

LESSEN THE BLUE



LARRY FOLK



With my self-designed, hand-built 1978 5-string dulcimer

LESSEN THE BLUE - LARRY FOLK

- 1 There Is a Power (Amandla! Ngawethu!) (4:07)
- 2 Lessen the Blue (5:38)
- 3 The Real Me (3:46)
- 4 Hey Politician! (Explicit) (2:05)
- 5 Madeira Way (4:59)
- 6 Nunca Mas (3:11)
- 7 All You Need to Know (Explicit) (4:21)
- 8 It's Forever (5:19)
- 9 215 (Two Hundred Fifteen) (2:58)
- 10 On Sunset Bay (3:30)
- 11 Sunset Song (45 Year Revision) (5:01)
- 12 It's Down To You (5:41)

Bonus Tracks:

- 13 Lessen the Blue (Single Version) (4:03)
- 14 All You Need to Know (Radio Edit) (4:21)
- 15 Hey Politician! (Radio Edit) (2:05)

Produced by and Arranged by Larry Folk
except 215, Arranged by Suba Sankaran & Dylan Bell
All songs by Lawrence J Folk

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Larry Folk -Guitars, Bass, Mandolin, Dulcimer, Dobro, Percussion, Hand Drum, Synth Programming, Voice

Pat Collins - Upright Bass

Steve Heathcote - Drums, Percussion

Dylan Bell - Bass (There is a Power)

Michael Racioppa - Piano, Organ

Al Hollett - Guitar solo on It's Down to You

Dylan Bell, Suba Sankaran & Tom Lillington - voices

Recorded at Amaranth Audio, Toronto between 2022 - 2024

Al Hollett's guitar recorded by Andrew Lambert at Sade's Place, Herring Cove, NS April 2024

Mike Racioppa's keys recorded at Madhouse Studio, Wasaga Beach ON, spring 2024

Suba Sankaran, Dylan Bell, Steve Heathcote and Sunset Song recorded by Murray Daigle at Phase One Studios, Toronto

Mixed and Mastered by Murray Daigle, Phase One Studios, April - July 2024

Photos: Suzanne Regimbal, A. Bruno, L. Folk

Special thanks to

All the players and singers, I am grateful for your participation in this project

Mike Racioppa for ideas, support, and playing

Norman Retasket for his words and his beautiful hand drum

Murray Daigle for everything, for years, as always, and for pointing me back to my 1983 Larrivee M-08. What was I thinking?

Art Menius, Eric Alper for promotion and assistance

Andrew Lambert, Al Hollett, Eva MacNeil, Suzanne Regimbal, Rob Potvin

Anne Applebaum for writing Twilight of Democracy; Barbara McQuade for Attack From Within

My family, and Rachel, Sarah and Adreana for help with the cover, input and support

In the years before the pandemic, I had comfortably settled into performing vocal jazz. As LJ Folk, I released two jazz recordings filled with standards, originals, and most interesting for me, jazz arrangements I made of classic rock songs from my youth. With the onset of Covid, like everyone else on the planet, I was forced to adapt. With no jazz venues to perform in, or jazz quartet to back me, I picked up my guitar and made the shift back to my songs. The result was a full album, *In The Moonlight* (September 2020), followed by a handful of singles: [A Hit of Love](#); (My response to Covid, while we awaited the vaccine), [So Wrong](#); and around the time of the botched Afghanistan Exit and the reversal of Roe v Wade, [Feeling Lost in America](#).

The years following the Pandemic have led us all to a troubling place. We are witnessing a rise in political division, racial disparity, lies, intolerance, military invasions, and the rescinding of hard-won rights. Even though I love performing the standards, and will continue to do so in my live shows, at this moment in time, singing, "I've got the world on a string," doesn't quite express my feelings about the turmoil.

There's a lot of blue in the world these days. Feels like a good time to lessen it.



There is a Power (Amandla! Ngawethu!)* (Folk)

*Zulu: Ah-mahn-dlah, Ah-weh-too "Power is with us!"

