

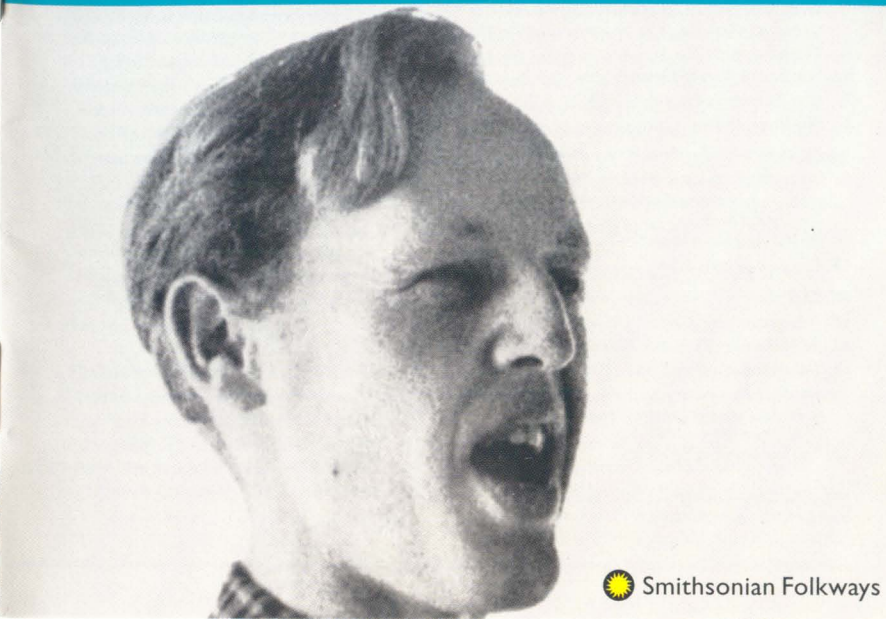
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Dyer-Bennet
records

Richard Dyer-Bennet

"My life has been enriched by Richard Dyer-Bennet's artistry; his tapes are still highlights among my programs. His wondrous lyric tenor and marvelously singular accompaniments—whether in classic ballads, raffish songs, or music from the centuries—must never be forgotten. With this reintroduction to Dyer-Bennet's music, Smithsonian Folkways Recordings offers the current generation of listeners an untapped treasure."

—Studs Terkel



**Smithsonian
Folkways**

Smithsonian Folkways Recordings
Center for Folklife Programs & Cultural Studies
955 L'Enfant Plaza, Suite 2600
Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC 20560
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Smithsonian Folkways

Richard Dyer-Bennet 1

Richard Dyer-Bennet was a major figure in the folk music revival of the 1950s and 1960s. He founded his own record company in 1955 in order to produce recordings without making compromises in sound quality, repertory, and style. This is a reissue of the first album of Dyer-Bennet Records, all of which are now available through Smithsonian Folkways Recordings. Booklet includes new notes by Bonnie Dyer-Bennet, Conrad L. Osborne, and Anthony Seeger, and a complete catalogue of Dyer-Bennet Records.

A Masterpiece.... *This first release under his own label is the finest album he has yet recorded. The singing is tops, the engineering is superb, the production job is excellent. Without a doubt this is a masterpiece of its kind.*

—Kenneth Goldstein, *The Record Changer*

- GROUP 1** 1. **Off in the still night** 3:49
2. **Molly Brannigan** 2:43 3. **Down by the Sally Gardens** 2:46 4. **The bold Fenian men** 4:00
5. **Three fishers** 3:26 6. **The bonnie Earl of Morey** 3:03 7. **Fine flowers in the valley** 3:08
8. **The Vicar of Bray** 4:22
GROUP 2 9. **So we'll go no more a roving** 1:37
10. **Phyllis and her mother** 2:57 11. **The joys of love** 2:34
GROUP 3 12. **I'm a poor boy** 3:09 13. **Pull off your old coat** 2:46 14. **Down in the valley** 3:56
15. **Pedro** 2:24 16. **The lonesome valley** 3:11

"My life has been enriched by Richard Dyer-Bennet's artistry. His wondrous lyric tenor and marvelously singular accompaniments—whether in classic ballads, raffish songs, or music from the centuries—must never be forgotten. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings is offering the current generation of listeners an untapped treasure." —Studs Terkel

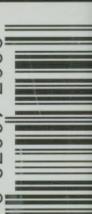


Smithsonian
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Richard Dyer-Bennet 1

A REISSUE OF THE 1955 LP RECORDING

GROUP 1

1. **Of in the stilly night** 3:49
2. **Molly Brannigan** 2:43
3. **Down by the Sally Gardens** 2:46
4. **The bold Fenian men** 4:00
(words by P. Kearney, arr. by Richard Dyer-Bennet/
Dyer-Bennet Records)
5. **Three fishers** 3:26
6. **The bonnie Earl of Morey** 3:03
7. **Fine flowers in the valley** 3:08
8. **The Vicar of Bray** 4:22

GROUP 2

9. **So we'll go no more a roving** 1:37
(words by Lord Byron, music by Richard Dyer-Bennet/
Dyer-Bennet Records)
10. **Phyllis and her mother** 2:57
11. **The joys of love** 2:34

GROUP 3

12. **I'm a poor boy** 3:09
13. **Pull off your old coat** 2:46
14. **Down in the valley** 3:56
15. **Pedro** 2:24
(words and music by Richard Dyer-Bennet/
Dyer-Bennet Records, BMI)
16. **The lonesome valley** 3:49

*Unless otherwise noted all songs arranged by Richard Dyer-Bennet/Dyer-Bennet Records.

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DYER-BENNET RECORDS IN 1955 AND 1997

Anthony Seeger
Director and Curator, Smithsonian Folkways
Recordings

Harvey Cort and I have founded a company to produce a series of high fidelity recordings of my work. This is our first release. I have been free for the first time not only to sing what I wish, but also to accept or reject the master record, choose from the finest available pressing material, and have a say about the design and printed material on the jacket. There are faults to be found, but I consider this a better selection of songs, better performed, better recorded, and more attractively presented than has hitherto been the case.

—Richard Dyer-Bennet, from jacket notes to Dyer-Bennet Records 1: Richard Dyer-Bennet

This first release under his own label is the finest album he has yet recorded. The singing is tops, the engineering is superb, the production job is excellent. Without a doubt this is a masterpiece of its kind.

—Kenneth Goldstein, The Record Changer

From the beginning of the recording industry, many artists have been frustrated by the degree to which record companies control the repertory they may perform, restrict their recording and marketing budgets, and take shortcuts with production and manufacturing and liberties with their music's presentation through cover art and promotional materials. From the record company's perspective, its actions are logical in view of anticipated sales, other projects with other artists, and overall marketing strategies. The conflict between the desires of artists and the logic of record companies continues today, and the number of artists with self-produced compact discs who prefer to work with small, independent labels rather than large companies or who set up their own record labels is an indication of enduring tension over artistic and aesthetic control.

The conflict between artists and their record companies was especially acute for experimental music and music that did not fit predetermined marketable genres. With the expansion of the record industry under the influence of the long-play records in the 1950s, a number of innovative, small record companies began to focus on niche markets and to publish experimental recordings by artists who were frustrated by (or ignored by) larger labels. Small labels like Folkways Records, Cook, ESP, Paredon (founded later),

and others specialized in productions that were of little interest to the mass-market companies. Moses Asch of Folkways once wrote, "I am the pen with which the artists write," and let them record what they wished; the motto of ESP records was "THE ARTISTS ALONE DECIDE WHAT YOU WILL HEAR ON THEIR ESP-DISC." At the same time, some frustrated artists formed their own record companies in order to wrest artistic control from the hands of record companies. Among them were Mary Lou Williams (Mary Lou Records), when she was changing her repertory, and Richard Dyer-Bennet (Dyer-Bennet Records), whose music transcended established genres. During the 1980s and 1990s folk-based artists such as John Prine (Oh Boy Records), Steve Goodman (Red Pajamas Records), and Ani DiFranco (Righteous Babe Records) have continued this trend in search of artistic integrity and control over the public presentation of their work. A small number of major rock artists have arranged parallel deals with major record companies to operate their own label. The Beatles, for example, ran Apple Records, issuing their own records and those by artists like Badfinger with the assistance of Capitol/EMI.

The Smithsonian Institution's Center for Folklife Programs & Cultural Studies has been acquiring the master tapes, files, and memorabilia of some of these innovative

record companies in order to preserve them for the future, to keep the sounds available now, and to ensure that, when the history of music in the twentieth century is written, it includes all of the music being performed, not just the most popular, the best financed, or that controlled by large companies. Through our mail-order operation we are keeping in print the Folkways, Cook, Paredon, and now Dyer-Bennet record labels; through the commercially distributed Smithsonian Folkways Recordings label we are making parts of each label available to a wider public—along with information about how all the others may also be obtained. We also use emerging technologies, such as the World Wide Web (see <http://www.si.edu/folkways>) and enhanced compact discs to bring the material to new audiences.

