

Turn, Turn, Turn:
Celebrating Pete Seeger
in Dance & Music

Elementary School Teachers' Guide

** = to be read by teacher

* = to be read to students

THE
VANAVER CARAVAN

Dance & Music Company

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The Vanaver Caravan

The Vanaver Caravan Dance & Music Company is known throughout the U.S. and Europe for its enlivening performances in various styles ranging from the farthest reaches of the globe, to Appalachian clogging, to the reconstruction of works by modern dance pioneer Ted Shawn, to “Pastures of Plenty,” based on the life and music of folksinger Woody Guthrie, to original Vanaver works.

Directed by choreographer Livia Vanaver and composer/musician Bill Vanaver, The Vanaver Caravan weaves a tapestry of dance heritage with skill and precision. At home, in the concert hall, at outdoor festivals, conferences and in the classroom, the Company has captivated audiences throughout the world with its celebrations of American and World dance and music.

PRODUCTION:

Director: Lisa Channer, Artistic Director, Theatre Novi Most – Minneapolis, MN. Research and performance project with mission to create new plays and performances that bridge disparate cultures, ideas and methodologies. Emphasis on projects connecting the vocabularies and ideas of the U.S. Russia and Europe. 1998 – Present.

Music Arranger: **Bill Vanaver**, well known musician and composer, has been playing to audiences throughout the world for the past 35 years. His stellar instrumental work on 5 string banjo, as well as a myriad of other folk instruments, along with his vast knowledge of traditional songs and musical styles, have brought his warm performances to such well known stages as the Newport Folk Festival, the Philadelphia Folk Festival among many others. He has recorded solo on the Elektra, Philo, and Vanguard labels, and has performed with such notables as Pete Seeger, Buffy Sainte Marie, and Tommy Makem.

Choreographer **Livia Vanaver**, has researched and performed dance styles from the U.S. and abroad for the past 35 years. She wrote a regular dance column for Sing Out! Magazine, “Steppin Out”. A leading authority in dance education, she has pioneered the exposure of World dance styles to schools, conferences and workshops in the U.S. and Europe.

Together **Bill and Livia** created the Vanaver Caravan in 1972. They have presented concerts, performed on TV, and appeared at countless folk festivals in the U.S. and Europe, including The Smithsonian American Folk life Festival, The Biennale de la Dance in Lyon, France, and the Sidmouth International Festival in England, Tanz&Folk Fest in Rudolstadt, Germany, Symphony Space in New York, Jacob's Pillow and for many years toured for the US State Department as Cultural Ambassadors of Good Will.

Pete Seeger **

For nearly 70 years as a performer, Pete Seeger has embodied the ideals of folk music – communication, entertainment, social comment, historical continuity, inclusiveness. The songs he has written, and those he has discovered and shared, have helped preserve our cultural heritage, imprinting adults and children with the sounds, traditions and values of our global past and present. **A fearless warrior for social justice and the environment**, Pete's political activism – from the Civil Rights movement and anti-McCarthyism to resistance to fascism and the wars in Vietnam and the Middle East – has become the template for subsequent generations of musicians and ordinary citizens with something to say about the world.

While his frequently unpopular stances have perhaps cost him a greater and more superficial popularity through media and performance blacklisting for during the '50s and '60s, 88-year-old Pete's fearless contributions have nonetheless earned him a **Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award**, a **Harvard Arts Medal**, the **Kennedy Center Award**, the **Presidential Medal of the Arts**, and even membership in the **Rock & Roll Hall of Fame**. *peteseegermusic.com*

Questions:

What was Pete Seeger fighting for?

Why was he so dedicated to his ideals?

Are there oppressed people today? Where?

What personal qualities and attitudes did Pete have that made him so great?

How can making music and dancing make your life better?

How can music and dance help us to make a better world?