Amandla! Amandla! Ngawethu!
There is a power when we stand as one
We share one desire: liberty for everyone

There's a darkness slowly creeping, It's a widening divide
Everybody has their own truth, everybody takes a side
We could cling to what divides us, and not see the wrong we see,
But the shadows might surround us
We could lose what sets us free

Amandla! Amandla! Ngawethu!
There is a power when we stand as one
We share one desire: liberty for everyone

Tyrants wield their power, standing freedom on its head
human rights rescinders, offer prison terms instead
We could choose to watch in silence
And let others raise their voice
Till the day it shows up at our door, and we're left without a choice

Amandla! Amandla, ngawethu!
There is a power when we stand as one
We share one desire: liberty for everyone

There is a power when we stand as one
We share one desire: liberty for everyone
There is a power when we stand as one
Our common desire: liberty for everyone

There is a power
There is a power
When we stand as one
When we stand as one

After reading Mark Mathabane's book, *Kaffir Boy*, (a derogatory term used against black men in South Africa) I encountered the phrase, "Amandla! Ngawethu!" the chant raised by the black population, as they looked to free themselves of Apartheid. I put the chant to music, and wrote the song I performed on Parliament Hill and at Toronto City Hall at rallies to end the injustice. Once Apartheid ended, the song was shelved.

During the pandemic, I was sorting through old recordings when I came across the original demo and it occurred to me that the song may have a place in today's world.

This is a completely new song, with an exciting South African-inspired vibe and a call for unity.

I look forward to shelving this one too.

"Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible but Man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary."

Reinhold Niebuhr 1892–1971

Break down Chant:

"Freedom to move, live ,stay, leave
Freedom to love, choose, change
Free to be true
Freedom to play, earn, read, learn
Free to deny, Free to believe
Freedom to dream, Freedom to be.
Freedom!"

Lessen the Blue (Folk)

I can't see the wind blow, there's nothing to see
I can't feel the sky change, It's blue-grey to me
I taste every color, all of them blue
Lost touch with my senses,
Are you senseless too?

When I was with you, with you, with you, with you,
With you, you felt alone
And yeah, we both knew, we knew, I knew, you knew
We knew that you were gone
I would take every blue tomorrow
To share today with you
You were the one, the one, the only one I knew who could
Lessen the blue

We planned for forever, but soon fell apart
The notes of our love song fell short of my heart.
When I was together I pulled us apart
Right now I could use you to mend up my heart

When I was with you, with you, with you, you felt alone
And yeah, we both knew, we knew, I knew, you knew
We knew that you were gone.
I would take every blue tomorrow, to share today with you
You were the one, the one, the only one I knew who could
Lessen the blue

You were the one, the one, the only one I knew who could
Lessen the blue



Photo: Suzanne Regimbal

The Real Me (Folk)

I can be gentle, I can be strong
If my words should hurt you, admit that I'm wrong
I can be anything you want me to be
It's hard to believe you just want me

I was trying for so long to be the perfect man
After all is said and done you take me as I am
You know all the things I hide, that others never see
You're the only one I know who knows the real me

All that I hope for
All I want to do
Oo, it's always with you
When I look in your eyes it's easy to see
It's not what I do that makes you love me

I was trying for so long to be the perfect man
After all is said and done you take me as I am
You know the things I hide, that others never see
You are the only one I know who knows the real me

Love needs to be perfect, when it isn't true
Perfect love's an illusion, and honestly, I just want you

I was trying for so long to be the perfect man
After all is said and done you take me as I am
You know all the things I hide, that others never see
You're the only one I know who knows the real me



Hey Politician! (Folk)

Hey you, politician
Why should we listen to you?
Hey you, politician
Just do what we elected you to do

