



# Stephen Wade

## A Storyteller's Story: Sources of Banjo Dancing

In May 1979 a young musician named Stephen Wade opened a one-man show at a small yet adventurous off-Loop theater in Chicago. Called *Banjo Dancing, or the 48th Annual Squitters Mountain Song, Dance, Folklore Convention & Banjo Contest and How I Lost*, it consisted of songs, tunes, and stories sourced in American folklore and literature, accompanied by his five-string banjo and percussive dance steps.

Scheduled for a four-weekend run in an eighty-seat black box, the show took a wholly unexpected turn. Theater critics from around the nation saw it and raved. "An impassioned banjoist, a nimbly authoritative clog dancer, a soulful singer of folk music and an enthralling tall tale raconteur," said *Time* magazine. "A wondrous artist, this Stephen Wade." The reviews soon led to an invited appearance at the White House, and the show moved into successively larger spaces in Chicago, and eventually to stages across the nation. A three-week engagement at Washington's Arena Stage turned into ten years. "Among the enduring Washington institutions—the Lincoln Memorial, the White House, the inaugural parade—it will soon be necessary to include Stephen Wade," wrote the *Washington Post*. Over time, *Banjo Dancing* became one of the longest-running, off-Broadway shows in the United States.

Now forty years after its premiere, with *A Storyteller's Story: Sources of Banjo Dancing*, Stephen Wade explores the precedents that lit his way. On this 65-minute recording, he performs songs, tunes, and stories accompanied not only by his banjo and guitar, but enlarged by his fellow musicians variously playing piano, pump organ, mandolin, fiddle, washboard, jug, and string bass. Among these new performances, the album features three historical recordings: a heartwarming segment where Stephen accompanies legendary WLS *National Barn Dance* performer Doc Hopkins during a joint Voice of America appearance, as well as a rare duet with Tom Paley, and to close, a much-celebrated solo appearance for a capacity crowd at Chicago's Orchestra Hall.

The CD includes an 11,000 word, 44-page illustrated booklet. This writing, combined with the tracks that form *A Storyteller's Story*, illuminates a set of influences and experiences thriving long before *Banjo Dancing*, and embodied by an unlikely group of musicians, writers, orators, and actors.

A 2013 Grammy nominee, Stephen Wade is author of the prize-winning book, *The Beautiful Music All Around Us: Field Recordings and the American Experience* (University of Illinois Press, 2012). Between 2015 and 2019 he established and directed all five years of the American Roots Music Program at Colorado's Rocky Ridge Music Center. He earlier wrote and narrated a series of song studies that aired on NPR's *All Things Considered* and *Morning Edition*. In addition to performing, recording, and teaching, he is currently researching another book on Americana folklore. In 2018 he produced Patuxent CD-208: *Americana Concert: Alan Jabbour and Stephen Wade at the Library of Congress*.

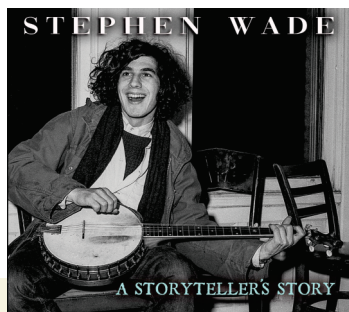
"Stephen Wade is arguably the best non-grass five-string banjo player around. His loyal following includes people who saw *Banjo Dancing*, his one-man stage show created from folksongs, stories, banjo tunes, and his own personal insights."

— *Bluegrass Unlimited*

### STEPHEN WADE

#### WITH:

**DOC HOPKINS \* TOM PALEY  
ZAN MCLEOD \* MARVIN REITZ  
ALEX LACQUEMENT \* JOEL BAILES  
BRENNEN ERNST \* TOM MINDTE**



1. Banjo Serenade
2. Market Square
3. Another Man Done Gone
4. Peachbottom Creek / John Henry
5. The Far-Famed Fairy Tale of Fenella
6. Station Will Be Changed After a While
7. Leather Britches with Tom Paley
8. Railroad Blues
9. Rhode Island Reel
10. East Virginia
11. Hobart Smith on Music / Cumberland Gap
12. Voice of America Broadcast with Doc Hopkins
13. Snow Camp
14. Old Paint
15. How Ruby Played
16. Up Jumped the Devil
17. Tales and Yarns
18. Wolves Howling
19. Ray Nordstrand's Introduction at Orchestra Hall
20. Chicago

