



Banjo NewsLetter

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**INTERVIEW
BY STEVE MARTIN**

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modal.

TE: Yes it is. *Paint Creek* runs through Ohio, near Chillicothe, and was a famous Indian area; lots of Native Americans there. And having grown up near Cherokee, I had a bit of a sense of how some of the songs were voiced by the Cherokee. So I wrote *Paint Creek* sort of in that vein.

BNL: It has a definite Native-American feel to it, not that ...

TE: It's not a native American melody, no.

BNL: No, but it sounds like it would be a great theme for a Western movie. Well, I find it incredible you have contributed so many songs to the banjo repertoire. Sometimes I hear your songs recorded by other people, so I hear other interpretations. James Alan Shelton's version of *Stephen*, for instance, is a good recording. And the Red Clay Ramblers have recorded your tunes. And Aine Minogue, and Alice Gerrard...

TE: And Jerry O'Sullivan recorded two of my tunes, on bagpipes, of all things—*One Rose*, and *Wind Chimes and Nursery Rhymes*.

BNL: Really. Well that would sound good, because you have great melodies. Now are you working on anything new?

TE: I'm still writing tunes; I have three new ones, and if I do another recording they will definitely be on that. I've been thinking of doing a recording of some of my new music with some of my favorite older pieces.

BNL: Now didn't you recently play in front of an orchestra?

TE: The Southeastern Ohio Symphony Orchestra! They wanted me to wear a tuxedo. [laughter] So I wore a suit. It was fun! Pretty amazing feeling to be up front of a symphony, all the strings and brass and percussion. They had taken some of my tunes and written arrangements.

BNL: What tunes were they?

TE: We did *Farewell My Home*, *Stephen*, and *Wind Chimes and Nursery Rhymes*...

BNL: Beautiful. I learned that.

TE: Five tunes in total. Then we did an encore of *Dueling Banjos*, and that was the most *unusual* arrangement I've ever heard of that tune. We started it out with the typical little thing, and then the orchestra came in and did whatever they did, which was a big fanfare sounding thing. Then they dropped out and we started over again, and the orchestra conductor, Dr. Laura Schumann, who is a *fantastic* violinist; she played violin against the banjo. It was a hoot; really fun.

BNL: Was it odd in any way to hear your music played orchestrally, or did you feel it played well?

TE: I was very pleased with it; it sounded big, and lush, and beautiful.

BNL: I would think your melodies would translate fantastically with an orchestra. Talk about myself for a moment, one of the early records that I got was Felix Slatkin's "*Fantastic Strings*" playing *John Henry*. And there were absolutely no bluegrass instruments on it at all, except for a single banjo. There were violins, of course. But here was this solo banjo playing *John Henry*, not in a bluegrass style, but just picked out in a slow rhythm of single notes. And I thought it was beautiful! And I've always had that in the back of my head, to do that someday, because it's quite moving. I wonder if you have had that experience.

TE: I did have that experience with the orchestra. But it also reminds me, speaking of *John Henry*, I was in Missouri working with Monroe, and we were early at the venue that evening, and