

Fox Chase

Informant/Performer:
Sanders Terry, Durham, NC, 1938

Source:
Collected by Alan and Bess Lomax
Library of Congress AFS 2490 A

Instrumental Piece: No Transcription Available

Background Information

Blind Sanders Terry, from Durham, North Carolina, has a genius for his harmonica such as the gypsies of central Europe have for their violins. He plays a cheap harmonica, but, as it lies in his cupped hands, he stops it with his fingers and produces the chromatic notes for which concert harmonica players require the large complex, chromatic instrument. His blindness just allows him to tell "light from darkness"; yet when he plays, his hands make a shadowy and intricate dance pattern before his sunken eyes.

In the "Fox Chase," "Son" Terry describes what a southern fox hunt sounds like. In the South the hunters do not ride to the hounds in the vigorous English fashion. On the contrary, they take their hounds to the hills, turn them loose, then sit comfortably around a campfire on a mountain top while the chase goes on below them. Their pleasure in the hunt is purely auditory and imaginary. They can tell every hound by his bark, and from the kind of bark just how the chase is developing. All night long they comfortably pursue the fox from the edge of the campfire, trade lies about their dogs, and indulge in gossip about the neighborhood.

Alan Lomax, from the liner notes of *Afro-American Blues and Game Songs* (AFS L4)