This is the first reissue on Smithsonian Folkways of Dyer-Bennet Records, all fifteen titles of which are available on cassette and compact disc from our mail-order office. Appropriately enough we start with volume 1, released in 1955. To re-introduce Richard Dyer-Bennet we provide a biographical essay about the artist by his daughter Bonnie Dyer-Bennet, a more detailed description of what he was doing with his voice by Conrad L. Osborne, and a list of the songs on all the other Dyer-Bennet Records. In spite of his fame during his lifetime, there is no book-length biography of the singer, and his papers

remain with his family. For this reason it is particularly appropriate that a member of the family prepared the biographical essay. Mr. Osborne's essay on Dyer-Bennet's vocal technique is particularly salient for those hearing him for the first time—it is important to recognize what Dyer-Bennet was trying to do in these songs, which is also the key to why he wanted to have total artistic control over his recordings by setting up his own company.

We are grateful to Harvey Cort, Melvne Dyer-Bennet, and her daughters Bonnie and Brooke for their generosity and assistance in making available once again the voice and artistry of Richard Dyer-Bennet as he wished it to be: recorded and produced to his own satisfaction and presented with respect and distinction.

"SING IN ME, MUSE, AND THROUGH ME TELL THE STORY...."

[*The Odyssey*, Book One, line one; translated by Robert Fitzgerald]

**A BIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY ON
RICHARD DYER-BENNET
Bonnie Dyer-Bennet**

Nearing the end of a career that spanned over fifty years, Richard Dyer-Bennet recalled how his American grandmother had enchanted him with her readings of children's versions of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* before he was six years old. "The earliest line of either prose or poetry I can remember having memorized was a line from the *Iliad* describing the moment of death for Patroclus: 'And in the ears of Patroclus, the din of battle rang no more.' That line still makes my scalp prickle."

How profoundly this experience affected the child was reflected near the end of his life in Dyer-Bennet's response to Robert Fitzgerald's translation of Homer's *Odyssey*, a work he intended to record. "I felt that my whole life experience, all my professional work, everything, had been in preparation for this material, and that I must tackle the *Odyssey*."

Richard Dyer-Bennet was born October 6, 1913, in Leicester, England. His father was a British army officer, his mother the daughter of an American classics professor. The family,

which eventually included three more sons and a daughter, moved to British Columbia, Canada, in 1919 and from there to Berkeley, California, in 1923. Dyer-Bennet grew up listening to recordings of Caruso, McCormack, Chaliapin, Scotti, De Luca, Tetrizzini, Galli-Curci, and others. His American grandmother, an accomplished pianist, introduced him to the songs of Schubert, Schumann, Franz, and Wolf. Dyer-Bennet had a good boy soprano voice and in 1926 joined Wheeler Becket's children's chorus in Berkeley, with whom he sang the role of Hänsel in Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*.

His elementary schooling was in Canada and Berkeley; his high school years were spent in Santa Barbara, California, and Berlin and Göttingen, Germany (1929–31), where he began to teach himself to play the guitar. The two years spent in Germany prior to World War II proved to be of critical importance not only to Dyer-Bennet's future career in music but to the awakening of his political awareness as well, since he found himself an alarmed witness to the growing Nazi movement.

Dyer-Bennet's family returned to the United States in time for his senior year in high school, and he enrolled in the University of California, Berkeley, in 1932 as an English major. For a few years he divided his energies between his academic studies and sports; a serious athlete throughout his youth, Dyer-

Bennet pursued tennis, soccer, and rock climbing with great enthusiasm. While the game of tennis was to remain a life-long passion (in later life he was a ranked super senior player in New England), during his college years he gave serious consideration to a career as a soccer player. During the 1930s, Dyer-Bennet was a club soccer player (the U.S. equivalent of a professional in England). He broke his nose tending goal against the Hollywood All-Stars while still a student at Berkeley, and in 1935, while playing for the San Francisco Olympic Club (against such teams as Bela Lugosi's Magyars and Victor McLaghlen's Light Horsemen), he was offered the chance to try out with the Glasgow Rangers, a fine professional team, and very nearly accepted the offer.

However, in the middle of his sophomore year at Berkeley, Dyer-Bennet sang a few songs at a friend's Christmas party, where he was heard by voice teacher Gertrude Wheeler Beckman. Beckman told Dyer-Bennet of the Swedish minstrel, Sven Scholander (1860-1936), a famous and much-loved performer on the European concert stage from about 1895 to 1920. Scholander sang the great traditional and folk songs of Sweden, Germany, Austria, France, and England, accompanying himself on the Swedish lute. Beckman believed that Dyer-Bennet possessed Scholander's gift as a musical storyteller and suggested that he

might have a career like that of Scholander's. Feeling that he may have found his calling, Dyer-Bennet switched his major from English to music, began to study voice with Beckman, and built a repertoire of songs.

He left Berkeley in 1935 at the end of his junior year to travel to Sweden to meet Scholander, who was then 75 years old. The old master and his young admirer sang for each other many times during the visit. Scholander encouraged Dyer-Bennet to continue his vocal studies, develop his instrumental skills, add more and a greater variety of songs to his repertoire, and, above all, to begin to learn the art of communication by singing as often as possible to any audience he could find to listen. At the end of the visit, Scholander assembled a party of his family and friends to hear Dyer-Bennet perform and gave the young man 100 songs from his own repertoire, with lute accompaniments. Dyer-Bennet later referred to his mentor as "the greatest modern exponent of the medieval art of minstrelsy."

Dyer-Bennet left Sweden with a newly purchased Swedish lute, inspired and indelibly impressed by Scholander's talent and his approach to song performance. Dyer-Bennet said of Scholander: "Scholander was the one who showed me that a concert career would be possible. [He] was not a folk singer, by which I mean that he was not born and

brought up in the rural folk singing tradition.... He was a trained musician who brought to his work highly developed perceptions of both poetry and music. With him, it was a trinity of poetry, melody, and lute accompaniment. I realized I didn't have to pretend to be any of the characters in the songs; I just had to tell the stories."

On his way back to California at the end of the summer of 1935, Dyer-Bennet stopped in England, and traveled to South Wales at a time when many of the mines were shut down. Seeking to follow Scholander's advice to perform as often as possible, he sang to the Welsh miners and their families in union halls, churches, grocery stores, and schools. Dyer-Bennet was deeply affected by the power of music to reach people even in such grim circumstances. "In the town of Pontyprid, I heard singing that rose above the squalor and gray misery of those damned coal towns. I heard two great choirs and one old harper who played and sang in Welsh and English with great beauty and power in a tradition he claimed had come down in his family from the ancient Welsh kings."

Much encouraged by the Welsh miners' response to his singing, Dyer-Bennet decided not to take his senior year at Berkeley but instead to pursue his vocal studies with Beckman and continue to add to his repertoire of folk and traditional songs. He also began

singing for a variety of audiences including school assemblies, women's clubs, and the local longshoremen's union.

In 1938, at a performance at a women's club in San Francisco, Dyer-Bennet was heard by Alfred Frankenstein of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the most respected West Coast music critic of the time. Frankenstein felt Dyer-Bennet was ready to be heard by the professional managements centered in New York and encouraged him to travel east right away, since he believed it would not be possible for the young artist to get onto a major concert series in San Francisco until he had proved himself in New York and was under the aegis of one of the well-known managers.

During the next few years Dyer-Bennet made three short trips to New York, paying his bus fare by singing at private parties. As a result of this exposure, he met a number of professionally well-connected people who became his earliest supporters. Among these were the composer Sam Barlow, who presented Dyer-Bennet at parties in his own home; Morton Howard, who engaged him to sing at private gatherings for the members of the Philadelphia Orchestra on a number of occasions; and Max de Schauensee, critic for the *Philadelphia Bulletin*, who urged him to keep trying to get a start in New York. In New York, Dyer-Bennet auditioned for several major concert managers, all of whom liked his

work but none of whom could envision how a self-accompanied singer of traditional and folk songs could be included on a standard concert series.

Dyer-Bennet's first breakthrough came in 1941, when Dr. Frederic Packard, a professor at Harvard, heard him at a private concert and offered to underwrite his first recording. The privately produced recording was released through the Gramophone Shop and is now a collector's item. Later that same year, Dyer-Bennet was offered a two-week engagement at Le Ruban Bleu, a small, sophisticated, nightclub on New York's Upper East Side run by Herbert Jacoby. The two-week contract was extended to three months, and Dyer-Bennet was on his way. In short order, he was doing two radio broadcasts a week for NBC and making his first recording for Keynote. In 1942, he was offered a two-week engagement by Max Gordon, owner of the Village Vanguard, which was at that time more of a cabaret theater than a jazz club and an excellent showcase for all sorts of performers. During his long stay at the Vanguard (the initial engagement was extended for years) Dyer-Bennet developed a large and loyal following, and the Vanguard became a meeting place for many of his friends and professional associates.

