Richard Dyer-Bennet, world-renowned troubadour, performs sixteen songs that have captivated children and their parents for centuries. With origins in England and the United States, some resemble fairy tales, while others sound more like adventure stories, and still others seem just for fun. Dyer-Bennet's high tenor voice, clear diction, and masterful guitar accompaniment create a variety of moods and rhythms through which children can explore these fantasies.

Originally released in 1958 on Dyer-Bennet Records Volume 6. Original notes and song texts included; 18 page booklet. 35 minutes.

"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
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Curator’s Introduction, January 2000

Here is a selection of songs that have captivated children and their parents for centuries, performed by a master musician in a high, clear, tenor voice, accompanying himself on acoustic guitar. These are mostly story songs, to be listened to like bedtime stories. Some of the old English ballads resemble fairy tales, with strange events resolving themselves into happy endings. Others, like the song about the boy who overcomes a man-eating wild boar, may have roots traceable to the Sumerian epic Gilgamesh or to Homer’s Odyssey: they are ancient adventure stories, whose counterparts are today’s video games. Others are just for fun.

These are not all happy songs about nonsensical subjects. They deal with experiences children feel deeply, like sibling jealousy (the jealous sibling is eaten by cannibals in the end), death and bereavement (of a goose), danger, and sometimes violence. But don’t be shocked — these sequences are also reflected in Walt Disney’s Snow White and Bambi, Woody Woodpecker and Road Runner cartoons, and Grimm’s fairy tales. For centuries children have explored the deep realities of life through fantasies like these. There is whimsical humor here too: the children of a frog and a mouse have long tails and webbed feet; a leprechaun tricks a man out of a purse of gold; and a song about three crows has a verse about a fourth.

Richard Dyer-Bennet (1913–1991), a major figure in the folk music revival of the 1940s–1970s, performed English ballads and American folk songs, blending indigenous rural and traditional materials with his unique musicality and urban artistry. Dissatisfied with his earlier recordings, Dyer-Bennet founded his own record company in partnership with Harvey Cort in 1955 to ensure that his recordings would truly
SONG NOTES BY RICHARD DYER-BENNET, 1958

1. COME ALL YE

Though obviously an Irish song, I learned this over twenty years ago from a person of German extraction in Minden, Nevada, a small ranch town near Carson City.

As I was strolling down the lane
The dew was sparkling on the grass
I heard the sound of the fiddler’s tune
And the merry song of the dancers.

Come all ye, oh, why do you wait?
The fiddler’s down from Dublin Town
The gardener will open the gate
So early of the morning.

Then dance, dance, and trip on the green
The fiddler’s tune is gay as June
Each lad thinks each lass
The queen of the morning.

2. OLD BANGUM

Another gift from the manuscript collection of Fletcher Collins, who found it in North Carolina.

Old Bangum, will you hunting ride?
Dillum down dillum
Old Bangum, will you hunting ride?
Dillum down
Old Bangum will you hunting ride
With sword and pistol by your side?
Copy kie, kittle down, killie quo quam.

There is a wild boar in the wood,
Dillum down dillum
There is a wild boar in the wood,
Dillum down
There is a wild boar in the wood/He’ll eat your flesh and drink your blood.
Copy kie, kittle down, killie quo quam.

Oh, how may I that wild boar see?
Dillum down dillum
Oh, how may I that wild boar see?
Dillum down
Oh, how may I that wild boar see?/Just blow a blast and he’ll come to me.
Copy kie, kittle down, killie quo quam.

Anthony Seeger, Curator and Director
Smithsonian Folkways Recordings
And found the bones of a thousand men.
Copy kie, kittle down, killie quo quam.

Old Bangum drew his wooden knife
Dillum down dillum
Old Bangum drew his wooden knife,
Dillum down
Old Bangum drew his wooden knife,
And robbed that wild boar of his life.
Copy kie, kittle down, killie quo quam.

He left the carcass in the den
Dillum down dillum
He left the carcass in the den
Dillum down
He left the carcass in the den/To rot with the bones of the thousand men.
Copy kie, kittle down, killie quo quam.

3. THREE JOLLY ROGUES OF LYNN
A New England descendant of an old English ballad about three sons of King Arthur.

In the good old colony days
When we lived under the king
Lived a miller and a weaver and a little tailor,
Three jolly rogues of Lynn, (3x)
Lived a miller and a weaver and a little tailor,
Three jolly rogues of Lynn.