The Performance: **, *

Turn, Turn, Turn: Celebration of Pete Seeger's Music in Dance

Pete Seeger was a close friend of The Vanaver Caravan. When Bill was 15 years old he attended a summer camp where Pete was playing the banjo. Bill was inspired to learn the banjo (and many other stringed instruments) and set off on his own career as a folk singer. In 1971, Bill eventually sang on the first singing crew of the Clearwater, a sloop that Pete helped to build and that still goes up and down the Hudson River teaching everyone about ecology and keeping the waters clean. In 1973, Bill and Livia Vanaver moved out of NYC and next door to Pete's daughter, Mika, just north of Beacon, NY where the Seeger family lived. Over the years they became great friends. Bill and Pete wrote the music for the first film about the Clearwater. In 1995, Pete wrote a card to Livia saying:

'Dear Livia,

I would love to play for your dancers. Let's do a concert in early Spring. Phone.' Pete. Well, we did an entire concert of Pete's music in May 1996 at the Bardavon Opera House in Poughkeepsie, NY and now are recreating that concert to tour.

In the years that followed we performed together with Pete many times, in concert halls, at festivals, raising money for good causes, and working with children in schools. Our CaravanKids group recorded Pete's song: "Take It From Dr. King", which he wrote after 911. We all miss Pete and Toshi. They left us a legacy of music and activism that we will pass along from generation to generation.

We highly encourage teachers and students to use any of these pieces as the foundation for a research project. Librarians can also be brought in to augment this program with related tales. Reflective writing or drawing after the performance.

Living in the Country (instrumental by Pete)

This was the actual melody that Pete wanted to play for our dancers in performance. It was the inspiration for our work together. In this opening piece, the dancers have a series of playful entrances and exits, like a game in the meadow. The dance style will be more modern and athletic.

Cindy (traditional) Pete loved to play for square dances. In fact, he met his wife, Toshi, when he was playing at a dance and she was dancing with Margaret Mayo's group. The style of dance we use here is Appalachian clog dancing. People of all ages, all over the south, in states like West Virginia, North and South Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky do this style of dance. It is based on Cherokee traditional shuffle dance, English and Irish step dance and African-American movements, rhythms and syncopations that merged together as people in the Appalachian mountains watched each other dance. They enjoyed "borrowing" steps and styles from each other and developed them into their own percussive dance forms.

John Henry (story dance about this legendary character)

This was one of Pete's most well-known stories that he sang. John Henry was a powerful worker who could dig and build very quickly. When a man invented a steam drill, he challenged John Henry, saying that his steam drill could dig faster and better. The dancers will portray the following characters:

John Henry, his wife (Polly Ann), and the man who invented the steam drill. The style we use to tell the tale is modern/contemporary dance. The dancers transform their bodies to become: townspeople, co-workers, the actual steam drill, a mountain, mourners, celebrators. If you listen to the words of the song and watch the dancers, you will see the whole story come alive!

Abiyoyo (South African tale)

This is a story of a little boy and his father (who was a magician) and how they save the town from the giant, Abiyoyo. Pete made this song famous and used to dance around the stage and tell the tale. Bill will sing, tell the story and play the banjo. You will be invited to sing the chorus, so you have a very important part!

Wimoweh (Mbube) (written by Solomon Linda)

Pete sang this song with the Weavers (actually pronounced mbube wo, wimbubwe). It was made popular by other groups on the radio who

thought it was just a folk song. When Pete discovered that it was actually written by a man in South Africa named, Solomon Linda, he was instrumental in being sure that the royalties from record sales went back to him and his family.

The dance style that inspires our choreography is based on South African Gumboot dancing and movements from the Zulu and Bantu tribes. It is a dance about freedom and gathering community together.

Empty Pockets Blues

Pete wrote this song about the important things in life. You can be happy even if you don't have money. When you love someone, that is more important.

