

dyer-bennet records the ninth album in a series

Richard Dyer-Bennet

tenor accompanying himself on the classic spanish guitar

The Laird o' Cockpen The two sisters of Binnorie Early one morning The pride of Petravore Gently, Johnny, my jingalo
The British light dragoons Schneiders Höllenfahrt Der tod von Basel Le joli tambour The buffalo skinners John Riley The cherry tree carol

COMPLETE LYRICS TO ALL SONGS INCLUDED INSIDE JACKET



Richard Dyer-Bennet 9

A note on this recording

This summer marks the fifth anniversary of Dyer-Bennet Records, and here is our ninth release. I have bowed to requests for new recordings of some songs previously done for other labels now out of print or made obsolete by advancing technics. Also included are songs I have not previously recorded.

The guitar sound is different—not because of a different instrument or new microphone placement, but because I shortened the nails of my right hand and played with the fleshy tips of the fingers. There are two schools of thought about this, and the controversy goes back at least three hundred years, for Thomas Mace speaks of it in his "Musick's Monument", published in 1676. Fernando Sor, 1778-1839, played without nails; his great contemporary, Dionisio Aguado, made use of his fingernails but used only the flesh of the thumb. Julian Bream, Rey de la Torre, and Andrés Segovia—three present day masters—all play with nails. On the other hand, Emilio Pujol, also a contemporary master, plays without nails. The characteristic nail tone is clear, brilliant, penetrating, suggestive of the harpsichord. The characteristic fingertip tone is less clear, less brilliant, more ample, warmer, and suggestive of the harp. Generally speaking, the great virtuosos of the past two centuries seem to have favored the nail method. For song accompaniment, however, I am not sure which tone is preferable, and this recording was made during a period of experimenting with the fingertip method.

Incidentally, de la Torre, my mentor on the guitar, spent a week with us this summer and made some valuable technical and musical corrections of my playing. We also found time for some chess. Hopper, our Weimaraner, has no particular interest in the guitar, though he sings a bit when the mood strikes him. Chess, however, fascinates Hopper, and the picture catches him studying the board at a crucial moment during a game between de la Torre and myself. Shortly after the picture was taken—I having lost the game due to a bit of bad advice—Hopper, playing the white pieces, completely confounded de la Torre by artfully swallowing a pawn, thus unmasking a concealed check and leaving his opponent no honorable alternative but a loss by resignation. May I point out, by the way, that the Weimaraner is an exceedingly short-haired dog, and that by no stretch of the imagination is the adjective "shaggy" applicable.

Richard Dyer-Bennet, August, 1960

Side 1 Group 1

The Laird o' Cockpen The air appears in Mrs. Crockett's Manuscript Book of Tunes, dated 1709. The words are of later date, the first seven verses having been written for the old tune by Lady Nairne, 1766-1845, and the last two verses by Sir Alexander Boswell, son of James Boswell.

The two sisters of Binnorie I have known this song for about twenty-five years, but cannot remember my source. I believe it to be a fairly modern version of the old Scottish song "The Twa sisters," which has the refrain, "Edinbro, Edinbro . . . Bonny St. Dunstan stands upon Tay". The theme is a fascinating one, and turns up in a number of folk songs: a musical instrument, made from some part of the body of a murder victim, sings out an accusation of the murderer.

Early one morning A traditional English song, the use of the word "traditional" implying that the song is probably not of folk origin but that poet and composer are unknown.

The Pride of Petravore In 1946 Ruth Chatterton starred in a play by N. Richard Nash called "Second Best Bed". I had a small part as an Elizabethan minstrel, and find that my memory retains three vivid impressions of the experience. There was the morning after our Detroit opening, when I was called to the theatre to persuade local dignitaries of Church and State that one of my Elizabethan songs was bawdy rather than obscene. My early morning rendition was acceptable and the song was not deleted—I am saving it for my final recording and farewell concert tour. I remember also the supple and melodious use Miss Chatterton made of her voice at an age when most actresses twenty years her junior sound harsh and heavy. Finally, I remember many otherwise dull hours in the dressing room which were enlivened by the singing of the Irish actor, Ralph Cullinan. This is a traditional Irish song as Cullinan sang it to me.

Gently, Johnny, my jingalo An English folk song collected by Cecil J. Sharp, who partially rewrote the lyrics to avoid offending the genteel ear of his time.

The British light dragoons This is a traditional Irish air with words by Sir Walter Scott. The wedding of tune and text came about as follows: A Scottish folk song enthusiast, George Thompson (1757-1851), valued the traditional melodies of the British Isles, but felt the traditional words were of lesser value and the general harmonic treatment inadequate. He therefore commissioned leading poets and musicians to write new lyrics and accompaniments. Beethoven did an arrangement of this song for voice, piano, violin, and cello. The trio accompaniment does not lend itself to guitar transcription; I have therefore set my own guitar accompaniment to the melody and Scott's words.



Betty Rosenzweig

Side 2 Group 2

Schneiders Höllenfahrt A German folk song from Württemberg. My source for this was the great Swedish minstrel Sven Scholander, to whom I have referred at some length in my notes for record no. 1 in this series.

Der Tod von Basel A German folksong collected in Frankfurt a.M. in 1807. Also from Scholander's repertoire.

Le joli tambour A French chanson populaire from Brittany. Again Scholander.

Group 3

The buffalo skinnors My source is Sandburg's American Songbag, which says the song was collected by John Lomax.

John Riley I have heard several versions of this, and memory has no doubt created a composite. The modality suggests an English ancestry, and the lonesome quality may mean a sojourn in the Southern Appalachians.

The cherry tree carol An American version of an old English carol, which I learned from Dolly Abbott in New York City in 1939.

Mr. Dyer-Bennet is managed exclusively by Hurok Attractions, Inc., 730 Fifth Avenue, New York 19, N. Y.

This is one of a series of recordings by Richard Dyer-Bennet, recorded under his own label. For a complete catalog listing contents of other albums, write: Dyer-Bennet Records, P.O. Box 235, Woodside 77, N. Y.

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

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