Now the miller he stole corn
And the weaver he stole yarn
And the little tailor he stole broadcloth
For to keep these three rogues warm, (3x)
And the little tailor he stole broadcloth
For to keep these rogues warm.

Now the miller drowned in his dam
And the weaver hanged in his yarn
And the devil got his paw on the little tailor
With his broadcloth under his arm, (3x)
And the devil got his paw on the little tailor
With his broadcloth under his arm.

Now the miller still floats in his dam
And the weaver still hangs in his yarn
And the little tailor still skips through Hell,
With his broadcloth under his arm, (3x)
And the little tailor still skips through Hell,
With his broadcloth under his arm.

4. AUNT RHODY
Widely sung in the United States; about the only thing that changes from place to place is the name of the aunt. I learned it from Burl Ives, and we sang it as a duet on an experimental television show for Gilbert Seldes in the good old days before World War II, when CBS TV was a relaxed outfit operating from a floor of the Grand Central Terminal Building. I believe the idea of singing two verses in the parallel minor was Ives’ — at any rate it’s a good one.

Go tell Aunt Rhody (3x)
The old gray goose is dead.
The one that she’s been saving (3x)
To make a feather bed.
The goslings are crying (3x)
Because their mammy’s dead.
She died in the millpond (3x)
A-standing on her head.

Oh, go tell Aunt Rhody,
Go tell Aunt Rhody,
Go tell Aunt Rhody,
The old gray goose is dead.

5. FROG WENT A-COURTIN’
There may well be historical allusions here, though I am unaware of them.
Pertinent information gratefully received.
So far as I know the song is English in origin, though this is an American version, and the last verse is my own.

Frog went a-courting’, he did ride, um hmm, (2x)
Frog went a-courting’, he did ride
With a sword and a pistol by his side, Um hmm, um hmm, um hmm.

He rode till he came to Miss Mouse’s hall, um hmm, (2x)
He rode till he came to Miss Mouse’s hall/Where he most tenderly did call, Um hmm, um hmm, um hmm.

“Oh Mistress Mouse, won’t you come down,” um hmm, (2x)
“I dare not for my life come down
’Cause Uncle Rat is not at home,” Um hmm, um hmm, um hmm.
But Uncle Rat he soon came home, um hmm, (2x)
Uncle Rat he soon came home/Says,
"Who's been here while I've been gone?"
Um hmm, um hmm, um hmm.

"Here's been a fine young gentleman," um hmm, (2x)
"Here's been a fine young gentleman
Who swears he'll marry me if he can." Um hmm, um hmm, um hmm.

Then Uncle Rat gave his consent, um hmm, (2x)
Then Uncle Rat gave his consent
And made a handsome settlement. Um hmm, um hmm, um hmm.

Then Frog and Mouse lived happily, um hmm, (2x)
Then Frog and Mouse lived happily/And they were blessed with children three. Um hmm, um hmm, um hmm.

And one did croak and two did squeak, um hmm, (2x)
One did croak and two did squeak
And they had long tails and webbed feet. Um hmm, um hmm, um hmm.

6. JOHN PEEL
We all know this as an English fox-hunting song, but I dimly remember reading or hearing that it was originally composed as a jest or to win a wager.

D'ye ken John Peel with his coat so gay,
D'ye ken John Peel at the break of day,
D'ye ken John Peel when he's far, far away
With his hounds and his horn in the morning.

Chorus:
For the sound of his horn brought me from my bed,
And the cry of the hounds which he oftentimes led,
Peel's "View hallo!" would awaken the dead
Or the fox from his lair in the morning.

Yes, I ken John Peel and his Ruby too,
Ranter and Ringwood, Bellman, and True,
From a find to a check, from a check to a view,
From a view to a death in the morning.

Chorus

D'ye ken John Peel with his coat so gay,
He lived at Troutbeck once on a day,
Now he has gone so far, far away
We shall ne'er hear his voice in the morning.