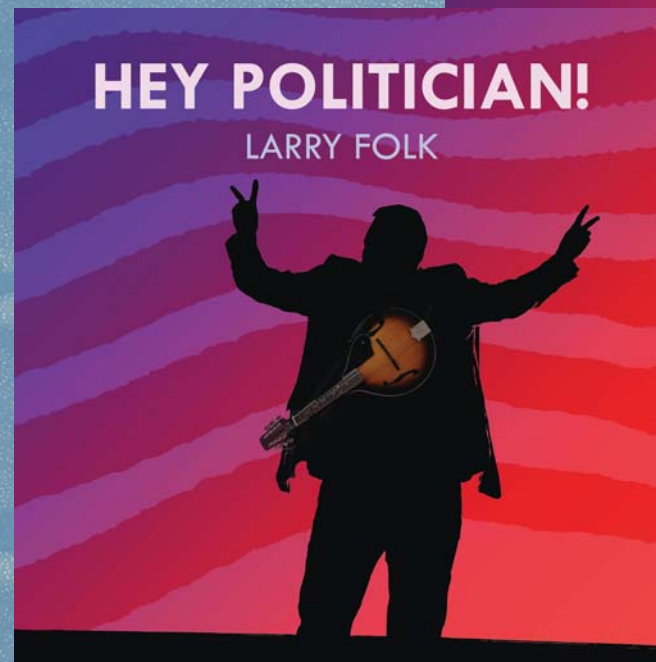
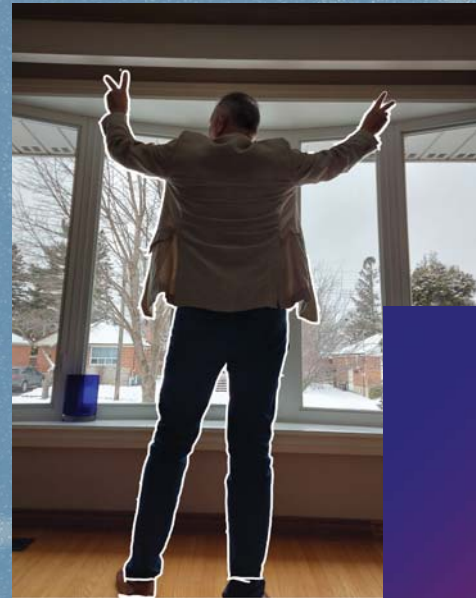
Left or Right, pick your fight
It doesn't matter you all know you know you're right
Dark shiny suit
Shit- eatin' grin
We'd be smiling too if we had your Wall Street friends.
Why not shut your mouth and do what we sent you to do?
Look out for the nation and stop looking out for you.

Hey you, politician
Why should we listen to you?
Hey you, politician
Just do what we elected you to do

Used to be what everybody knew 'bout politicians
Was they would smile and lie to us
And we'd pretend to listen
Seems like everything has gone and turned the other way
Now people hang on every word these idiots have to say

Hey you, politician
Why should we listen to you?
Hey you, politician
Just do what we elected you to do

Can't stand the garbage you spew
Nobody wants to hear from you.



A home away from home. A place we look forward to returning to every year. Hope it never loses its charm.

Madeira Way (Folk)

Just nestled on the Gulf Coast west of Tampa Bay
You'll find Madeira Beach calling you its way
It's hard to block that call and go the other way
Don't fight it, you'll find it's perfect there today

Where Sunshine meets up with the bluest sky each day
If dark clouds ever show, they quickly slip away
White sand, cool water underneath your feet
Salt air in your hair and your day's complete

This is life Madeira way
You'll be falling for the lifestyle
Life Madeira way
Just sayin' you'll be stayin' for a while

It's early in the day you've gotta make your move
You linger for too long, the sunshine gets its groove
But we both know you know that situation's fine
Don't sweat it, you bet it's nice in the sunshine

The place keeps changing rearranging all its lines
And that can only mean even better times
It's hard to improve perfection, you've kept all your charms
You welcome the world with open arms

This is life Madeira way
You'll be falling for the lifestyle
Life Madeira way
Just sayin' you'll be stayin' for a while

Later when the day is fading saying its goodbyes
A sunset so beautiful, you won't believe your eyes
A million colors in the sky when day is done
Madeira Beach, you're a jewel in the sun.