This is a duet in a soft shoe combined with Lindy hop /Swing dance styles)

Union Maid (song by Woody Guthrie)

The American labor movement, in spite of its rocky history, is responsible for many benefits we take for granted, such as the 8 hour day, workers' ability to strike and negotiate with their employers, and on-the-job safety regulations. Those who fought for these rights often put their lives on the line, as the companies frequently tried to break up strikes by hiring violent "thugs" and even getting "protection" from local law enforcement. Many women, like Mother Jones and Aunt Molly Jackson were oftentimes the true heroes of these struggles. Labor songs, like "Union Maid," were important instruments in promoting solidarity and reinforcing the values of the workers during these hard times.

The Music: Woody often used folk and popular tunes of his day as the melodies for his songs. "Union Maid" was written to the tune of the pop song "Red Wing."

The Dance: Livia Vanaver uses the Southern clog dancing style as a base, over which she has choreographed actions which express the feistiness, bravery, and humor of the "Union Maid."

Questions:

1. This song is from the 1930's. What kinds of jobs did women who worked in factories in those days have?
2. What is a "Union?"
3. What was the "Union Maid" trying to accomplish? How?
4. Why did she have to be brave?

The chorus is: "Oh you can't scare me, I'm sticking to the union, I'm sticking to the union, I'm sticking to the union" (2x) "till the day I die!" Perhaps some of you will learn this chorus and sing with the musicians.

Newspaper Dance & Garbage

This is an environmental song preceded by a comedic dance/theatre piece originally choreographed by Gladys Bailin in 1970 using newspapers. Here is a dance where there is no musical accompaniment.....only the sound of feet and the newspapers themselves. It is a structured improvisation which is really fun for the dancers to perform and fun to watch as well. At the end of the dance and as we clean up the stage, we hope you will sing the chorus to the song: Garbage (which just repeats the word Garbage 3 x)

Turn Turn Turn (words, Ecclesiastes, music: Pete Seeger)

This is one of Pete's most popular songs. Many people don't realize that Pete wrote this song. We perform the song in an expressive, modern /contemporary dance style. It brings a feeling of hope and that "there is a time for every purpose". Pete said to us many times before he passed away, that he felt more hopeful for the future than ever. He believed that the world and the human race would be sustained and saved by small groups of people actively working together for various causes and that is how we can accomplish living in a more humane way and in caring for our precious planet earth.

This Land is Your Land (words and music by Woody Guthrie)

Pete loved this song. We often ended our annual Calico Ball with This Land ...which Pete performed with us for the past 25 years in his home town of Beacon, NY with ALL the third graders in the district! Woody traveled all over the United States, often hitching rides in the box cars of freight trains. He saw the beauty of our country. He also witnessed poverty and injustice. This song inspires us all to notice the beauty around us and also to be mindful of treating each other with great care, love and respect if the human race is going to survive.

This Land is Your Land: Woody's most famous song, sung by the whole company, is really a statement of the American ideal of participation, and a hope that all of America's citizens will increasingly have an even greater voice in the nation's future.

Questions:

1. Why do you think this song is so famous?
2. Woody says, "This Land was made for you and me." Who, exactly are "you and me?"
3. To whom does America belong?
4. Are other countries just as important to their people as America is to ours?
5. Are we taking care of our country and its people? How?

Projects:

1. Even though this is a professional dance and music show, all of the dances are based on the kinds of dancing that everyday people do on their own. The same can be said for the music. Why do people dance and make music? How are these dances and songs different from each other/

* For the teacher – Here's a partial list of possible responses to the above questions, but see if you can inspire the students to come up with most of it.

1. To celebrate
 2. TO meet and socialize (couple dancing)
 3. To show strengths and abilities of warriors.
 4. In religion as part of rituals, ceremonies, or to evoke states of ecstasy, or "centering."
 5. For exercise.
 6. To tell stories.
2. Learn to sing the song, "This Land is Your Land," and discuss the verses.
 - At the finale of our show, this will enable the children to sing along on the verses as well as the chorus.