Having settled down in New York, it was easier for Dyer-Bennet to take advantage of the city's cultural offerings and expand his

musical experience. His exposure to the artistry of some of the world's finest classical guitarists, including Andrés Segovia and the Cuban-born, Spanish guitarist Rey de la Torre, was particularly influential, and he began to work even more seriously on developing his guitar technique.

While working at the Vanguard, still without concert management, Dyer-Bennet met Ted Zittel, then press agent for Mike Quill's transport workers' union. Zittel suggested they form a partnership, hire Town Hall for a concert, and split the profits. In anticipation of his concert debut, but only weeks away from the performance, Dyer-Bennet decided to switch from steel to gut guitar strings, a move that might at best be described as daring, and, at worst, reckless.

In March 1944, Dyer-Bennet made his concert debut at Town Hall to an overflow audience (on arriving at the concert hall, Dyer-Bennet was astonished to find that a contingent of mounted police had been deployed to maintain order among the crowd of people seeking tickets). This first success was followed by a second sold-out Town Hall performance in April and a third in May.

In November 1944 Dyer-Bennet sang his first concert at Carnegie Hall. His friend Sam Barlow persuaded the impresario Sol Hurok to attend the performance; Hurok came backstage at the first intermission, introduced

himself, and announced, "I've only heard this kind of thing once before, in the town of Riga on the Baltic in 1920...." As Hurok paused, Dyer-Bennet asked, "Was it Sven Scholander?" Astonished to hear that Dyer-Bennet had in fact met Scholander only a few years earlier, Hurok then asked Dyer-Bennet to repeat the song with which he had opened the concert, "The White Lily." When Dyer-Bennet declined, on the grounds that the song didn't belong in that part of the program, Hurok accepted the refusal saying, "Good. You know your business. What kind of career do you want?" Dyer-Bennet replied, "Just what I'm doing tonight." Hurok nodded and said, "Come see me Monday and we'll talk business." The meeting resulted in a contract to begin touring in the 1945-46 season.

With the events of the Second World War prominent in everyone's mind, Dyer-Bennet had developed a knack for writing short songs based on the day's news, which he included in his performances at the Vanguard. Before long, the Office of War Information (OWI) had asked him to write and perform news ballads and propaganda songs based on events as they were occurring. These were broadcast as close as possible to the locations where they were happening. Awakened often by a phone call or a cable bearing late-breaking news of the war, Dyer-Bennet would hop into a taxi, scribbling lyrics to perform with improvised

accompaniments when he arrived at the OWI's New York headquarters.

While some of these songs were played occasionally during post-war radio broadcasts, unfortunately they were never written down. Dyer-Bennet did not consider them to be of musical significance, believing rather that the value of this work lay in its immediate purpose, to entertain, rally, and support the Allied armed forces. By chance, Dyer-Bennet thus continued into the twentieth century the tradition of the minstrel from an earlier time, part of whose role was to report important events through song.

The OWI had planned to send Dyer-Bennet to North Africa to continue his broadcasts closer to the scene of the action. However, his schedule of three shows a night at the Village Vanguard, many irregular hours working for the OWI, plus numerous war-related benefit appearances in the New York area took a serious toll on Dyer-Bennet's health and resulted in a perforated stomach ulcer, which required two months' hospitalization. Needless to say, the OWI authorities were forced to conclude that Dyer-Bennet was too much of a liability to send to North Africa. Finally, in June 1945, Dyer-Bennet was able to persuade the USO and Army Special Services to send him to the Philippines, where he traveled among field hospitals, singing to the wounded in the wards. He was in Manila when the war ended,

On his return to New York, Dyer-Bennet began to study guitar with Rey de la Torre. He began his first tour for Hurok in October 1945, joining a roster that included Marian Anderson, Andrés Segovia, Artur Rubinstein, Isaac Stern, and Jan Peerce. Dyer-Bennet toured annually until 1970, eventually performing in every state in the country, including Hawaii and Alaska, with thirty concerts in Alaska alone. He appeared on public concert series in virtually all the major cities in the United States and Canadian Provinces, at colleges and universities, and performed as well in England and Italy. Although his itinerary ultimately increased to include fifty concerts one year, Dyer-Bennet decided on a limit of about thirty-five concerts per season in order to have time for studying new material, reading, playing tennis, and working on translations, the most important of which was that of Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* (The Lovely Milleress), published by G. Schirmer, Inc., in 1967. He planned to follow the Schubert translation with Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte* but never completed the work to his satisfaction.

Following his early exposure to the life of a celebrity, Dyer-Bennet saw that, although he wanted a concert career, the normal family life he also wanted to maintain would be impossible if he remained in New York. Deciding, as he would many times throughout

his career, in favor of a more private life, Dyer-Bennet moved his family to Colorado in 1947. In Aspen, at that time still a quiet ranching community, Dyer-Bennet and his wife founded an experimental school at which they dealt with the essential components of minstrelsy. Within two years, however, Hurok's concerns about the difficulty of promoting his career long-distance persuaded Dyer-Bennet to return to the East Coast to settle permanently in New England.

Dyer-Bennet's concert career was barely established in the early 1950s when he found himself a target of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). Goaded on by Senator Joseph McCarthy, HUAC and others spawned both "Red Channels" and their unofficial blacklist, which prevented Dyer-Bennet and numerous other performers from appearing on radio or television for many years, and wreaked havoc in the lives of countless other citizens. Dyer-Bennet was fond of referring to McCarthy and his supporters as the "self-appointed guardians of the nation's safety." Among the allegations enumerated in Dyer-Bennet's dossier were his work for the OWI during W.W. II, his appearances at government-sponsored War Bond rallies, and his participation in benefit concerts to support "Bundles for Britain," the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee, and Russian War Relief. In the latter instance he was alleged to have

sung only in Russian, despite the fact that he never knew that language. Another astonishing allegation was the charge that he had organized the New York waterfront. When the HUAC investigator assigned to interview him asked about this charge, Dyer-Bennet laughed and replied, "As a singer-poet, I would have been pleased to be able to tackle such a task." HUAC dropped its attempts to intimidate Dyer-Bennet when he told the investigating attorney that if he were summoned to testify at the hearings in Washington, he would call on General Telford Taylor to defend him (Dyer-Bennet and General Taylor, the chief American prosecutor at the Nazi War Crime Tribunal in Nuremberg, had met while both men were campaigning for Adlai Stevenson). On hearing this assertion, the investigator slammed her notebook shut and left without another word. Dyer-Bennet always maintained he had felt honored to participate in any way he could during the war years and noted at the time:

Having never believed in, nor been involved in, illegal or treasonable activities, I have bitterly resented these inquiries into my beliefs and associations. I believe there are many thousands of people in my situation. We find ourselves scorning and pitying those who, under pressure of the moment, disown perfectly decent beliefs and motives of the past, and

incriminate friends, relatives and acquaintances. I think it is possible to state a tenable and honorable position without adding another link to the "guilt by association" chain.

Although Dyer-Bennet's access to radio and television audiences was completely cut off during this period, both the Hurok agency and Max Gordon of the Village Vanguard were fully supportive, and his reputation continued to spread through his work in New York and annual concert tours across the country.

It was at the Vanguard in the early 1950s that Dyer-Bennet met Harvey Cort, a New York-based television director and producer. Their friendship developed, and in 1955, with great enthusiasm, they formed a partnership to establish a recording company. Dyer-Bennet had long been dissatisfied with many aspects of his experiences recording for other companies, including production quality, album design, program content, and the time limitations usually imposed on recording artists. Indeed, he was often required to complete an entire album in an afternoon. In addition, the standard use of echo chambers and over-dependence on cutting, splicing, and dubbing to produce recordings was an esthetic anathema to him.

Since Dyer-Bennet and Cort had no knowledge of "single artist" labels gaining any kind of commercial success or distribution, their

original intent was quite modest; Dyer-Bennet would use their first record for concert promotion purposes, while Cort intended to use it for personal gifts. The release of their first recording, *Dyer-Bennet #1*, in 1955 (reissued on this compact disc) earned enthusiastic reviews from the critics and sold well. Among the excellent notices the first album received was the recognition from Jack Holzman of Elektra Records, who placed this extraordinarily gracious ad in the Schwann catalog:

A bow and a "thank you." Usually we're pretty wound up in our own activities. But, recently, another company has issued an exceptionally outstanding "folk" record. It is Dyer-Bennet's own recording of sixteen excellently selected songs. We have never heard Mr. Dyer-Bennet sing better or be more perfectly recorded. Each enthralling moment is pure pleasure. Our guitars are doffed in his direction.... By next month we should have sufficiently regained our marbles to do an ad for ourselves. We put out fascinating records too.

With this generous, unsolicited support, and encouragement from all sides, Dyer-Bennet and Cort went on to produce a total of fifteen albums from a repertoire of some 600 songs ranging from the thirteenth century to contemporary times, from England, Ireland, Scotland, France, Germany, and America.