Life Madeira way
Think I'm falling for the lifestyle
Life Madeira way
Just sayin' I'll be playin' for a while



All You Need to Know (Folk)

Look up, look up, look up,
Can you see
The world is lost, it's crazy
Right now, right now, just now
I see you
And all the good that you do

Don't try so hard to make sense of nonsense
If it's not real then it's only pretense
Breathe in, breathe out and just go on living
Life is sweet and yet so unforgiving
I'm never gonna let you go
And this is all you need to know
You know

You're far, so far, so far
From sharing
I'm here, still near, still caring
It's hard to know your heart
Is tearing
Can't bear the hurt you're bearing

Don't try so hard to make sense of nonsense
If it's not real then it's only pretense
Breathe in, breathe out and just go on living
Life is sweet and yet so unforgiving
I'm never gonna let you go

And this is all you need to know
You know This is the part that I really hate
I try to find the best words to state
But all the good ones come too late
I coulda used them yesterday
You gotta know there's more than blue
Don't let this hard world fuck with you
I know that things could stay this way
But they could change for better
It's true

Don't try so hard to make sense of nonsense
If it's not real then it's only pretense
Breathe in, breathe out and just go on living
Life is sweet and yet so unforgiving
I'm never gonna let you go
And this is all you need to know
You know
This is all you need
This is all you need to know
I know

During the pandemic I was approached by a teacher-friend with lyrics written by his locked-down, online-learning students, reflecting on their experiences. I came up with the music to accompany their thoughts. I've put my own thoughts to this one, and added a bridge. It is a song of hope for those seeking to find it in this crazy world.

It's Forever (Folk)

There is nothing I would really rather do
Than to spend my days with you
From the time we met you've been a part of me
You're in everything I do
Remember, what we promised long ago
Still remains so true

It's Forever and for always
You never need to doubt my love for you
It's forever and for always
I'll take the years I've got left living
And spend them all with you

Don't go thinking that I'd ever let you go
It just isn't in my heart
After all I've gone and built a world with you
And that would tear it apart
remember what I'm telling you today
has been true right from the start

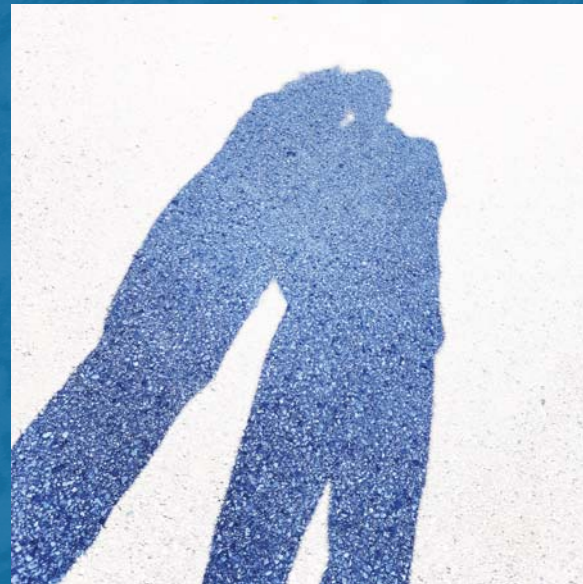
It's Forever and for always
You never need to doubt my love for you
It's forever and for always
I'll take the years I've got left living
And spend them all with you

With you
Spend them all with you

Remember all those dreams from long ago
Are still coming true today

It's Forever and for always
You never need to doubt my love for you
It's forever and for always
I'll take the years I've got left living
And spend them all with you

With you
Spend them all with you



215 (Two Hundred Fifteen) (Folk)

So many pining for the truth
They long for truth to be revealed
About the innocents now sealed
'neath wooden markers in a field
That cry out a silent vigil

The name Brother Joseph's Orchard evokes idyllic imagery, yet belies the horrors that are associated with that dark patch of ground in British Columbia. The public was shocked and saddened to hear about the number of children suspected to be buried on the grounds of the Residential school in Kamloops.

After viewing a CBC documentary on the story, I was moved to write 215 (Two hundred-fifteen). I knew it was not my story to tell, and the song is simply a reflection on events. The final line uses the metaphor spoken by Tk'emlúpsenc drum-maker/musician Norman Retasket in the documentary.

Grateful thanks are offered to Norman for agreeing to share his words in this song, and it is dedicated to him and the community that lived the events.

