
Every rose grows merry with time
There's never a rose grows fairer with time
These are usually paired with "Once (s)he was a true love of mine" or some variant. "Parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme" may simply be an alternate rhyming refrain to the original based on a corruption of "grows merry in time" into "rosemary and thyme". Commercial versions
The earliest commercial recording of the ballad was by actor/singers Gordon Heath and Lee Payant, Americans who ran a café and nightclub, L'Abbaye, on the Rive Gauche in Paris. They recorded the song on the Elektra album Encores From The Abbaye in 1955.[2][3] Their version used the melody from Frank Kidson's collection Traditional Tunes, published in 1891, which reported it as being "as sung in Whitty streets twenty or thirty years ago" – that is, in about the 1860s.[4] The song was also included on A. L. Lloyd's 1955 album The English And Scottish Popular Ballads, using Kidson's melody, but the version using the melody later developed by Simon & Garfunkel in "Scarborough Fair/Canticle" was first recorded on a 1956 album, English Folk Songs, by Audrey Coppard.[4][5] It was included by Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger on The Singing Island, and then by Shirley Collins in 1959 on the album False True Lovers.[3][4] It is likely that both Coppard and Collins learned it from MacColl, who claimed to have collected it "in part" from a Scottish miner. According to the Teesdale Mercury and Martin Carthy's daughter It emerged that researcher Ewan MacColl wrote a book of Teesdale folk songs after hearing Mark Anderson sing in the late 1940s. The book included Anderson's rendition of a little-known song called Scarborough Fair. However, according to Alan Lomax, MacColl's source was probably Cecil Sharp's One Hundred English Folk Songs, published in 1916.[6][7] In April 1966, Marianne Faithfull recorded and released her own take on "Scarborough Fair" on her album North Country Maid about six months prior to Simon & Garfunkel's release of their single version of the song in October 1966.[8] Simon & Garfunkel Paul Simon learned the song in London in 1965 from Martin Carthy, who had picked up the tune from the songbook by Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger[9] and included it on his eponymous 1965 album. Simon & Garfunkel set it in counterpoint with "Canticle"—a reworking of the lyrics from Simon's 1963 anti-war song, "The Side of a Hill".[10] set to a new melody composed mainly by Art Garfunkel.[9][11] It was the lead track of the 1966 album Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme, and was released as a single after being featured on the soundtrack to The Graduate in 1968.[9] The copyright credited only Simon and Garfunkel as the authors, causing ill-feeling on the part of Carthy, who felt the "traditional" source should have been credited.[9] This rift remained until Simon invited Carthy to perform the song with him as a duet at a London concert in 2000.[9] Simon performed this song with The Muppets when he guest starred on The Muppet Show. Before Simon had learned the song, Bob Dylan had borrowed the melody and several lines from Carthy's arrangement to create his song, "Girl from the North Country", which appeared on The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan (1963), Nashville Skyline (1969) (together with Johnny Cash), Real Live (1984) and The 30th Anniversary Concert Celebration (1993). The Coolies' first album, dig..?, released in 1986 by DB Records, consisted of nine tongue-in-cheek covers of Simon & Garfunkel classics, including this track. "Scarborough Fair" b/w "The Sound of Silence" was released as a 7" single. Chart performance Chart (1968) Peakposition Australian Kent Music Report 49 Irish Singles Chart 5 UK Singles Chart[12] 9 US Billboard Hot 100 11 Other recordings Kabir Suman and Ranjan Prasad recorded two different Bengali version of this song respectively their 'Tero' and 'Jhorer Songket' album. Suman's song was sung by Sabina Yasmin. Andy Williams released a version in 1968 on his album, Honey. Additionally, Simon, Garfunkel and Williams performed the song live, in William's TV show, in 1968.[13] Sergio Mendes and Brasil '66 made the U. S. top 20 in 1968 with a jazzy version of the song. This recording is prominently featured in the opening sequence of the 2015 German film Sanctuary. In 1969, Gershon Kingsley recorded a version featuring the Moog synthesiser on the album Music to Moog By. The Dutch rock group Brainbox recorded it in 1969.[14] The Korean duo Toi Et Moi () recorded a version in 1970.