

Chasing Sunshine -

Maggie Dodd, Michael Poole and Rick Fitzgerald

By Nan Bovingdon

I've been listening to a wonderful CD, "Chasing Sunshine," featuring Maggie Dodd, Michael Poole and Rick Fitzgerald, with help by the musical talents of Heidi and John Cerrigione, Neal and Coleen Walters. All are multi-instrumentalists.

Michael was the 2018 Mountain Laurel Autoharp Champion, and former recipient of the Cohen/Grappell recording grant. His CD, *Beneath Still Waters* has been previously reviewed in *AQ*.

Rick was the 2009 winner at Mountain Laurel. His CD (one of several), *Crossing the Water* has also been reviewed here. So what could go wrong with their new CD, playing together and with Maggie Dodd? Nothing, that's what.

Here's a CD by a group of musicians known for versatility, taste and musical excellence. From the very first cut, "Red Tail Hawk," from the singing of Kate Wolf, according to Maggie's liner notes, the various strengths of these singers and players shine. Maggie's clear, clean solo voice, Michael and Rick's harmonies, and Neal's mandolin stand out, backed nicely by Heidi's autoharp and Coleen's upright bass. It's a haunting melody, beautifully delivered.

"I Wish I Knew How it Would Feel to be Free," a 1960's anthem, is still relevant in concept and message today. Rick's harp and vocal render it again as if brand new. His singing is particularly lyrical and moving on this song.

The interplay of the entire group shines throughout this CD, and a perfect example is Louise Branscombe's song "Steel Rails." From the first guitar and harp intro, to Maggie's vocal, Heidi's gentle harp, Neal's lilting

mandolin, unobtrusive but supportive background of vocal harmony and bass, everyone works so closely together, well, you might think they were related or something!

Michael Smith's marvelous song "The Dutchman," performed on guitar and vocal by Rick, brought Steve Goodman right into my living room. Same guitar arrangement and understated, but tender lyrics, it is very pleasing.

I particularly enjoyed the musical interplay on "The Rising of the Moon," with women's harmony, connected by guitar and harp with mandolin dancing on top. These people should own t-shirts that reads "Plays Well With Others."

"Who Will Watch the Home Place" sounds like a song and question from our grandparents' time, but as folk music goes, it's quite young, written by Laurie Lewis.

It is played and sung flawlessly, the guitar and mandolin are particularly suited to this melody, as well as to the message of the song itself; "when I leave here, who will I be?" This one will stick in my mind--in a good way--long after the CD is back in its jacket.

These are fine musicians, both vocally and instrumentally. Not just the 'headliners', Maggie, Rick and Michael, but the accompanying players. Who wouldn't love to have a back-up band like THAT?

This CD's a keeper.



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