Chorus

7. THE LEPRECHAUN
According to my friend David Flaherty, who ought to know, the leprechaun is native to Ireland and stands only so high, or at most an inch more — the leprechaun, that is. Flaherty himself is a full-grown man. To get back to my footnote, leprechauns are shoemakers by trade, dress colorfully, and are to be found only on moonlit nights under a bush on some desolate hillside. Mountain dew is apparently their main sustenance, this being a delicate and harmless liquid formed by the condensation of fog on the leaves of certain plants found only on Irish soil. The dew which forms on Scottish and American plants is much less delicate. Flaherty tells me that up in Vermont, for instance — but I'm getting ahead of my story. The point is that, if you can catch a leprechaun, he will give you, as ransom for his freedom, a purse of gold. And no matter how much you take out, the purse will remain full. This is not so with mountain dew, by the way. I well remember the night Flaherty and I were out looking for a penny stamp on Black Mountain. We chanced upon an old stone jug into which some Vermont dew had fallen. "Dave," I said, "let's see if this jug remains full, like the leprechaun's purse." Dave agreed. In fact, I remember his exact words. "Dick," he said, "it may not be as delicate as the dew of Ireland, but since we cannot find a penny stamp, let us be thankful for what we have found and, in the interest of folklore, explore the permanence or impermanence of the cubic capacity of this jug." Dave has a nice way of turning a phrase, which is why I quote him verbatim. To make a long story short, we took alternate sips, and after my second or third sip the jug appeared empty. To make certain, I tilted
it to an extreme angle, thus eclipsing the moon, and everything went black.
"Dave," I said, "the jug is empty, and what's more, the moon has gone out."
Dave seized the jug and verified my findings. Again I have his exact words, having jotted them down at the time. In a characteristically apt phrase he began thus, "Oh dear!" — the balance is really not pertinent and as a matter of fact tends to damage the sonority of his opening cadence.

I have gone into the above incident at some length in order to simplify the task of future musicologists. I refer of course to the matter of the penny stamp. This fixes the date of the whole extraordinary episode as not earlier than late summer of 1958, for it was in August of that year that the Postal Rate Increase came into effect, giving rise to the so-called Penny Panic and Great Stamp Hunt, which in turn culminated in the "Black November" elections and the ensuing congressional investigation of the Post Office Department.

In a shady nook one moonlit night
a leprechaun I spied,
With scarlet coat and cap of green,
a cruchkin by his side,
'T was tick tack tick his hammer went
upon a tiny shoe,
And I laughed to think of a purse of gold,
But the fairy was laughing too.

With tiptoe step and beating heart,
quite softly I drew nigh,
There was mischief in his merry face,
a twinkie in his eye,
He hammered and sang with tiny voice
and drank his mountain dew,
And I laughed to think
he was caught at last,
But the fairy was laughing too.

As quick as I thought I seized the elf,
"Your fairy purse," I cried,
"The purse," he said, "is in the hand of the lady by your side."
I turned to look, the elf was gone,
Oh what was I to do,
I laughed to think what a fool I'd been,
But the fairy was laughing too.

8. THE PIPER OF DUNDEE
A traditional Scottish song with a wee change of key added.

The piper came to our town,
to our town, to our town,
The piper came to our town,
and he played bonnie,
He played a spring; the laird to please,
A spring brent new frae yant the seas,
And then he gave his bags a wheeze,
And played another key.

Chorus:
And wasna he a roguy,
a roguy, a roguy,
And wasna he a roguy,
the piper of Dundee.

He played "The Welcome Owre
the Main"
And "Ye'se Be Fou and
I 'se Be Fain."
And "Auld Stuart's Back Again."
"Wi' muckle mirth and glee."
He played "The Kirk,"
he played "The Queer,"
"The Mulin Dhu" and "Chevalier,"
And "Lang Away, But Welcome Here,"
sae sweet, sae bonnie.

Glossary:
spring — a kind of dance
brent new frae yant — brand new from over gat — got
none — none
their lane — alone, by themselves
vow o'weir — (this I admit is beyond me) — R D-B

Chorus
It's some gat swords,
and some gat nane,
And some were dancing mad their lane,
And many a vow o'weir wa'ta'en that
which at Amulric,
There was Tallibardine and Burleigh,
And Struan, Keith, and Ogilvie,
And brave Carnegie, who but he,
The piper o' Dundee.
9. Bow Down
An American song possibly related to the old Scottish ballad "Binnorie."

