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*Dyer-Bennet  
records*

# Richard Dyer-Bennet

TENOR accompanying himself on the classic Spanish guitar

The lady's policy

Dinah and Villikens

Fain would I wed

Willie Taylor

Charlie is my darling

Lilli burlero

The beloved kitten

Spottlied auf Napoleons rückzug aus Russland 1812

The lass from the low country

The swapping song

The house carpenter

The lady who loved a swine

Go down, Moses

**Complete lyrics to all songs on this record included inside jacket a long playing record on high fidelity**





## "essential"

"An essential part of any group of folk recordings."

—New York Folklore Quarterly

RE-CHANNELLED STEREO—This record was originally recorded monophonically. It has been electronically re-channelled to simulate stereo. It can also be played on modern mono record players with excellent results.

# Richard Dyer-Bennet 3

*A note on this recording*

Here is the third release of our young but healthy company. Again I have attempted to present a shorter version of what I do on the concert stage — namely, a varied program. The range of material represented gives me the opportunity to deal with a point close to the heart of my work.

"Why did you sing a Negro spiritual?" is a question often asked me after a performance. The implication is that because I am not a Negro I cannot possibly do justice to the song. May I point out that I am also not an Elizabethan Englishman, nor a Napoleonic European, nor an 18th century sailor — nor even a pig, though I represent one momentarily on this record.

I sing only what I think I understand and have considerable feeling for. My job as an artist is to persuade you of this understanding and feeling. May Orpheus guide me.

*Richard Dyer-Bennet*

## Side 1 Group 1

**The lady's policy** Probably 18th century English, it was brought to my attention by John Ward. The last verse, including the whistle in the parallel minor, is my own invention.

**Dinah and Villikens** My grandmother taught me this, and though she was born and raised in America I believe the song stems from the 19th century English music hall tradition. The American folk song "Sweet Betsy from Pike" is usually sung to an almost identical melody.

**Fain would I wed** Again I am indebted to John Ward for this anonymous 16th century English song. I have altered the last two lines in order to avoid an ambiguity. The original lines seemed to suggest that a woman is speaking, whereas the first two verses are clearly a man's statement. Possibly the person who noted it down had remembered it incorrectly. At any rate, this is an example of the non-scholarly but necessary liberty a singer must take if he wishes to make contemporary sense.

**Willie Taylor** This was sung to me about twenty years ago by James Goronwy Ressor, a Welsh-American friend living in Berkeley, California; where he learned it I don't know. It harks back to the "press gangs" of 18th century England. These gangs practised an aggressive recruiting technique. Entering a tavern, for instance, they would bang likely-looking prospects on the head with a beer mug. Next morning the prospects would awaken aboard ship, duly accredited members of the Royal Navy.

**Charlie is my darling** A Jacobite song. Charlie is, of course, the "Bonnie Prince" of history and legend. I have made one or two errors in singing the accepted text, but was well enough pleased with the general delivery to let them stand.

**Lilli burlero** An anti-Jacobite song, to balance matters. In 1686, King James II nominated General Richard Talbot to the lieutenancy of Ireland, "on account of his being a furious papist" says Percy in his "Reliques of English Poetry." Percy goes on to say that Talbot's subsequent behaviour justified the king's expectations and the Protestants' fears. First published in 1688, the text is attributed to Lord Wharton and the tune probably traditional Irish.

## Side 2 Group 2

**The beloved kitten** In 1820 Beethoven, who had apparently noted down this Austrian folk song, sent it to his publisher, Simrock, in Bonn. In an accompanying letter Beethoven added that he thought it better to hunt folk songs than to hunt men, though heroes have been praised for the latter. I have made a fairly literal translation of the one Austrian verse Beethoven



Photo Betty Rosenzweig

wrote down, and have added a second verse of my own devising.

**Spottlied auf Napoleons Rückzug aus Russland 1812** Here is the great retreat from Russia as seen by a poet of the time. Could the Napoleonic superman myth be more delightfully and vigorously deflated? I got the song from Sven Scholander in Sweden in 1935. Incidentally, the reference to the Prince of Neufchatel in the fourth verse puzzled me until I ran across a reference to Neufchatel as reputedly the ugliest man in Europe at that time.

## Side 2 Group 3

**The lass from the low country** Collected in Cherokee County, North Carolina, by John Jacob Niles. Perhaps all folk songs have some value as oral documents, so to speak. As poetry and music I do not find them equally valuable, and as a singer I prize the work of those rare collectors whose judgment flatters my own. I have never known Niles to concern himself with a second rate song. This is one of his gems.

**The swapping song** I learned this from Dahlov Ipcar in Robinhood, Maine, in 1944. John Ward has traced it back to 18th century London.

**The house carpenter** It was Fletcher and Margaret Collins of Staunton, Virginia, who first enthused me with American ballads. In 1939 Collins was teaching at Elon College, North Carolina, and collecting songs all over Alamance County; previous to this he had been collecting in West Virginia. From his West Virginia manuscript collection he gave me this sturdy descendant of the old Scottish and English ballad, "The Daemon Lover." The last verse, and transition into the parallel minor, are my own additions.

**The lady who loved a swine** I learned a version of this in New York City in 1942. It awakened a dim memory from my early childhood in England, and I have perhaps combined two forms of the song into this.

**Go down, Moses** David Lloyd Garrison taught me this in Santa Barbara, California, in 1929. It is, of course, an American Negro spiritual, and I would judge it to be not earlier than mid-19th century in origin. In my mind it is a compelling emotional link between two situations identical in space but centuries apart in time — the biblical scene then and now. That the link is provided by 19th century Americans adds power and significance to a great song.

For best response on high fidelity phonographs, use R.I.A.A. characteristic.

Produced by Harvey Cort

Recording Engineer: J. Gordon Holt

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