During this same period, Dyer-Bennet developed strong professional and personal ties in Chicago, first with faculty at the Institute of Design, where he performed and led seminars, and soon after with Chicago's FM radio station, WFMT, where Studs Terkel interviewed him each time he came through town. The conversations with Terkel usually began on a musical theme and expanded to include a broad range of subject matter. For many years, WFMT closed their week's broadcast on Saturday night with Dyer-Bennet's recording of "The lonesome valley" (track 16). Dyer-Bennet greatly enjoyed his reception in Chicago, where he found the audiences as open and varied a group as those in New York. He was also profoundly stimulated by his exchanges with a group of designers, writers, and scientists who became close friends.

While Dyer-Bennet always enjoyed performing, he found being on the road, often for weeks at time, lonely and exhausting. However, in the course of his long career, Dyer-Bennet often found himself returning to the same locations and established a network of good friends throughout the country. He also got in the habit of carrying his tennis racket with him on tour in hopes of finding a game from time to time.

In 1968, still not satisfied with his own vocal technique, Dyer-Bennet began vocal studies with Cornelius L. Reid, an interna-

tionally known teacher and author. During the course of his years of work with Reid, Dyer-Bennet increased his vocal range by an octave and developed his voice from a light, almost countertenor quality to a true lyric tenor with the range and timbre needed for *Lieder* and tenor arias.

It was partly as a result of his own vocal development through his work with Reid that Dyer-Bennet hit on a theory concerning the training of the actor's speaking voice. While lecturing at the Elizabethan Institute at the University of Vermont in the summer of 1969, Dyer-Bennet attended a performance of *Macbeth* by a group of professional actors. Although the actors were young and vigorous, Dyer-Bennet found it difficult to understand their words. When a nine-year-old boy came on to do a bit part, Dyer-Bennet got every word. "I realized the kid was producing in his larynx the kind of tone one would call music. The untrained boy had ordinary nine-year-old American diction but if his vowels had been elongated they would have had musical pitch. It was the difference between what acoustical physicists call 'musical sound' and 'articulated noise.'"

Dyer-Bennet stated his theory as follows: "Man, of course, is a singing animal...[and] used the voice for cooing and grunting before he used words. If the primary function of this instrument [the voice] is singing, then speech

is a secondary function. In training the speaking voice, therefore, you should observe the rules governing the singing voice."

While at the Elizabethan Institute that summer, Dyer-Bennet met Irving Ribner, then chairman of the Department of English at SUNY at Stony Brook. Ribner invited Dyer-Bennet to Stony Brook to meet William Bruehl, chairman of the Theater Department, to discuss his theory of vocal training for actors. Dyer-Bennet conducted a workshop for theater students at Stony Brook that fall and taught an experimental class in the spring of 1970. This experience further advanced his theoretical ideas, and he was offered the joint position of associate professor and artist-in-residence at the university in the fall of 1970.

In 1972, Dyer-Bennet suffered a cerebral hemorrhage, which so severely limited the use of his left hand that he found himself unable to play the guitar without watching his hand closely. He attempted a few concerts after the stroke, but, becoming convinced that he couldn't maintain contact with the audience, he reluctantly decided to give up concertizing. Fortunately, the effects of the stroke did not prevent Dyer-Bennet from continuing to teach at Stony Brook, and, nearly as importantly to him, he found he was still able to play tennis, compensating for his restricted mobility with his use of wicked spins and fiendishly well-placed shots. He also contin-

ued to read voraciously and broadly, as he had throughout his life.

In January 1977, at the age of 63, he performed his own translation of Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* (The Lovely Milleress), at Alice Tully Hall in New York, accompanied by Nancy Guarniez at the piano. In his review in the *New Yorker*, Andrew Porter praised Dyer-Bennet's translation of the work and said, "...[Dyer-Bennet]...presented the cycle as the little play that Wilhelm Müller had in mind, and drew his listeners with him into the drama.... [I]t was a 'Schöne Müllerin' that came to life.... [H]is presentation of the drama was unfaillingly fresh, youthful, and enthusiastic." A recording of the Schubert cycle was released shortly thereafter.

After the Schubert performance, Dyer-Bennet considered himself to be finished with major projects, but, during the spring semester of 1977, he included an excerpt from Robert Fitzgerald's translation of Homer's *Odyssey* in a performance at Stony Brook. The result, as he said, "was so dramatic that it changed the subsequent course of my life. The Stony Brook audience, ranging from highly literate academicians to undergraduate students, were thunderstruck by the power of Fitzgerald's language as perceived by the *ear*, not the *eye* in the telling of the great tale. I left the theater realizing that Fitzgerald had created a masterpiece, that it

must be heard, and that I must devote myself to this exciting task."

Dyer-Bennet became entranced with this work. He saw the project as "the logical extension of a lifetime of minstrelsy" and decided to record the entire work, an effort that would have required twenty-four albums. Dyer-Bennet said that Fitzgerald's translation was "the single most exciting piece for a verbal performer that exists in the English language.... It's not a vehicle for the actor, but for the storyteller.... That's what I've been doing all my life, telling stories in song." With this in mind, he approached Fitzgerald for his approval and also Doubleday, the publisher of the translation. Fitzgerald was delighted with the plan and told Dyer-Bennet that he had always hoped someone would address his work to the ear. The serious study of the *Odyssey* then began in the fall of 1978. Dyer-Bennet applied for and received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities enabling him to devote full time to the project in 1979-80, away from the responsibility of teaching.

In order to learn how to perform the *Odyssey*, Dyer-Bennet felt he must tell it over and over again. He memorized three half-hour excerpts from the epic and performed them for the first time in the Coolidge Auditorium at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., in 1980. Fitzgerald, who came to Wash-

ington to hear these performances, afterwards told Dyer-Bennet, "You're beginning to get into his skin!" When Dyer-Bennet asked whose skin, Homer's Odysseus's, or Fitzgerald's, Fitzgerald responded only with an enigmatic smile.

Dyer-Bennet learned to play a simple accompaniment with his right hand on a lap harp and over the next several years gave nearly seventy performances of the *Odyssey* excerpts at venues ranging from university classics departments to the Story Tellers School of Toronto. The first public performance took place at the Village Vanguard, a site chosen for sentimental reasons and because Dyer-Bennet had learned that Homer himself probably performed his own work in taverns. Richard Dyer (no relation), a reviewer for the *Boston Sunday Globe*, wrote of one performance, "It was not sung or chanted; it was not recited and interpreted the way the actor would. Instead the words hung transparent in the air and all the room was the tale, not the teller."

After many presentations of the work, mainly for college and university classics departments, Dyer-Bennet became eager to travel a little in Greece, reaching for a taste of the ancient land. In June 1979, he and his wife gathered a small party of friends for a cruise of several weeks among the Greek islands, where he soaked up the colors of the

landscape, the texture of the air, and the sound of goat bells at dawn. The trip more than fulfilled his hopes and provided him with a number of memorable experiences. In the ruins of the amphitheater at Delphi, he declaimed parts of the first book of the *Odyssey* for his companions and ran a foot race with a friend at the site of the ancient stadium further up the mountain. He also took delight in swimming ashore from the boat at Odysseus's home island, Ithaca.

A documentary film was made of the *Odyssey* project in progress, commissioned by SUNY under a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. Produced and directed by Jill Godmellow and Susan Fanshell, *The Odyssey Tapes* includes slides from the Greek trip, part of Dyer-Bennet's first public performance of the *Odyssey* at the Village Vanguard, and footage from his concert career. The film has been shown on educational television, purchased by libraries across the country, and made available through the Museum of Modern Art.

The film project had been one of the happiest experiences of Dyer-Bennet's career. It also proved to be the last he could comfortably handle physically, although he continued to perform excerpts of the *Odyssey* occasionally until about 1987. He retired from Stony Brook in the spring of 1983, planning, in his own words, "if life and energy endure, to tackle the *Iliad*." Sadly, Dyer-Bennet's health failed

rapidly after his retirement, and he was unable to complete his *Odyssey* project. *The Odyssey Tapes* is the only legacy of the culminating work of his career. Characteristically, he remained hopeful during his last illness and planned to make one more recording, of songs he had never performed publicly. The record was to include Mendelssohn's "On Wings of Song Transport Me," a song his grandmother had taught him when he was about six years old, the first song he ever learned. Richard Dyer-Bennet died of lymphoma on December 14, 1991.

Bonnie Dyer-Bennet
February 1997

THE VOICE OF A GENUINE ORIGINAL Conrad L. Osborne

Richard Dyer-Bennet was a genuine original. There has certainly been no singer like him since his retirement, and, though he belongs to a very old tradition, the managers and agents who heard him at the outset of his career had no idea what to make of him—there was no one like him then, either. He was one of the most important figures in the folk music revival of the 1940s, yet stood apart from it in significant ways. He sang folk music as if it were art music, art music with the directness and immediacy of the folk singer, and old music as if newly minted. He conceded nothing to trend or fashion or commercialism, yet became a true popular artist, with a large and predominantly young following.