There lived an old lord in the north country./Bow down,
There lived an old lord in the north country,
The bows they bend to me,
There lived an old lord in the north country,
And he had daughters, one, two, three,
Singing "I'll be true to my love,
If my love will be true to me."

The sisters stood by the river's brim./Bow down,
The sisters stood by the river's brim,
The bows they bent to me,
The sisters stood by the river's brim/And the elder, she pushed the younger one in,
Singing "I'll be true to my love,
If my love will be true to me."

"Sister, oh sister, pray give me your hand,"/Bow down,
"Sister, oh sister, pray give me your hand,"/The bows they bent to me,
"Sister, oh sister, pray give me your
hand,"/And I will promise both home
and land.
Singing "I'll be true to my love,
If my love will be true to me."

"I'll neither give you hand nor
glove,"/Bow down,
"I'll neither give you hand nor
glove,"/The bows they bent to me,
"I'll neither give you hand nor glove,
Unless you promise me your true
love."
Singing "I'll be true to my love,
If my love will be true to me."

Down the river the maiden swam,
Bow down,
Down the river the maiden swam,
The bows they bent to me.
Down the river the maiden swam
Until she came to the miller's dam,
Singing "I'll be true to my love,
If my love will be true to me."

The miller's daughter stood at the door,
Bow down,
The miller's daughter stood at the door,
The bows they bent to me,
The miller's daughter stood at the
door/Looking very much like a gilly
flower.
Singing "I'll be true to my love,
If my love will be true to me."

"Father, oh, father, here swims a
swan,"/Bow down,
"Father, oh, father, here swims a
swan,"/The bows they bent for me,
"Father, oh, father, here swims a
swan./Looking very much like a gen-
tlewoman."
Singing "I'll be true to my love,
If my love will be true to me."

The miller he ran for his rod and
hook,/Bow down,
The miller he ran for his rod and
hook,/The bows they bent for me,
The miller he ran for his rod and hook
And he fished the maiden out of
the brook,
Singing "I'll be true to my love,
If my love will be true to me."

The elder sister fled over the seas,
Bow down,
The elder sister fled over the seas,
The bows bent to me,
The elder sister fled over the seas/And
there was eaten by wild savages,
Singing "I'll be true to my love,
If my love will be true to me."

10. The Tailor and the Mouse
Traditional English children's song.

There was a tailor had a mouse,
Hi diddlum cum feedle,
They lived together in one house,
Hi diddlum cum feedle.

Chorus:
Hi diddlum cum tarantantum
Through the town of Ramsey,
Hi diddlum cum over the lea,
Hi diddlum cum feedle.

The tailor had a tall silk hat,
Hi diddlum cum feedle,
The mouse he ate it, fancy that,
Hi diddlum cum feedle.

Chorus
The tailor thought his mouse was ill,
Hi diddlum cum feedle,
He fed him part of a large blue pill,  
Hi diddlum cum feedle.

Chorus

The tailor thought his mouse would die,  
Hi diddlum cum feedle,  
He baked him in an apple pie,  
Hi diddlum cum feedle.

Chorus

The pie was cut and the mouse ran out,  
Hi diddlum cum feedle,  
The tailor followed him all about,  
Hi diddlum cum feedle.

Chorus

The tailor chased him over the lea,  
Hi diddlum cum feedle,  
The last of that mouse he never did see,  
Hi diddlum cum feedle.

Chorus

11. I Went Out One Morning in May
A children’s play-party song from North Carolina. Collected by Fletcher Collins.

I went out one morning in May/Gathering flowers all so gay,  
I gathered red, I gathered blue / Every little thing that a love could do.

Here sits a young lady, she once said no/  
She now says yes and it shall be so,  
So rise you up upon your feet / And ask some gentleman to take your seat.

Shall I go bound, shall I go free / Shall I love a pretty gal that don’t love me?  
Oh, no, no, no, that never shall be / That ever love should conquer me.

12. Green Corn
I learned this from Huddie Ledbetter (also known as Lead Belly) in 1942.  
“Lead” called it a “sukey-jump tune” — I understood him to mean a dance song of some kind.

Chorus:
   Green corn, come along, Charlie, (4x)
   Green corn, green corn, come along, Charlie (4x)

Wait, snakes, day’s a-breakin’ / Peas in the pot, and hoecake’s a-bakin’.

