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Jeff Stockton



the Honey Roads

Last night as I was sleeping,
I dreamt—marvellous error!—
that I had a beehive
here inside my heart.
And the golden bees
were making white combs
and sweet honey
from my old failures.
Antonio Machado



1) Na Ródannaí Meala

Which comes first - the Blossom or the Bee? Or is it some Great Song that sings both into being...for each needs the other. The Irish concept of the 'Amhrán Mór' - the Great Song - is everywhere around us...and all living beings bring their own sweet song into the symphony. The Honeybees sing a song truly distinct from all others. It is a song of beauty and unity, sung each time they dive headlong into beauty. A simple prelude to the music of the Honey Roads.

Singer of sweetness

(Amhránaí milseán)

Singer of joy

(Amhránaí an-áthas)

Singer of delight

(Amhránaí aoibhnis)

Singer of honey

(Amhránaí meala)

On the Honey Roads

(Na ródannaí meala)



2) The Honeyqueen

One afternoon in early summer, a royal visitor graced us with a visit. A young queen on her singular flight out into the world. There was no mistaking who she was - her incredible size revealed her identity.

To my surprise (as the maiden flight of the queen is about something else entirely), she lingered near the flower pots just outside for a few minutes. It was an incredible thing to see her up close. This little piece was composed in her honour.

My own original tune - mixed with a delightful traditional piece called 'Ships At Full Sail', for the Honeyqueen did not fly...she was sailing - stately on the winds.



3) Handprint On My Heart

When we love, that love sings - even in the absence of the loved one. As I traveled through Ireland in 2012, it was always a gift to chat with Irish Gaelic speaking people. On one quick chat, I asked how to say 'I miss you'...I was delighted with the answer. The translation I was given from the Irish Gaelic - 'You are with me, like a handprint on my heart'. Ah - it needed a song.

We have a love strong as the mountains
We have a love as deep as the sea
We have a love bright as the sunrise -
Strong as the summer winds

Chorus

Tá tú in éineacht liom mar lámhlorg ar mo chroí
You are with me, O you are with me
Like a handprint on my heart.

You sing to my heart as the dawn sings of sunlight
You sing to my heart on the warm summer breeze
You sing to my heart as the bright summer blossoms
Sing to the honeybee

Chorus

Sweet is the sound of your bright ringing laughter
Sweet is the smile as it lights up your face
Sweet is your touch and your arms strong around me
Sweet is this joyfilled embrace

Chorus

4) Pollen Pilgrim

The honeybees just do what they do...but when I watch them, I see such a reverence, such a profound gentleness in their approach. I spend far more time than I am comfortable admitting watching the bees in the summer. Their arrival seems a good moment to drop everything, and see magic unfold. An arrangement of traditional pieces in honour of their grand summer pollen pilgrimage. An arrangement of 3 of my favourite traditional pieces...'Drunk at Night, Dry at Morn'; 'Blarney Pilgrim'; and 'Fairly Shut of Her'...for the Bees dance on their pilgrimages.



5) Honey Tastes Sweeter

The Celtic traditions are astonishing in their reference to and reverence for the bee. You can see it in the sweetness of the folk traditions. Some years ago, I came across the mention of the best way to tell if someone was your true love...for honey would taste sweeter coming from their hand.

I saw the Honeybee
Dancing over the meadows green
Dance in joy completely free
The sweetest thing I had ever seen

From each blossom a sweet ambrosia
Was carried off in the summer air
It was poetry in motion
And then I saw you dancing there

All in one moment
It happened suddenly
My heart had opened
Like the blossom to the bee

You bring my heart sweetness
You bring my heart joy
Nothing sweeter than the Love between us

This love is sweet as nectar - our love will endure
Like Honey and Holy Water you are the answer to my prayers

Now through the seasons we've danced together
Under the sun and beneath the stars
In stormy skies you are my shelter
You are the fire within my hearth

You are my love and my greatest treasure
My heart is dancing my words are true
Like honeycombs in the depth of winter
The sweetest thing in my life is you

Honey tastes sweeter coming from your hand

Like Honey and Holy Water
You are the answer to my prayers!