I became familiar with Dyer-Bennet's singing in the early 1950s, through some of his many recordings of traditional ballads. Though my own musical orientation was primarily classical, I was immediately attracted to the tonal charm, expressive directness, and verbal finish of his performances—a kind of highly polished simplicity, I'd call it. When I first heard him in person, in a 1954 benefit concert at the roomy old Roosevelt Auditorium on East 17th Street, I found even more to like. He had a beguiling presence, informal and friendly, yet elegant. His program had

range and taste. It opened with six folk songs of the British Isles, and concluded with eight of American origin. In between came a group consisting of Schubert's "Wohin?" and "Der Leiermann," and Martini's "Plaisir d'amour" (track 10)—in his own arrangements and translations, of course—and three of his own compositions, one a setting of Byron, the others of William Cowper's translations from the ancient Greek.

The voice itself, while extremely light by classical standards, had more body and warmth than the recordings had led me to expect. In spots like the sustained upper notes of the Kentucky coal miner song "I'm a poor boy" (track 12), it soared up into the Roosevelt balcony with gratifying expansiveness. And it is important to remember that throughout his career, as the microphone gradually took over nearly all non-classical "live" performances, Dyer-Bennet's work remained entirely acoustical. The intimacies and subtleties of his singing and playing, which on his recordings sound tailored to the microphone, were in fact projected with utter clarity to the corners of some quite spacious halls. Certain open-throated classical singers have the ability to "float" soft sounds in a way that seems to cancel distance (I think of Renata Tebaldi, Eileen Farrell, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau), and some with smaller instruments (like the tenors Cesare Valletti and Alfredo Kraus) calibrate dynamics

and shading so shrewdly that they create an illusion of impact. But of all singers in my experience, Dyer-Bennet comes closest to the classical guitarist Andrés Segovia in his genius for drawing a big audience into a small world solely through the precision, purity, and concentration of his musical storytelling.

Therein lies a world of experience, unmediated and unamplified, a world of direct human-to-human communication, that is slipping from us in both musical and theatrical performance.

The secrets of Dyer-Bennet's art start with his vocal technique. I know of no singer of any kind whose pitch was more consistently exact. His ability to sustain a flowing legato line, to project pure and balanced vowels, to execute small but noticeable shifts of tonal dynamics and colors, rivaled that of the most accomplished art song singers, and it is a mark of his uniqueness among folk artists that we should speak of him in these terms. While his timbre was that of a high lyric tenor, with an almost countertenorish cast, he generally sang in what amounted to high baritone keys—roughly from C below middle C to the G above it, about an octave and a fifth—where he could keep the words light and undistorted and the tone free from stress or stiffening.

Dyer-Bennet's verbal sensitivity was acute. He had a sharp ear for languages and accents, and understood poetic idiom and scansion so thoroughly that the most rarefied and anti-

quoted forms emerged as natural, everyday expression in his singing. His sense of dramatic timing, of suspense, and his command of the appropriate rhetorical devices informed not only his singing but his accompaniments and arrangements as well. His instrument was at first the lute, but he soon changed to the more versatile Spanish guitar, and through study with one of the virtuosos of that instrument, Rey de la Torre, became a proficient and subtle player. The oneness of breath, attack, and rubato so painstakingly sought by the singers and pianists of the art song tradition, or by chamber musicians, was the norm in Dyer-Bennet's work, for singer and player were one.

Sometimes Dyer-Bennet made use of his rhythmic and coloristic skills in overtly demonstrative ways, as in the many songs that call for illustrative narrative or for impersonation. But the most haunting moments in his performances, at least for me, usually involve a kind of pointed understatement or held-back tension, and this sensibility is found in his arrangements as well. One of my favorite examples is the drawn-out guitar interlude after the climax of "John Henry" (*Dyer-Bennet Records 5*, track 8), with the hammer motive gradually fading into the delicate, hushed entry of the voice for the final verse. The arrangements are usually simple and always respectful of the material's original style, yet shrewdly set up for one or two striking musico-dramatic coups that nail

down the song's key event. And from the rich modal chords of some of the oldest European songs to the loping falling fourth, with the snap of a crush note on the second, that is practically the entire accompaniment to "I ride an old paint" (*Dyer-Bennet Records 5*, track 10), the choices are always specific and evocative.

My own friendship with Dick Dyer-Bennet began on one of the snowiest nights of the very snowy New England winter of 1960-61. He and his wife Melvne (a psychomotility therapist and a pioneer in the field of movement therapy) and their family were ensconced on their lovely property at Monterey, Massachusetts, while Dick continued to tour and looked after the record label he had established for himself after long involvement with Decca, Vox, and several other companies. We gathered at the Great Barrington home of John and Hazel Conly, a former road house whose vast, beamed dining room now served as a magnificent combined living room, library, and listening room. John, the former Music Editor of *High Fidelity Magazine*, had a formidable collection of old 78 rpm records, and after dinner we listened to a few. I recall Edwin Fischer's recording of the Bach F Minor concerto and, at Dick's request, the performance of Händel's "Waft Her, Angels" by the English tenor Webster Booth, which Dick admired especially for its dramatic attack on the recitative.

It was the beginning of my appreciation—which grew throughout our long though intermittent acquaintance—for the sharpness of wit and strength of conviction that spiced Dick's basically gentle temperament, and for his boundless curiosity about and passion for the musical, poetic, and vocal matters that lay behind his apparently guileless performances. It was this range and intensity of interest that led to his intermixing of Dowland, Campion, Bach, Mozart, Schubert, Falla, and even Rossini with Scottish border ballads, Irish laments, Mexican tales, and Appalachian fables; to his lovely translation of Schubert's great song cycle *Die schöne Müllerin* (published by G. Schirmer under the title of *The Lovely Milleress*), with its emphasis on the naive and folksy qualities of Müller's poetry; and to his ambitious project for reciting and recording the entire Fitzgerald translation of *The Odyssey* in a recreation of ancient Bardic style. Late in his career life, he still pursued vocal improvement, traveling to New York City to study with a prominent teacher, Cornelius Reid. And he dove enthusiastically into his own teaching work with theater students. A combination of advancing age and health problems kept him from full realization of some of his undertakings, but he never gave up the search.

Dick's performing style had its analogue in that of the classical singers he most

admired—the Danish tenor Aksel Schiøtz (whose close friend he became) and the Irish tenor John McCormack. Both these artists performed their classical repertoire without affectation and with superb technical command (McCormack's early recordings, in particular, present a textbook of lyric tenor technique), yet brought to folk music and salon songs all the care and dignity they accorded high art. Dick preferred their singing to that of more interpretatively "busy" artists, however lavishly gifted. He explained his preference and summarized his philosophy of performance in one of his letters to me in 1964:

...I think the trick is to so learn a song that it can be called upon, word by word and note by note, as though improvised, or as though these words and notes were freely and spontaneously chosen at that moment. The singer then does not have to think of dynamics or color anymore than the truly involved speaker does. The result is marvelously subtle, and marks the difference between genius in song (Aksel Schiøtz, and at his best McCormack), and a very skillful facsimile (Fischer-Dieskau and Lotte Lehmann).

...[A] singer must not only understand the overall meaning of a song, he must understand it phrase by phrase and word by word so well that he can think and feel the

meaning of each word he utters. Only then can the color be absolutely right.

Second, and this from the listener's point of view, unless the words are understood fully—word by word—not only is the literal and poetic meaning lost, but perhaps still more importantly, the listener will not comprehend why the music does what it does. Why does this line rise and fall, why a dramatic interval here, why a rest there, why a forte or pianissimo, why a key change, why a rich or spare texture in the accompaniment?

Similar thoughts have been offered by some of the wisest conductors and directors, by performers and teachers of every variety. But they have never been more cogently or more succinctly phrased than in the paragraphs just quoted. So I will let these stand as the final, defining word about an extraordinary man and true artist, Richard Dyer-Bennet.

Conrad L. Osborne, a voice teacher and performer, has written music criticism for the New York Times, High Fidelity/Musical America, Opera News, and many other publications. His is also the author of the novel O Paradiso.

ABOUT THE SONGS

Notes by Richard Dyer-Bennet, 1955

The songs on this recording are grouped as I might do them on a concert program. I suggest that the first group be listened to without a break, and that groups 2 and 3 are distinct—hence the spacing on the record [followed on this compact disc].

GROUP 1

1. Oft in the stilly night

This is a traditional Irish tune with words by Thomas Moore, who wrote new words to many Irish folk songs.