So many pining for the truth
Hear words of reconciliation
On the affairs of church and nation
That spawned a heartless subjugation
Children who never had a voice
Who were taken without choice
Straight from the arms of those who loved them

So many pining for the truth
They are the ones who lived the story
Who were denied a time of glory
Who hear how much we all are sorry
Who seek to finally bring them home
Who wait to take just one good breath

Dedicated to Norman Retasket, with grateful thanks

My response to a CBC Documentary on the Old Kamloops Residential School. The final line is based on the words of survivor, drum-maker Norman Retasket, who made the drum you hear at the end of the piece. For More:

<https://wbwww.theindigenousfoundation.org/articles/kamloops-residential-school-take-action>

Sunset Song (45 Year Revision)(Folk)

Painted on a shield of blue
The sunset lights the sky
Dabs of red and yellow hue
It's magic to the eye
Harkening a falling night

Watching from my point of view
It's all so plain to see
Standing farthest from the dawn
It's twilight calling me
So I'm welcoming the night

Looking back now I can see
The journey's up to you and me
Different paths were beckoning
Each with possibility

Can't retrace my path,
no turning back
And still,
I'm satisfied.

I'm not saying it was good
Not saying it was bad
Got to dream a dream or two
And shared times that were sad
It was just the life I had.

Looking back now I can see
The journey's up to you and me
Different paths were beckoning
Rich with possibility
Can't retrace my path,
no turning back
And still, I'm satisfied

Doo doo doo

I don't regret the fading sun
The colours that turn grey
Night is warm and welcoming
The sweet point of the day
The ones I love still light my way.

Looking back now I can see
The journey's up to you and me
Different paths were beckoning
Deep with possibility
Can't retrace my path,
no turning back
And still,
I'm satisfied

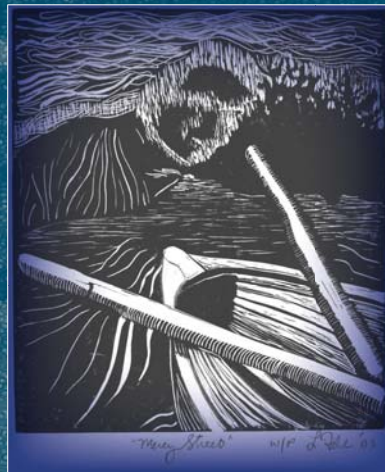
Doo doo doo

This song was written just prior to entering Humber College in the fall of 1978. I always loved the guitar part, but the lyrics were weak, like most of them back then; about missing friends, with vague spiritual references. I eliminated the lengthy guitar break, inserted a completely new chorus and lyric. The only lyric to survive from the original song is the opening line. The song used to be about a time of day. This one is about a time of life. And I'm satisfied.

It's Down to You (Folk)

Hey it's ok
You can't turn back the clock to change the way
Things turned out today
I'm on your side
You know that I will be here as you try
To find your way
I know you've got it in you
You've got to find it in you

It's all down to you
We're here to pull you through
There's nothing you can't do
It's down to you
It's all down to you,
Just do what you must do
You've got to face the truth
It's down to you
It's down to you



Is this the day
You gaze beyond the darkness, find a light
To light your way
Words often fail
But there is one that's beating in your heart
Love bleeds today
I know you've got it in you
You've got to find it in you

It's all down to you,
We're here to pull you through
There's nothing you can't do
It's down to you
It's all down to you
Just do what you must do
You know this is your truth
It's down to you
It's down to you

As a young music fan, I always loved the extended guitar solos in classic rock songs: Pathway to Glory, Make Me Do Anything you Want, Getting Closer, and of course, Stairway. So great to have re-connected with my old Humber buddy, Al Hollett on this track. We have some cherished memories of our time there, and other places too. He is a great player, but more important, he had a basement tapes record of Jimi Hendrix. I jest, not about the vinyl, but that it was more important than him being a great human being. I only wish we resided closer than we do. But he lives in Nova Scotia. I mean, why would you ever leave?

The Guitar Solos

Nunca Mas

I wrote this after viewing a Nova Documentary about the atrocities inflicted on the citizens of Argentina by the ruling Military in the 70's. Nunca Mas was the name of the committee set up afterwards to investigate what happened. It translates as "never more." A latin jazz version of this tune can be found on my 2014 CD [Parking for Meatballs](#), featuring the wonderful percussion of Memo Acevedo, and upright bass of Duncan Hopkins.

This is the original version for guitar.

On Sunset Bay

This piece is named after a memorable evening of making music on Lac Clair, ON

