

## Tom Lehrer "Clementine"

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I should like to consider the folk song, and expand briefly on a theory I have held for some time, to the effect that the reason most folk songs are so atrocious is that they were written by the  
Le. if professional songwriters had written them instead, things might have turned out considerably differently. for example, consider the old favorite, with which, I'm sure, you're all familiar  
Ot;clementine", you know:

In a cavern, in a canyon,  
Dadada dadadada...

A song with no recognizable merit whatsoever, and imagine what might have happened if, for example, cole porter had tried writing this song. the first verse might have come out like this:

In a cavern, in a canyon,  
Excava-ha-ha-hating for a mine,  
Far away from the boom-boom-boom of the city  
She was so pretty, what a pity, clementine.

Oh clementine, can't you tell from the howls of me  
This love of mine calls to you from the bowels of me.  
Are you discerning the returning  
Of this churning, burning, yearning for you-oo-oo... ah-ah...

Well, supposing at this point that mozart (or one of that crowd) had tried writing a verse, the next one might have come out as a baritone aria from an italian opera, somewhat along these lines:

Era leggera e come un fairy  
E suo shoes numero nine,  
Herring bo-ho-ho-hoxes senza to-ho-ho-hopses,  
Sandalae per clementina si, per clementina si,  
Per clementina sandalae, per clementina sandalae, per clementine.  
Cleherentina, cleherentina, clehe-he-mentina...

Herring boxes senza topses sandalae per clementina,  
Herring boxes senza topses sandalae per clementina,  
Che sciagura clementina, che sciagura clementina,

cara clementina, cara  
Clementina-na-na-na-na-na-na-na!  
Supposing at this rather dramatic juncture in the  
narrative, one of our modern "cool school" of  
composers had tried writing a verse, the next one  
might have come out like this:  
Drove those ducklings to the water  
Yeah brach! doddley doo doo uh ah!  
Ev'ry morning like 9am  
Ooh pah! de do de do do do, biddley da!  
Got hung up on a splinter, got a-hung up on a splinter  
Cloo ge mop! huh huh!  
Do de do de do do do  
Fell into the foamy brine, dig that crazy clementine,  
man!  
To end on a happy note, one can always count on  
gilbert and sullivan for a rousing finale, full of words  
and music and signifying nothing.

That I missed her depressed her young sister named  
esther,  
This mister to pester she tried.  
Now her pestering sister's a festering blister,  
You're best to resist her, say i.

The mister resisted, the sister persisted,  
I kissed her, all loyalty slipped.  
When she said I could have her, her sister's cadaver  
Must surely have turned in it's crypt.  
Yes, yes, yes, yes!

But I love she and she loves me.  
Enraptured are the both of we.  
Yes I love she and she loves i  
And will through all eternity!

See what I mean?

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