*Oft in the stilly night,
Ere slumber's chain has bound me,
Fond mem'ry brings the light
Of other days around me.*

*The smiles, the fears, of boyhood's years,
The words of love then spoken,
The eyes that shone, now dimm'd and gone,
The cheerful hearts now broken!*

*Thus in the stilly night,
Ere slumber's chain has bound me,
Sad mem'ry brings the light
Of other days around me!*

*When I remember all
The friends so linked together,
I've seen around me fall
Like leaves in wintry weather,*

*I feel like one who treads alone
Some banquet hall deserted,
Whose lights are fled, whose garlands dead,
And all but he departed!*

*Thus in the stilly night,
Ere slumber's chain has bound me,
Sad mem'ry brings the light
Of other days around me!*

2. Molly Brannigan

This sounds to me like a 19th-century Irish music hall song, rather than a rural folk song.

*Say, man dear, did ye never hear
Of pretty Molly Brannigan?
She's gone away and left me,
And I'll never be a man again,
Not a spot on me hide
Will the summer sun e'er tan again
Since Molly's gone and left me here
Alone for to die!*

*Oh, the place where me heart was
You could easy roll a turnip in,
It's as large as any paving block
From Dublin to the Devil's Glen,*

*If she'd rather have another,
Sure, she might have sent mine back again
And not have gone and left me here
Alone for to die!*

*Oh, well I remember
When the milking time was past and gone,
We strolled into the meadow,
Where she swore I was the only one
That ever she could love;
But ah! that false and cruel one,
For all o' that she's gone,
And left me here for to die!*

*And well I remember,
When going home, the rain began,
And I wrapped her in me freize coat,
Though ne'er a weskit had I on,
And me shirt was rather fine drawn,
But ah! that false and cruel one,
For all o' that she's gone.
And left me here for to die!*

*Oh, the left side of me carcass
Is as weak as water gruel, man!
I've not a pick upon me bones,
Since Molly proved so cruel, man!
If I only had a blundergun,
I'd go and fight the Immelman!
It's better, sure, to kill meself
Than live here and die!*

*Oh, I'm cool and determined
As any salamander, man,
Won't ye come to me wake,
When I take that long meander, man?
Sure, I'll feel meself as valiant
As that famous Alexander, man.
When I hear ye cryin' round me,
"Yerra, why did ye die?"*

3. Down by the Sally Gardens

This is a poem of W. B. Yeats, set to a traditional Irish melody. The text is correctly printed and the use of the word "All" at the beginning of the first line in the recording is an error of addition on my part.

*Down by the Sally Gardens
My love and I did meet,
She passed the Sally Gardens
With little snow-white feet.*

*She bid me take love easy,
As the leaves grow on the tree,
But I being young and foolish
With her did not agree.*

*In a field by the river
My love and I did stand,
And on my leaning shoulder
She placed her snow-white hand;*

She bid me take life easy,

*As the grass grown on the weirs,
But I was young and foolish
And now am full of tears.*

4. The bold Fenian men

One Monday night in the winter of 1946–47 I tuned in on "The Voice of Firestone" and heard Christopher Lynch sing a haunting Irish song. A few weeks later I asked Jim O'Beirne, in New York City, if he knew the song. "I taught it to Lynch," said he, and forthwith taught it to me. [This is a song of the Irish Rebellion of 1916, originally written by Patrick Kearney, who also wrote the Irish national anthem.]

*'Twas down by the glenside,
I mēt an old woman
A-plucking young nettles,
She ne'er saw me comin',
I listened awhile
To the song she was hummin'
"Glory O, glory O
To the bold Fenian men."*

*"'Tis fifty long years,
Since I saw the moon beaming
On brave manly forms,
And pikes that were gleaming.
I see them again now,
In all my day dreaming,
Glory O, glory O
To the bold Fenian men."*

*"Some died on the hillside,
Some died mid the stranger,
And wise men have told us
Their cause was a failure,
But they fought for old Ireland,
And never feared danger!
Glory O, glory O,
To the bold Fenian men."*

*I passed on my way,
God be praised that I met her,
Be my life long or short,
I shall never forget her.
We may have great men,
But we'll never have better!
Glory O, Glory O,
To the bold Fenian men!*

5. Three fishers

When I was a small boy in England, I was occasionally taken to the seaside. I can remember seeing grey silhouettes of ships out on the water, and being told they were trawlers. This was the name given to the boats used by commercial fishermen. It seemed to me then a dangerous and exciting life, and I know now that it was also grim and not very rewarding. Before the days of steam it must often have been as Charles Kingsley tells us in this poem, set to music by John Hullah. The text is correctly printed, and my singing contains inadvertent variations.

Three fishers went sailing out into the west,
 Out into the west as the sun went down;
 Each thought on the woman who loved him
 the best,
 And the children stood watching them out of
 the town;
 For men must work, and women must weep,
 And there's little to earn and many to keep,
 Though the harbour bar be moaning.

Three wives sat up in the lighthouse tower,
 And they trimmed the lamps as the sun went
 down;
 They looked at the squall, and they looked at
 the Shower,
 And the night-wrack came rolling up ragged
 and brown!
 For men must work, and women must weep,
 Though storms be sudden and waters deep,
 And the harbour bar be moaning.

Three corpses lay out on the shining sands,
 In the morning gleam as the tide went down;
 And women are weeping and wringing their
 hands,
 For those who will never come back to the
 town,
 For men must work, and women must weep,
 And the sooner it's over the sooner to sleep,
 And goodbye to the bar and its moaning.

6. The bonnie Earl of Morey

A 16th-century Scottish lament for a popular
 nobleman who was murdered by the king's
 henchman. Huntley, the murderer, was par-
 doned ostensibly because Morey was said to
 have been the queen's lover.

*Ye hielands and ye lowlands,
 O where hae ye been?
 They ha' slain the Earl of Morey
 And laid him on the green.*

*He was a braw gallant
 And he rade at the ring,
 Ah, the bonnie Earl of Morey,
 He might ha' been a king.*

*Oh, lang may his lady
 Look frae the castle doon,
 Ere she see the Earl of Morey
 Come soundin' through the Toon.*

*O wae betide ye, Huntley,
 And wherefore did ye sae,
 I bade ye bring him hither,
 But forbade ye him to slay,*

*He was a braw gallant,
 And he played at the glove,
 Ah! The bonnie Earl of Morey
 He was the queen's love.*

*Oh, lang may his lady,
 Look frae the castle doon,
 Ere she sees the Earl of Morey
 Come sounding through the Toon.*

7. Fine flowers in the valley

An 18th-century Scottish ballad of the
 supernatural.

*She lay down beneath a thorn,
 Fine flowers in the valley.*

*And it's there she has her little babe born,
 And the green grass it grows rarely.*

*She's taken out her little pen knife
 And robbed that poor babe of its life.*

*And she went home all by the church,
 She saw a wee babe on the porch.*

*"Oh, little babe, if thou wert mine,
 I'd clothe thee in the silk sae fine."*

*"Oh mother dear, when I was thine,
 Ya didna' treat me then sae fine!"*

8. The Vicar of Bray

An 18th-century English political broadside
 ballad. A Canadian music critic, in reviewing
 one of my concerts, spoke of this song as a
 "delightfully witty satire on organized reli-
 gion"! It is of course nothing of the sort, but
 rather a satire on political opportunism. That
 the opportunist happens to be a vicar is
 regrettable.

*In good King Charles' golden time,
 When loyalty no harm meant,
 A zealous high churchman was I,
 And so I gained preferment.
 To teach my flock I never missed,
 Kings are by God appointed,
 And damned are those who dare resist,
 Or touch the Lord's annointed.
 And this is law, that I'll maintain,
 Until my dying day, sir,
 That whatsoever king may reign,
 Still I'll be the Vicar of Bray, sir!*

*When Royal James possessed the crown,
 And popery come in fashion,
 The Penal Laws I hooted down,
 And read the Declaration.
 The Church of Rome I found did fit
 Full well my constitution,
 And I had been a Jesuit,
 But for the Revolution.
 And this is low, that I'll maintain,*

*Until my dying day, sir,
That whatsoever king may reign,
Still I'll be the Vicar of Bray, sir!*

*When William was our king declared,
To ease the nation's grievance,
With this new wind about I veered,
And swore to him allegiance.
Old principles I did revoke,
Set conscience at a distance,
Passive Obedience was a joke,
A jest was Non-Resistance.
And this is law, that I'll maintain,
Until my dying day, sir,
That whatsoever king may reign,
Still I'll be the Vicar of Bray, sir!*

*When royal Anne become our queen,
The Church of England's glory,
Another face on things was seen,
And I become a Tory.
Occasional Conformists base,
I blamed their moderation,
Although the Church in danger was,
From such prevarication.
And this is law, that I'll maintain,
Until my dying day, sir,
That whatsoever king may reign,
Still I'll be the Vicar of Bray, sir!*

*When George in pudding-time come o'er,
And moderate men looked big, sir,
My principles I changed once more,
And thus become a Whig, sir,
And so preferment I procured,
From our new faith's defender,
And almost every day abjured
The Pope and the Pretender.
And this is law, that I'll maintain,
Until my dying day, sir,
That whatsoever king may reign,
Still I'll be the Vicar of Bray, sir!*

*The illustrious House of Hanover,
And Protestant succession,
To them I do allegiance swear,
Whilst they may hold possession.
For in my faith and loyalty
I never more shall alter,
And George my lawful king shall be,
Until the times do alter!
And this is law, that I'll maintain,
Until my dying day, sir,
That whatsoever king may reign,
Still I'll be the Vicar of Bray, sir!*

GROUP 2

9. So we'll go no more a roving

The words are Byron's and the music is my own. The text is correctly printed and the slight discrepancies between it and the recorded version are errors of memory on my part.