6) Kiss The Blossom

**The bees dance, and it is joyful to behold.
They approach the bloom, moving away
from this one and that - but often with the
slightest touch or caress - a kiss for the
blossom. My own original tune, blended
with 'Merrily Kiss The Quaker'.**



7) Hearts On Fire

**Summer night, firelight...it always seems
that its spell allows us to forget the
troubles of the wider world for a moment
- and fall in love again. I have always
felt that heart is both a Honeycomb and
a Hearth...each aspect needing care and
tending. The great bard Amergin called
the Bees the 'Tears of the Sun'...and so -
as we do - they have hearts aflame.**

**Here in the firelight your hand in mine
The stars blaze so bright the evening sweet and fine
The rising moon lifts the dark
The love between us is the spark**

**An chroí ar las -Hearts on fire!
An chroí ar las - Burning bright!
An chroí ar las - Hearts on fire!
Oh come share the light!**



**This fiery hearth - where magic starts
Joyful hands, joyful hearts
A beacon blazing - a midnight sun
Warm our hearts til break of dawn**

**Dreaming with you together
Dreaming with two strong hearts
Dreaming into forever
Through the embers to the stars**

Chorus

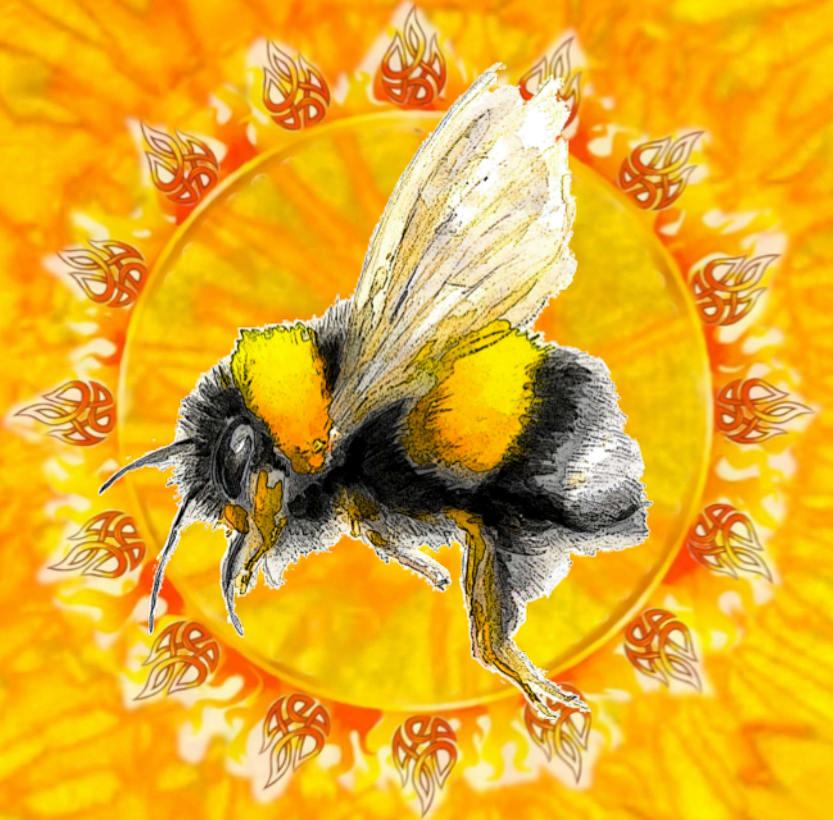
**Illumination of the hearth
A constellation of swirling sparks
The fire deepens as it burns
Dreaming strengthens, hope returns**

**Dreaming with you together
Dreaming with two strong hearts
Dreaming into forever
Through the embers to the stars**

Chorus

8) The Honey Roads

**This little melody was a gift to me.
It just appeared on the harp strings
one day, title and all. It always
sounds best played outside on a
summer afternoon...with the
windsong in leaves swirling through
it - carrying it off through sunlight
and shade.**





9) Bless The Mead

**Mead is a magical, celebratory
honeywine...meant for the big
celebrations. Summer night, the one I
love in my arms...a dance beneath moon
and stars. My own original song - with a
little of 'The Kesh' - perfect for dancing
and laughing in circles under the
summer stars.**



**Moonlight shines honeycomb gold
The sky is midnight blue
The moon was made for the sky to hold
And I was made for you**

**So raise your glass
The taste so sweet!
Bless the hands that made this mead,
And bless the sweet Honeybee!
Take my hand - dance with me.**

**The Evenstar sings a song of love,
Round the moon luminous.
Eternity dances above,
Tonight they dance for us**

**So raise your glass
The taste so sweet!
Bless the hands that made this mead,
And bless the sweet Honeybee!
Take my hand - dance with me.**

10) Arise & Dance

Beekeepers tell the best stories. A beekeeper friend of mine shared an image with me from the hives. Early spring, weather wet, grey and cool. The hum of the hives can be heard all the way inside the house...the Bees are primed. Then, every so often - clouds part, a wave of sunlight and warmth...and the Bees - thousands of them - all rise from the hives...and Dance in the sunlight. A great swirling cloud - sunlit wings. Then, the sun retreats, and the Bees flow back into the hives. Magic. My own original piece - with a touch of what is often called the 'fun' Saltarello.



