

Introductory notes for Transports production, as requested:

When Peter Bellamy first heard about the Norwich Folk Club's idea of performing The Transports he had some small reservations as to how the folk club members involved would handle his master-work. These reservations disappeared when Peter heard the Folk Club's interpretation and he gave the project his whole-hearted support. He found it entirely fitting that the very first staged performance of his ballad opera would be given by singers from the area from which the original true story of The Transports came and that the setting would be Norwich Castle where the tragic events that began the story took place.

Peter had a vocal style of startling power and originality. He was an entirely individualistic performer often appearing on stage in flamboyant outfits he had designed and made himself. He had a sharp mind and a quick wit, he could be charming and funny but also argumentative and uncompromising. With a rigidly right-wing family background Peter was often at odds with the prevailing political concerns of performers and promoters in the folk world of the mid-1960s. Mostly though Peter was apolitical and the songs which make up the telling of the story of The Transports are evocative of the yawning class divide within the population of rural Norfolk in the late 18th century which frequently resulted in poverty, injustice, cruelty and human hardship. Although there is a certain boisterous comic element in Abe Carman's Robbers Song it voices a protest about the virtually non-existent chances of honest work for honest men at this time and Susannah's song expresses the drudgery and slave-like conditions that were mostly the lot of serving maids.

Although Peter was always a staunch devotee of traditional folk music, his personal musical tastes were far-reaching and eclectic. He was a connoisseur of the blues, a jazz lover, a fan of the Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan and Elvis Presley. He was always ready to listen to and pass an opinion on the latest thing in the music world and I know that were he still around Peter would enthusiastically embrace this fresh approach to his music and give his backing to this new, up to date revival of what is frequently regarded as his crowning achievement. He would be

gratified to know that his music is appreciated and enjoyed by a whole new generation of musicians, singers and actors and I have been asked by members of the cast of the first ever staging of The Transports to pass on thanks to Crude Apache Theatre Company for helping to keep Peter Bellamy's musical legacy alive and well.

Liz Holliday - March 2013
Requested from Liz April 2013