*So we'll go no more a roving
So late into the night,
Though the heart be still as loving,
And the moon be still as bright.*

*For the sword outwears its sheath,
And the soul wears out the breast,
And the heart must pause to breathe,
And love itself have rest.*

*Though the night was made for loving,
And the day returns too soon,
Yet we'll go no more a roving
By the light of the moon.*

10. Phyllis and her mother

This song was published in Germany in 1799, and both poet and composer were given as anonymous. I got it from Sven Scholander in Stockholm, in 1935 [see the biographical essay for further information on Sven Scholander and his influence on Richard Dyer-Bennet]. The translation is my own, and more free than literal.

*Waiting for her shepherd lover,
Tra le ra lee Te ra le ra la
Little Phyllis took to cover.
Tra le ra lee Te ra.
Into the bushes she did creep,
And while waiting fell asleep.
Tee ra le ra lee Tee ra le ra la,
Tee ra le ra lee Tee ra le ra la.*

*But her mother was suspicious;
Stolen fruits are so delicious!
After Phyllis she did creep,
Found the innocent fast asleep.
Pleased to find how well she'd taught her,
Motherwise, she kissed her daughter.
"Oh!" sighed Phyllis, half awake,
"Damon dear, how long you take!"*

*Hear the angry mother screaming,
Frightening Phyllis from her dreaming;
"Brazen hussy! You've fooled me so!
To a convent you shall go!"
Phyllis shivered with misgiving,
"That's not my idea of living.
And if love is wrong," said she,
"Tell me how I came to be!"*

11. The joys of love

Some think of this as an Italian classic, some as a French. In either case it is attributed to Martini, an 18-th century composer. As a matter of fact, Martini was probably a German whose real name was Schwarzen-dorf. My translation is done rather freely from the French text, "Plaisir d'amour."

*The joys of love are but a moment long,
The pain of love endures a whole life long.
I gave up all for cruel Sylvia;
She gave me up and has taken another love.
The joys of love are but a moment long.
The pain of love endures a whole life long.
"Just as that stream ever flows to the sea,
Beside the garden wall and over the meadow,
So I will always be true." Thus often spoke
Sylvia;
Still flows the stream, but she has changed
her mind.
The joys of love are but a moment long,
The pain of love endures a whole life long.*

GROUP 3

12. I'm a poor boy

This is a composite of several versions I have heard. Lomax and Seeger, in "Our Singing Country," print a version and state that the song was composed at Coal Creek, Tennessee, following a mine explosion.

*I'm a poor boy,
And a long way from home.
It's pay day
On Coal Creek
You'll miss me
When I'm gone.
I'm a poor boy,
And a long way from home.*

13. Pull off your old coat

I got this from the roving song collector, Sam Eskin. Sam tells me it originated in this country, was taken to England by an early minstrel show, and found its way back again to America. Here it is, showing the effects both of American birth and British residency.

*I looked to the east, I looked to the west
For Fortune a chance to me affordin';
But fortune is a blind god, flyin' in the
clouds,
And forgettin' me on this side of Jordan.
Pull off your old coat
And roll up your sleeves,
Life is a hard road to travel,
I believes.
Silver spoons to some mouths, golden spoons
to others,
Providence unequally affordin'.
Damn it, though they tell us all of us are
brothers,
Don't see it clearly this side of Jordan.*

*Pull off your old coat
And roll up your sleeves,
Life is a hard road to travel,
I believes.*

*Like some ragged owlet with its wings expanded,
Nailed upon some garden gate or hoardin',
Thus am I by some folk as a rascal branded;
Never hurted none, this side of Jordan.*

*Pull off you old coat
And roll up your sleeves,
Life is a hard road to travel,
I believes.*

14. Down in the valley

I don't know the origin of this, but it has a quality I associated with mountain songs, and my guess would be the Southern Appalachians. The next-to-last stanza is my own.

*Down in the valley, valley so low,
Hang your head over, hear the wind blow.
Hear the wind blow, love, hear the wind blow,
Hang your head over, hear the wind blow.*

*Build me a tower, forty feet high,
So I can see her, as she rides by.*

*Write me a letter, send it by mail,
Send it in care of Birmingham jail.*

*Into the past, love, wanders my mind,
Sad recollections are all that I find.*

*Down in the valley, valley so low,
Hang your head over, hear the wind blow.*

15. Pedro

Both words and music are my own, written in 1940. I am aware of using the word "pueblo" in the second verse as if it meant "house" instead of "village." In 1940 I misused the word unwittingly. Today I let it stand by invoking a poet's traditional privilege.

*It was down by the Mexican border,
In a village whose name I forget;
There lived Pedro, the young vacquero,
There he worked through the burning daylight,
There he played his guitar at evening,
Stealing all hearts away.*

*I spent one night at the village,
Strolling idly beneath the stars,
Listening to Pedro, the young vacquero,
Leaning against an old pueblo,
Singing to young folk grouped around him,
Stealing all hearts away.*

*Now I open my window at evening,
Gaze over the swaying trees;
I seem to hear, as the branches whisper,
Pedro's song and guitar-like echoes,
Setting a tune to the age-old mysteries,
Stealing all hearts away.*

16. The lonesome valley

To me, this is the most powerful and moving American song I have yet encountered. It exists in many versions, and I have assimilated several and then fashioned my own.

*You've got to cross that lonesome valley,
You've got to cross it by yourself,
There hain't no one can cross it for you,
You've got to cross it by yourself.*

*Jordan river is chilly,
Jordan river is cold,
Jordan river is wide and deep,
But you can't drown a good man's soul.*

*You've got to cross that lonesome valley,
You've got to cross it by yourself,
There hain't no one can cross it for you,
You've got to cross it by yourself.*

*Some say John was a Christian,
Some say John was a Jew,
But I say John was a natural man,
And he was a preacher too.*

*You've got to cross that lonesome valley,
You've got to cross it by yourself,
There hain't no one can cross it for you,
You've got to cross it by yourself.*

CREDITS:

Originally produced by Harvey Cort
Recording engineer: Rudy Van Gelder
Original jacket notes by Richard Dyer-Bennet
Cover photo by Clemens Kalisher
Design of original album by Martin Rosenzweig
New notes by Bonnie Dyer-Bennet, Conrad L. Osborne, and Anthony Seeger
Mastered by Dave Glasser and Charlie Pilzer at Airshow in Spingfield, VA
Audio supervision by Pete Reiniger
Reissue production supervised by Anthony Seeger and Amy Horowitz
Production coordinated by Kip Lornell with Mary Monseur and Michael Maloney
Production assistance by Kori Shlactor
Editorial assistance by Carla Borden
Design by Visual Dialogue, Boston, MA
Special thanks to Melvene Dyer-Bennett and Harvey Cort for their assistance in seeing this project to fruition.

DYER-BENNET RECORDS

A Complete List

Dyer-Bennet Records 1, Richard Dyer-Bennet (Reissued in 1997 as Smithsonian Folkways SF 40097)

Of't in the stilly night; Molly Brannigan;
Down by the Sally Gardens; The bold Fenian men; Three fishers; The bonnie Earl of Morey; Fine flowers in the valley; The Vicar of Bray; So we'll go no more a roving; Phyllis and her mother; The joys of love; I'm a poor boy; Pull off your old coat; Down in the valley; Pedro; The lonesome valley

The first release under his own label is the finest album he has yet recorded. The singing is tops, the engineering is superb, the production job is excellent. Without a doubt this is a masterpiece of its kind.

—Kenneth Goldstein, The Record Changer

Dyer-Bennet Records 2, Richard Dyer-Bennet

When cockleshells turn silverbells; Corn rigs are bonnie; The garden where the praties grow; The bailiff's daughter of Islington; Two maidens went milking; Who killed Cock Robin?; Jan Hinnerk; Woman! Go home!; Blow the candles out; Eggs and marrowbone; The beggar man; The Turkish Revery

A superb release by a superb artist. Miss it at your peril.

—Howard LaFey, High Fidelity

Dyer-Bennet Records 3, Richard Dyer-Bennet

The lady's policy; Dina and Vilikens; Fain would I wed; Willie Taylor; Charlie is my darling; Lilli Bulero; The beloved kitten; Spotted auf Napoleons Rücksug aus Russland 1812; The lass from the low country; The swapping song; The house carpenter; The lady who loved a swine; Go down, Moses
Artistic gems...high style, immaculate timing and admirable skill again produce a decisive success. The sound is excellent, the repertoire is chosen with discernment.