11) Fill The Honeycomb

'Fill The Honeycomb' is a simple little piece - a dreaming of the hum of deep contentment of the Bees...when all is well within the hive...

when the honeycombs are filling.

It is a song that takes me to sense memories of summer...

The sweet clarity of cloudless blue sky; the rush of windsong sweeping through green leaves; the sweetness of shade - after the sun's warmth has melted the tension from every muscle.

I have long thought that the heart is a Honeycomb...

Honeycombs are meant to be filled.



12) Honeybee In The Heather

Late summer, greens fading with the coming harvest. But still prime Bee Time. And knowing that the change of seasons is coming - the dance through the longer grasses is all the more joyful. Two traditional pieces I have long loved...Sí Bheag, Sí Mhór; and Rose In The Heather.



13) The Final Blossom

There is a poignancy to the last things. All of us feel it when the frost approaches, when the days shorten, when the blossoms fade. This melody came through the harp while recording 'Between Two Lights'. I recorded it with lyrics, and a different arrangement...but the piece just did not feel settled. In completing this album, it seemed to find its place without words...just a simple moment of savouring the beauty of the bittersweet.

14) The Bee Loud Glade

My favourite poem from W.B. Yeats is 'The Lake Isle Of Innisfree'. As with all of his work - a beautiful blend of hope and yearning. It is a Dreaming, a meditation, on the sense of finally being able to go home. His descriptions of the signs of home make me smile every time...the peace, the bean-poles, the light on the linnet's wings...and the Bee Loud Glade. Getting older, the power of Memory astonishes me. Where, suddenly now and uncalled - a moment from the past simply rises up and through mind and heart. It seems like a stolen moment - stepping into the summer gold of some summer past...

First snowfall silent the night
Autumn gold fades to silver and white
Snow upon the honey roads
Sweet memories lead me home

Chorus

I will arise now, I will go down
I will go down, down to the bee loud glade.
Find peace there, peace comes flowing slow
In the midsummer sun's warm golden honey glow

Through whitened banks sings the whispering stream
The harvest waltz now winter's dream
You fill my heart, my heart is a honeycomb
Memory sweet now as it was long ago

Chorus

Though those sweet days will never come again
Here in my heart the sweetness of you remains
I thought my memories would only dim and fade
But they are golden down in the bee loud glade

Chorus

15) The Honey Roads (Reprise)

**A simple postlude to the travels upon
the Honey Roads...**

**Here upon
The Honey Roads
Blessings fall
On my heart and soul**



16) New Beginnings

It was the world view of the Celts...The End is the Beginning. Seen in the new year beginning at Samhain; the new day beginning at dusk. The dark time of the year comes, the Bees go deep into the winter cluster...but the hum of the hive sings promise of the joys that will come again. A simple piece from a recording project in 2009. A version of this piece was used as part of a spoken word introduction to one of my storytelling albums. But the simple beauty of harp and violin seemed to also want to just sing on its own.

17) Beautiful Mother

A simple moment of heartfelt connection to the Beauty of the world. This piece was planned to be the closing song to an instrumental project released in 2010. At the last minute, it was changed to be an instrumental called 'In The Stillness'. As I was completing 'The Honey Roads', I came across this song in my archives, and felt it deserved a home.



**In the stillness I can hear
Across the sky your song of joy
Fill the world, bright as the sun
Held in your warmth, my heart is full
Sing to me beneath the sun.**

**In the stillness I hear the song
In the winds that whisper through
Shining birch, stately pine,
Mighty oak, silent ash
Sing to me beneath the boughs**

**In the stillness I hear the song
In the shining waters all around
Flowing rivers, turning tides
Silent pools, soothing rains
Sing to me upon the shore**

**All around me I hear the song
Beneath the silence of the stones
Song of wisdom, teach me how
To endure mountain strong
Lift me up so I stand tall**

**Lead me on in wonderment
Lift my eyes to behold
Darkness lifted by the dawn
Beautiful light in the golden noon
Sunsets woven red and gold**



**Make me ready to come to you
With clean hands and shining eyes
So when life fades as sunset fades,
I shine bright as a midnight star.
And I come home singing**

**Beautiful Mother, I can hear
Beneath the stars, your song of Joy
Held in your warmth, my heart is full
I lift my voice upon the winds
I sing to you, beneath the moon.**

Credits

**All Music Composed/Arranged by
Jeff Stockton**

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Barb Olorenshaw: Violin Tracks 16 & 17

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Jeff Stockton



the Honey Roads