Richard Dyer-Bennet

TENOR accompanying himself on the classic Spanish guitar

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!

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

photos by Clemens Kalischer
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A note on this recording
During the summer of 1957 I intended to record enough material for two 12-inch discs. Indeed, Gordon Holt and I spent our customary hours experimenting with microphone heights and distances and finally managed to capture 28 songs on tape.

However, we were constantly contending with frogs, crickets, thunderstorms, and the audible arrival of the Berkshires Branch of the N.Y., N.H., and Hartford Railway's night train in Great Barrington. You may ask why we did not seek the soundproofed seclusion of a New York studio. The reasons are numerous and include: New York is 140 miles from my home and Great Barrington is 4; the private living room of a friend was made available at almost any time and proved to have good acoustics; our hosts refreshed us with gin and tonic at intervals; a custom not yet estABLished so far as I know by rival studios.

To come to the point, upon close listening to the tape we found 4 of the 28 songs marred by extraneous sounds. We also found that 14 of the songs, unmarrked by the night sounds of the Berkshires, made an interesting record. In fact, my partner, Harvey Cort, believes that the selection thus pressed upon us is stronger than might otherwise have been the case. So here is our fourth release, and I trust Mr. Cort is right.

Richard Dyer-Bennet, August, 1957

Side 1 Group I

A May Day carol
I learned this song from my grandmother about 30 years ago. She used to accompany me on the piano before I started playing the guitar. I call it "A May Day Caroll, because there are many May Day carols. We are inclined to think of carols belonging to Christmas, but there used to be several seasons of the year celebrated by carol singing. May Day has long been symbolic of spring, flowering, rebirth of life and love, and song has all the freshness of the season, I confess a bowl of cream is not my first thought of a morning, even in May, but then this may also be symbolic.

The rising of the moon
I learned this from the Irish actor, Ralph Coleman, who came from America in 1904 to play at the St. Louis World Fair. Coleman was part of a group which included John McCormack, and they have remembered this song from the singing of that great tenor. According to legend, the phrase "the rising of the moon" was used as a pass word and rallying cry during the great rebellion.

The Kerry recruit
My father remembers hearing this song by the Irish bard Tom Plunket Greene at a school concert in England in the 1890s, though I did not learn it until the 1940s in New York. The song was popular among recruits in the British army shortly after the Crimean War. I added the last verse myself just as the tide began to turn in World War II and Russian military power was greatly appreciated in America. Though we are no longer so appreciative, the verse is still a good conclusion to the song.

Searching for lambs
Collected in England by Cecil Sharp, the words as printed here are due to the song being in 5/4 time, with one measure of 3/4.

The bonnets of bonnie Dundee
In 1868 a National Covenant was signed by many Scottish Presbyterians, agreeing to resist by force the introduction of episcopacy in Scotland. Among those who opposed the Covenanters were certain Royalists, and foremost of the Royalists was John Graham of Claverhouse, Viscount Dundee. The rising of the moon and the words are by Sir Walter Scott.

The Spanish lady in Dublin City
The origin of this is unknown to me. Perhaps it stems from a time when there was considerable traffic between Spain and Ireland. Perhaps the lady, or her father, floated ashore on a spar from the wreck of the Spanish Armada. I learned it in New York City about 15 years ago.

The three rafts
First published in Thomas Ravenscroft’s "Musick’s Memorial", 1611, the song has always seemed to me to come from a much earlier period. At any rate, it has in mind a medieval tapestry when singing it — a tapestry in which the figures move. Notice the verses about the "fallow doe, as great with young as she might go." The word "tenan" in the last verse is old English for "friend, companion, or possibly lover. It sounds like a requiem for Chivalry", said a recent listener.

Side 2 Group II

Song of reproach
Tune and original German words attributed to Hermann von Doman, a 13th century German Minnesinger. The English translation and guitar part are my own. I learned the song in Carmel, California, in 1939, from a man whose family had known it for several generations — I do not mean to imply that they had passed it down orally since the 13th century; probably some one came across it in manuscript a few generations ago.

Jag vill gå vall
A Swedish shepherd song, which I learned from my teacher, Gertrude Wheeler Beckman, in 1935. The whistling was not a part of the song as I learned it, though surely it is not an incongruous addition.

The three tallors
This is a German folk tune, and the text I sing is my own free translation of a German text by K. Haarle. I got the song from Sven Schlöndorff in Stockholm in 1935. [See my notes on R.D.B. #1 for information about Schlöndorff.]

