The Dryland Blues

Blues influence has gone in many directions during its century. In this selection, in addition to the basic twelve-bar structure, we’ve seen a couple of ragtime progressions and a waltz. There are also jazz blues, rock blues, Cajun blues, and who knows what else? Alberta’s fine poet and essayist Sid Marty is also a splendid songwriter and deserves wider notice for his abilities. Prominent among the influences on his singing and writing is the Greenwich Village troubadour of the mid-60s, Fred Neil. (Whatever happened to him, anyway?) I’d long spotted the Neil influence on this song, and it was only when I heard Sid singing it in concert last year that I realized that the “blues” in the title was as much musical as it was emotional. It’s smooth, minor-keyed, and a little bit jazzy, but it’s a blues, all right. Try it for yourself!

Listen to the little saw-whet in the Aspen trees.
All night long he’s playing on his hollow drum for me.
But he can’t make me fret, at least not yet, anyway.

Listen to the chorus frogs singing how the pond is turning dry.
All night long complaining in a lullaby.
But that won’t make me weep, I’ve got no tears; they’ve all gone dry.

But when the nighthawk sobs how her nest is robbed,
Robbed because the rain never comes this way, well,
That’s just the easy part,
One chorus from the heart, Just the beginning of the dryland blues.

Listen to the chorus frogs singing how the pond is turning dry.
All night long complaining in a lullaby.
But that won’t make me weep, I’ve got no tears; they’ve all gone dry.

Now I’m sittin’ starin’ at the moon through a bottle of booze.
It’s another dewless night, honey, without you.
Thinkin’ in cliches Helps me to keep the fear away.

[Bridge]
Because the earth’s in pain, it’ll take a year of rain
To wash the hurt away, to bring you home to stay.
But that’s just the easy part,
One chorus from the heart, Just the beginning
Of the dryland blues.