Chorus

All I want in this creation / Little bitty wife and a big plantation,  
Two little boys to call me Poppa/One named Sop and one named Gravy.

Chorus

13. Buckeye Jim
Poetic nonsense from North Carolina. Thanks again to Fletcher Collins.

‘Way up yonder above the sky/  
A jaybird built in a bluebird’s eye.  
Be nimble, Jim, you can’t go/  
Go weave and spin, you can’t go,  
Buckeye Jim.

‘Way up yonder above the moon/  
A bluebird lived in a silver spoon.  
Be nimble, Jim, you can’t go/  
Go weave and spin, you can’t go,  
Buckeye Jim.

‘Way down yonder in a holler trough/  
An old woman died of the whooping cough.  
Be nimble, Jim, you can’t go/  
Go weave and spin, you can’t go,  
Buckeye Jim.
14. Little Pigs
Taught to me by a California girl in 1934. She learned it from her grandmother, who said it was sung as a lullaby in Scotland.

Little pigs lie in the best of straw/With an onk (snore) onk (whistle) onk, shenan little dog
(Repeat)

Chorus:
O lily bolay, o lily bolay, o lily bolay, o lily bolay, Ah, my daddy's a bonny wee man, With an onk (snore) onk (whistle) onk (snore) onk (whistle) onk, shenan little dog.

Little pigs maketh the best of pork/With an onk (snore) onk (whistle) onk, shenan little dog
(Repeat)

Chorus

15. Three Craw
A Scottish mystery, learned in New York in 1942.

Chorus:
Three craw sa' upon a wa' Sa' upon a wa'/Sa' upon a wa', Three craw sa' upon a wa'
On a cold and a frosty mornin'.
The first craw, he couldn'a find his maw, Chorus
The second craw he fled awa' the wa', Chorus
The third craw, he couldn'a flee ata', Chorus
The fourth craw, he wasna there ata', Chorus

Glossary:
craw — crow or crows
sa' — sat
wa' — wall
couldna — could not
fled awa' — flew away from ata' — at all
wasna — was not

16. The Hole in the Bottom of the Sea
I jotted this down in a tavern in New York in 1939, from the singing of some N.Y.U. students celebrating the completion of final examinations.

There's a hole in the bottom of the sea, There's a hole in the bottom of the sea, There's a hole, there's a hole, There's a hole in the bottom of the sea.

There's a log in the hole in the bottom of the sea, There's a log in the hole in the bottom of the sea, There's a log, there's a log, There's a log in the hole in the bottom of the sea.

There's a bump on the log in the hole in the bottom of the sea, etc.

There's a frog on the bump on the log... etc.

There's a wart on the frog on the bump... etc.
Dyer-Bennet Records
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Dyer-Bennet Records 1, D-1000 (1955),
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Folkways SFW 40097
Dyer-Bennet Records 2 (1956), D-2000
Dyer-Bennet Records 3 (1957), D-3000
Dyer-Bennet Records 4 (1957), D-4000
Dyer-Bennet Records 5 (1958), D-5000
Dyer-Bennet Records 6, With Young People
In Mind (1958), reissued on Smithsonian
Folkways (1999) as SFW 45053
Dyer-Bennet Records 7, Beethoven:
Scottish and Irish Songs (1958), D-7000
Dyer-Bennet Records 8 (1959), D-8000
Dyer-Bennet Records 9 (1960), D-9000
Dyer-Bennet Records 10 (1962) D-10
Dyer-Bennet Records 11, Stephen Foster
Songs from the Original Editions (1962),
D-11

Dyer-Bennet Records 12, Of ships, seafar-
ing men, watery graves, card sharpers, a
giant ram, an Indian scalping, and one
edible rat (1964), D-12
Dyer-Bennet Records 13, Stories and songs
for children and their parents (1964), D-13
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 (1962), D-1601
WARNING: This is not a record for
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The language is strong and explicit.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:
About Richard Dyer-Bennet
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Bennet." In Richard Dyer-Bennet 1 CD
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Genuine Original." In Richard Dyer-
Bennet 1 CD Booklet, Smithsonian
Folkways Recordings SFW 40078, pp.
15–18.
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