Group III

The swagman
I learned this from a girl in San Jose, California. In 1936, she had learned it from a San Francisco man, and he learned it in Australia. I have since learned that it was written by one "Barnby" Patterson, an enterprising and hardworking man in the mining camps of Australia. It was the unofficial song of the Australian troops in World War II and II, though they sang it as a marching song rather than as a narrative ballad. It is my own idea to sing the chorus in waltz time, and if Patterson did not write it so, he should have.

The foggy, foggy dew
I do not know the origin of this, though I seem to remember hearing that it was Irish originally, and was called "The Weaver". At any rate, it is well known in America among college students. As a matter of fact, I first heard it from my fraternity brothers at the University of California in 1932. We used to think of it as a humorous and somewhat daring song. I had to grow considerably older and wiser before recognizing its meaning, which is no harm and evocative song. When I sing it to an audience I can tolerate a wistful and unshamed smile on any listener's face, but a laugh is definitely out of bounds.

The fox
An American version of a song known in the British Isles for at least a century and a half, according to the "Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes", edited by Ina and Peter Oles, one verse only was published in "Gammer Gurton's Garland", 1810, and Sir Walter Scott mentions the song in a memorandum from around 1826.

Drill, ye territors, drill!
I believe this song comes from a time in the 19th century when numbers of Irishmen were flying to America and found work as railroad builders. The word "terrier", means the one who delays, but I have heard an alternative and more peculiar definition of the word as used in this song. The railroad work gang may have had terrier dogs as mascots; and the colloquial Irish pronunciation of "terrier" would be "terrier".

Concluding note
I would like to call your attention to the scope and variety of material on this record. There is music from England, Ireland, Scotland, Sweden, Germany, Australia and America; and the time span is 15th to 20th century. What do these songs have in common? I do not have an answer, yet I feel a certain unity. Perhaps the unity exists only in the singer's mind, to be given a fleeting but recurring reality during the act of singing. Songs lie dormant in book, manuscript and memory, until they are sung. A recording can capture these moments of life and prolong them indefinitely. This is the chief satisfaction for me in making records.

The guitar used on this recording was made for me by Manuel Velazquez of New York City. It is new, and I have not yet tamed it, but its quality is apparent. R.D.B.

For best response on high fidelity phonographs, use R.I.A.A. characteristics.
Recording Engineer: Gordon Holt
Produced by Harvey Cort
Dyer-Bennet Records, P.O. Box 235, Woodside 77, N.Y.

Other albums in this series:

Richard Dyer-Bennet 1 (DYB 1000) 12" LP
Includes:
- the lonesome valley
- oh! the chilly night
- the cabin Earl of Moray
- we'll go no more a courting
- lonesome valley
- oh! the chilly night
- the cabin Earl of Moray
- we'll go no more a courting

Richard Dyer-Bennet 2 (DYB 2000) 12" LP
Includes:
- cock robin, blow the candles out
- corning's bannie
- the garden where the palmies grew
- the beggarman's two maidens went milking
- the bolshis daughter of islington
- veille de Noel
- tanais go home
- east and sutherland
- the turkish reveve

Richard Dyer-Bennet 3 (DYB 3000) 12" LP
Includes:
- the lady's policy
- dinah and william
- pain would i wed
- willie taylor
- charlie's in my delting
- little buttercup
- the beloved katherine
- scottish aut napoletans rockaer austrsland
- the loss from the low country
- the swapping song
- the house carpenter
- the lady who loves a spade
- go down, makes

Richard Dyer-Bennet 5 (DYB 5000) 12" LP
Includes:
- greenleeves
- lord randal
- westplus wynde
- venezuela
- john henry
- spanish is the love's tongue
- barbara allen
- the white lily
- the golden vanity
- the quaker lover
- the brothers
- i ride an old paint

Richard Dyer-Bennet 6 (DYB 6000) 12" LP
Songs with young people in mind
Includes:
- the leprechaun
- the piper of dundee
- three jolly rogues of lynn
- john feel
- the tailor and the model
- come all ye green coat
- old song
- the hole in the bottom of the sea
- buckeye jim
- the little pigs
- the frog went a courting
- go tell aunt rhodie
- one morning in may
- the three crows
- blow down

Richard Dyer-Bennet 7 (DYB 7000) 12" LP (Stereo: DYB 7000)
Beethoven Scottish and Irish Songs
Includes:
- faithful johnnie
- on the massacre of glencoe
- the lovely lass of inverness
- bonny laddie
- highland laddie
- sunset
- the pulse of an irishman
- once more i hall thee
- morning a cruel tormentor
- the return to uther
- the morning air plays on my face
- old man, my dear derrit
- again, my lyre