DYER-BENNET RECORDS  the eleventh album in a series

Stephen Foster songs—from the original editions
sung by Richard Dyer-Bennet

accompanied by 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 alway!
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

COMPLETE LYRICS TO ALL SONGS INCLUDED INSIDE JACKET
STEPHEN COLLINS FOSTER, 1826-1864

He was born in Lawrenceville, Pennsylvania, a town founded by his father and now a part of Pittsburgh. An early interest in music and poetry was not encouraged, though his idle, dreamy nature clearly unfitted him for business, soldiering, or frontier politics. His general schooling was inadequate and despite little or no musical training he acquired some facility on the piano, violin, flute, guitar and banjo. He also learned to sing with a voice of warmth and sweetness, and in later years performed his own songs with a pleasing baritone—though he never sang professionally.

He attended such plays and musical events as were available in his home town, and was greatly influenced by the popular black face minstrel shows of that time. Several of his early songs were given or sold for a few dollars to professional performers who made them known and were assumed to have written them. This led to publication, but with no credit or royalties going to the real composer. However, by 1850 a number of successful songs had appeared under his name, and fame, if not fortune, was on the way.

A marriage in 1850 produced one daughter but does not appear to have been otherwise fruitful. The years until 1861 were reasonably successful. There was some semblance of family life and many of the songs became world famous. Reputable firms were his publishers and between 1849 and 1860 the royalties amounted to some $15,000—a comfortable living for those days.

In 1861 a general decline began. Always a vigorous drinker, he now became seriously addicted. Melody and verse still flowed, but with less inspiration. With few exceptions these last songs are of little interest. Money became scarce; wife and daughter could no longer depend on him for the necessities of life, and left him.

His last four years were spent largely in New York City, alone, and drinking heavily. Having drawn advances from publishers, he felt obliged to produce something in an effort to reduce this indebtedness and thus make further advances possible. Headquarters for the last days were a small saloon in back of a dilapidated grocery store. Here he sat, drinking a special mixture of French spirits and brown sugar kept for him by a likeable all his life; and so he remained to the end, having made seemingly not a single enemy, nor any human attachment of a strength able to save him.

He died in Bellevue Hospital from the ravages of excessive drinking, possible tuberculosis, and loss of blood, having fallen during the night at his lodging house and gashed his neck on a washbasin or pitcher. His personal belongings were the threadbare clothing on his body, a worn leather purse containing thirty-eight dollars, a few letters, books, magazines, recordings—anything and everything pertaining to Foster's life and work. His family and friends found him kindly and likeable all his life; and so he remained to the end.

Harry Rubenstein and I looked through all 188 of Foster's songs. We decided against the dialect songs as being socially somewhat offensive at this moment of history—though Foster had no such intention within the context of his time. We also decided against the rather maudlin sentiment of the Civil War songs. We found ourselves drawn to the languorous airs of nostalgia, sad remembrance and idyllic love. This is his richest vein, and suggests a talent which, had he been encouraged to thoroughly develop it, might have resulted in an American Schubert. These songs, while not towering works of art, have at least the charm and distinction of small works of art, and sound gracious and pleasant in these noisy times. We chose 10 such songs, and mildly comic ones by way of contrast. In the course of this selection we noted; one, that most of Foster's best songs are settings of his own words; two, that his original piano accompaniments are better than later arrangements by other musicians.

This recording brings to completion a project suggested to me 15 years ago by Alfred Frankenstein, noted critic of the San Francisco Chronicle. I hope he approves of the result. I know he will not hesitate to say so if he doesn't.—R.D.-B.

Harry Rubenstein is a graduate of the Baldwin School of Music, New York. He studied piano with Mischa Levitski and Carlos Buher. He has served as accompanist for Hanya Holm, Meritho Graham and various modern dance groups. He founded and directed the Berkshire Children's choir, and has performed as soloist with The New Symphony of the Hills. Nonmusical activities have included several years as plant manager for Acoustic Research, Cambridge, Mass., makers of the famous AR speakers. At present he is music director at Windsor Mountain School, Lenox, Mass., and a staff member of the Pittsfield Community School, Pittsfield, Mass.

STEPHEN

Foster

FOSTER'S SONGS

Josiah Kirby Lilly, a retired Indianapolis business man, began collecting Fosteriana in 1930. This collection is now housed in the Stephen C. Foster Memorial Building in Pittsburgh, and contains manuscripts, first editions, pictures, letters, books, magazines, recordings—anything and everything pertaining to Foster's life and work. Lilly also had reproductions made of all the first editions of Foster's compositions. Complete sets of these reproductions were made available to schools, libraries and musical groups. One of these sets is at present in the hands of Mr. Americo Buhler, who teaches singing at Princeton and spends her summers in the Berkshire Hills of Massachusetts. I am indebted to Miss Luckey for access to these reproductions.

Harry Rubenstein

FOSTER'S MEMORIAL BUILDING

The world was singing his songs. He was thirty-seven years old.

Richard Dyer-Bennet, September 1963

Stephen Foster Memorial Building in Pittsburgh, and various reproduced in the collection of the Pittsfield Community School, Pittsfield, Mass.

One of the first of Foster's compositions was the song "Beautiful Sammy." This recording was made in June 1965 at the Temple of Music, South Mountain, Pittsfield, Mass., site of the oldest summer chamber music festival in the nation, founded by Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge. The hall was made available by the South Mountain Association and Mrs. William Willeke, Manager.

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 of other albums, write: Dyer-Bennet Records, P. O. Box 235, Woodside 77, N. Y.

It is the only song in which I have taken any liberties. As first published, the song ends with a coda taking the voice to the high A in an operatic style. In listening to playback I did not like the sound of this coda, and as the form of the song is complete without it, we decided to delete the passage and move straight into the closing piano chords. John Tasker Howard in his biography, "Stephen Foster, America's Troubadour," states his belief that the questionable coda was not Foster's idea but was suggested by Henry Kleiber, a musician friend of Foster. This lent me courage to make the deletion.—R.D.-B.

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