[15] The Korean singer Eunhee () recorded a version in 1971.[16] The King's Singers have recorded "Scarborough Fair" at least twice. One version appears on their LP Original Debut Recording from 1971 (reissued in 1994). Another version appears on their CD Annie Laurie: Folksongs of the British Isles from 1993. The Korean singer Park Inhee () recorded a version in 1976.[17] The Stone Roses used the ballad as the basis of their song "Elizabeth My Dear" (1989). Justin Hayward recorded this song on Classic Blue (1989). Progressive rock/metal band Queensrÿche recorded a version, featured on the single Empire (1990). Canadian guitarist Greg Joy recorded an instrumental version, feature on the album Celtic Secrets (1993). Gregorian sung this song on their album Master of Chant from 1999. Spanish folk metal band Mågo de Oz perform the lullaby "Duerme..." based on this melody. It is featured in their 2000 album Finisterra. Sarah Brightman recorded a version on her 2000 album La Luna. The song was released as a single in the same year. "Scarborough Fair" was the main subject throughout episode 8, season 2 of Gunslinger Girl (2003), "A Day in the Life of Claes". In the episode, Claes is shown carrying and reading The Elfin Knight. The ending theme, following the melody and lyrics of Simon & Garfunkel's popularized version, was sung by Aoi Tada. British classical/mediaeval music ensemble Mediaeval Baebes included their version of the song called Scarborough Fayre on their 2005 album Mirabilis. Celtic Woman performed the song in 2007 with lead vocals by Hayley Westenra. The group Omnia recorded a version of the ballad under the title The Elven Lover in their album Alive! Galician folk band Luar na Lubre recorded a version titled "Romeiro ao Lonxe "in Galician language on their album Ao vivo. This version and the whole album was recorded live in 2009 at Teatro Colón (A Coruña, Galicia). My Dying Bride performed a doom metal rendition of the song on their 2009 EP Bring Me Victory. German hard dance band Scooter used the song as the basis for the song "Scarborough Affair" on their twelfth studio album, The Ultimate Aural Orgasm (2007), as well as a remix of said song entitled "Scarborough Reloaded" on the maxi single Ti Sento. Leaves' Eyes, a Norwegian symphonic metal band, included their version of Scarborough Fair as the fifth track for their third studio album, Njord (2009). An acoustic version of the track has also been included on two EPs, My Destiny and at Heaven's End. Nicholls Low performed a rock version of the ballad on his 2009 album Emergie. Angels of Venice, Carol Tatum, harp and Christina Linhardt, soprano performed their version at Le Temp Traveler's Ball at the Monte Cristo Club, Los Angeles in April 2011. Laura Wright recorded a version, featured on her album The Last Rose (2011). The Gothard Sisters released a folk version on their 2011 album, Story Girl[18] Nolwenn Leroy, a French singer-songwriter, included her version of the song on the deluxe edition of her 2011 album Bretagne. Italian Nu-Jazz artist Nicola Conte released a version of the song on his 2011 album Love & Revolution. Nox Arcana recorded a gothic version of "Scarborough Fair," with revised lyrics that tell a ghost-story, for their 2012 album Winter's Majesty. Siobhan Owen recorded a version, featured on her album "Storybook Journey" (2012). Marina Prior covered the song for her 2012 album Both Sides Now. The character Kanato Sakamaki (voiced by Yuki Kaji) from the anime Diabolik Lovers (2012) briefly sings "Scarborough Fair" in episode 6. Celia Pavey performed the song in her audition for The Voice, gaining four turns; she later recorded a studio version. David Nevue performed the song on solo piano in his 2013 album Open Sky. Peter Hollens performed a capella version in 2014. It will be included on his first album. The SUNY Geneseo a capella group Exit 8 recorded a version in 2014 for their album Truth Lion. The German-based mediaeval folk duo The Violet Moon recorded a version of the song in 2015 for their album "A Walk in Time". Motoi Sakuraba arranged a version in addition to his score for Phantasy Star Nova which was sung by Saori Hayami. British jazz folk band Pentangle recorded a version on their album One More Road. Japanese singer, Chihiro Yonekura recorded the song on her 20th single Omoide ga Ippai. An Instrumental version of the song is used in Civilization VI as the theme for the English civilization. American Renaissance Faire band Green Man Clan recorded the song on their 2016 Album, "We Go To Elvenses".[19]
References
External links
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