—Christian Science Monitor

Dyer-Bennet Records 4, Richard Dyer-Bennet

A May Day carol; The rising of the moon; The Kerry recruit; Searching for lambs; The bonnets of Bonnie Dundee; The Spanish lady in Dublin City; The three ra'ens; Song of reproach; Jag vill gå vall; The three tailors; The swagman; The foggy, foggy dew; The fox; Drill, ye tarriers, drill!

An outstanding recording. Once again the minstrel lives up to the high standards he has set for himself, and once again the superb engineering captures every nuance of his singing with flawless clarity and lifelike presence. Needless to say, all the songs are stamped with Dyer-Bennet's exceptional artistic and musical integrity. Belongs in every serious collection.

—Robert Sherman, American Record Guide

Dyer-Bennet Records 5, Requests

The "Golden Vanity"; The white lily; Lord Randall; Westryn Wynde; Barbara Allen; Venezuela; The Quaker lover; John Henry; Spanish is the loving tongue; I ride an old paint; Edward

Can be recommended unreservedly.

—Nat Hentoff, The Reporter

Dyer-Bennet Records 6, Songs With Young People In Mind

Come all ye; Old Bangum; Three jolly rogues of Lynn; Aunt Rhody; Frog went a courting; John Peel; The leprechaun; The piper of Dundee; Bow down; The tailor and the mouse; I went out one morning in May; Green corn; Buckeye Jim; Little pigs; Three crows; The hole in the bottom of the sea

Probably we have no greater balladeer in America than Richard Dyer-Bennet.... No musically inclined family can afford to miss it.

—Emma Dickson Sheehy, Parents Magazine

Dyer-Bennet Records 7, Beethoven Scottish and Irish Songs

Richard Dyer-Bennet, tenor; Natasha Magg, piano; Urico Rossi, violin; Fritz Magg, cello Faithfu' Johnie; On the massacre of Glencoe; Bonnie laddie, highland laddie; Sunset; The lovely lass of Inverness; The pulse of an Irishman; Once more I hail thee; Morning a cruel turmoiler; The morning air plays on my face; The return to Ulster; Oh! Who my dear Dermot; Again, my lyre

It is amply apparent that the songs recorded by Dyer-Bennet are the work of Beethoven in the full tide of his career. They stand up with the best of Beethoven's chamber music. Such, at least, is their effect when they are so well performed as they are in this instance.

—Alfred Frankenstein, San Francisco Chronicle

Dyer-Bennet Records 8, Gems of Minstrelsy

The Agincourt song; Come live with me; Come away, Death; I care not for these ladies; Flow, my tears; All in a garden green; Henry Martin; All mein Gedanken; Die bekehrte Schäferin; Kränzelkraut; Jagdabenteuer; Warnung; Le brave marin; Aminta

The performances are, as always, superbly finished both as to singing and the guitar playing, and the recording is beautiful.

—San Francisco Chronicle

Dyer-Bennet Records 9, Richard Dyer-Bennet

The Laird o' Cockpen; The two sisters of Binnoire; Early one morning; The pride of Petravore; Gently, Johnny, my Jingalo; The British light dragoons; Schneider's Höllenfahrt; Der Tod von Basel; Le joli tambour; The buffalo skinnners; John Riley; The cherry tree carol
Splendid.... Richard Dyer-Bennet's ninth release under his own aegis equals the very high standards of its predecessors.

—O.B. Brummel, High Fidelity

Dyer-Bennet Records 10, Richard Dyer-Bennet

The Lincolnshire poacher; Lowlands; I once loved a girl; She moved thro' the fair'; The seven little pigs; O speak then my love; Le veritable amour; The unfortunate troubadour; The reaper's ghost; Two comments; Go 'way, old man; The wife wrapped in wether's skin; My good old man; No hiding place

A feast of balladry.... He gives each piece its particular character of pain, passion, joy, love, humor and even an eeriness to those ballads steeped in the lore of the supernatural. His voice and guitar transcend time and space to breathe life into notes and verses.

—The Hartford Times

Dyer-Bennet Records 11, Stephen Foster Songs from the Original Editions

Richard Dyer-Bennet, vocals; Harry A. Rubinstein, piano

Linger in blissful repose; Gentle Annie; Come with thy sweet voice again; If you've only got a moustache; Jeanie with the light brown hair; For thee, love, for thee; Ah, may the red rose live always!; Beautiful dreamer; Sweetly she sleeps, my Alice fair; There are plenty of fish in the sea; Open thy lattice, love; Come where my love lies dreaming

Very beautiful...as haunting as Schubert or Brahms.... [Richard Dyer-Bennet] is the first person in history to record the songs of Stephen Foster precisely as Foster wrote them. At last they have been recorded with the dignity and respect which is their due.

—Albert Frankenstein, San Francisco Chronicle

Dyer-Bennet Records 12, Songs of Ships, Seafaring Men, Watery Graves, Card Sharpers, a Giant Ram, an Indian Scalping, and One Edible Rat

Shallow Brown; The drunken sailor; The Eddy-stone light; Hullabaloo belay; The mermaid; The willow tree; The Charleston merchant; Peter Gray; The roving gambler; Billy Barlow; Australian girls; Hanging Johnny; The Derby ram; Plain language from Truthful Jones

Dyer-Bennet subtly transmutes traditional songs into art songs; in each case, he illuminates the song's emotional soul.... Sonically flawless, highly recommended.

—High Fidelity

Dyer-Bennet Records 13, Stories and Songs for Children and Their Parents

Stories: The tale of the tales; The man who was full of fun; The wolf who was a friend; The king of the noise
Songs: The soldier and the lady; The devil and the farmer's wife; The old gray goose; The fox and the geese

He is an artfully simple tale spinner, neither overdramatizing nor indulging in coyness, and always keeping the lines of suspense taut.... For children and their parents who are still open to the wonder and fantasy of the inner life of children.

—Nat Hentoff, Hi-Fi Stereo Review

Dyer-Bennet Records 1601, Mark Twain's 1601, Fireside Conversation in the Time of Queen Elizabeth I, and Songs in the Same Free Spirit. Read and sung by Richard Dyer-Bennet

Warning: This is not a record for children or the easily shocked adult. The language is strong and explicit.

Mark Twain's 1601; Old Joe Clark; The old she-crab; The tailor's boy; The Eer-I-e Canal; There was a friar in our town; The gatherin' o' the clan

A comic masterpiece.

—The New Records

A delightfully bawdy disc.

—Everett Helm, Musical America

Dyer-Bennet Records, Aksel Schiøtz, Baritone

Aksel Schiøtz, baritone; Paul Ulanowksy, piano; Richard Dyer-Bennet, guitar
Franz Schubert: Liebesbotschaft, Ganymed, Der Wanderer an den Mond, An die Laute; Hugo Wolf: Heb auf dein blondes Haupt, Verschwiegene Liebe, Der Tambour, Auf dem grünen Balkon, Anakreons Grab; Johannes Brahms: An die Nachtigall, Salamander, Im Waldeseinsamkeit, Mein Mädel; Carl Michael Bellman: Fredman's Epistles nos. 25 and 30, Fredman's Song no. 31

Remarkable artistry.

—John H. Harvey, St. Paul Pioneer

ABOUT SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS

Folkways Records was founded by Moses Asch and Marian Distler in 1948 to document music, spoken word, instruction, and sounds from around the world. In the ensuing decades, New York City-based Folkways became one of the largest independent record labels in the world, reaching a total of nearly 2,200 albums that were always kept in print.

The Smithsonian Institution acquired Folkways from the Moses Asch estate in 1987 to ensure that the sounds and genius of the artists would be preserved for future generations. All Folkways recordings are available on high-quality audio cassettes, each packed in a special box along with the original LP liner notes.

Smithsonian-Folkways Recordings was formed to continue the Folkways tradition of releasing significant recordings with high-quality documentation. It produces new titles, reissues of historic recordings from Folkways and other record labels, and in collaboration with other companies also produces instructional videotapes and recordings to accompany published books, and other educational projects.

The Smithsonian Folkways, Folkways, Cook, Paredon, and Dyer-Bennet record labels are administered by the Smithsonian Institution's Center for Folklife Programs &

Cultural Studies. They are one of the means through which the Center supports the work of traditional artists and expresses its commitment to cultural diversity, education, and increased understanding.

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For further information about all the labels distributed through the Center, please consult our internet site (<http://www.si.edu/folkways>), which includes information about recent releases, our catalogue, and a database of the approximately 35,000 tracks from the more than 2,300 available recordings (*click on Database Search*).

Or request a printed catalogue by writing to: Catalogue, Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 955 L'Enfant Plaza, SW, Suite 2600, Smithsonian Institution MRC 914, Washington, DC 20560, USA. Or use our catalogue request phone: (202) 287-3262, or e-mail folkways@aol.com