

Four Poems

Playing by Memory

by Nicholas Jones

for Marcelle and Paul Lipke

About to leave these woods, I here rehearse
this passing week, to claim its lines
for memory; I practice them
to set them in my mind, before
intensity diminishes,
dissolving.

This week feels now inevitable,
secure, immovable in mind;
but once I leave this magic circle,
it will begin to change and fade.
It cannot long retain its place
in memory.

What seems so resonant and clear,
a single, focused entity,
will move to multiplicity,
a flower seen by a dragonfly;
a hundred pictures scattered
and distant.

And so, I make these few fixed notes,
snapshots, geographies to map
where we have lived and moved this week,
fragments to remind me of the whole.
Inadequate, of course, but better than
forgetting:

*The slanting sun of morning, as
I walk to Jubilee; the drops
of water falling from high pines;
the risings of the trail; the dark
cool water of Long Pond
at midnight.*

*Music to learn—the sense of new
and old at once; our six-day chance
to shape its lines and find its soul;
the way we work together, listening
and, every now and then, playing
as one voice.*

*The feel of shoes on sanded floors;
the fiddle's modal slides; the eyes
that greet me as I turn a hey;
the hands that guide me, circling
among the interwoven figures
of the dance.*

*A clown's impossibilities;
laughter and song; bits of our lives,
poems and skits and jokes performed;
the tables' eager conversations;
living with generosity
and open hearts.*

*A bagpipe's echoes in the trees;
a dance tune buzzing in a shawm;
viols that pick their notes from silence
and then return them to the woods;
the ancient woody, hollow thunk
of antlers.*

They're not the week's full harmony,
but these are cadence points—enough,
perhaps, to ground a later echo,
the week's implicit counterpoint
held in body and in mind,
remembered.

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The author is Professor of English and Associate Dean at Oberlin College as well as participant (along with his wife Sue) in Early Music Week at Pinewoods. This poem was the result of last summer's EMW auction, with the Lipkes offering the highest bid.

The G Fiddler

by Dudley Laufman

That's what he did nighttimes
played for them house dances
down the peninsula
Tunes like White Cockade
Larry O'Gaff 'n like that
Folks would walk on broken glass
to have a bow arm like his
Well that's what he did nights
Had real work daylight hours
what the hippies call a Day Job
Had his own boat and a mate help 'im
So he's pulling pots one morning
and a rope snagged
pulled his hand right through
cutting off the tip of a finger
He says to his mate
'Dere goes B flat

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Dudley Laufman is a musician, caller, poet and recipient of several awards for his contributions to traditional dance and music.