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Stories Told by Music

Geraldine G. Fenn

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Stories Told by Music

SOUTH DAKOTA MUSIC PROGRAM

1938-39

Folk Songs

HOME SWEET HOME.....	Bishop
OLD FOLKS AT HOME.....	Foster
CARRY ME BACK TO OLD VIRGINNY.....	Bland
MY OLD KENTUCKY HOME.....	Foster
SWING LOW, SWEET CHARIOT.....	Spiritual

Club Songs

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FOR THE BEAUTY OF THE EARTH.....	Kocher
HARR! THE HERALD ANGELS SING.....	Mendelssohn

Operatic

THE LAST ROSE OF SUMMER (MARTHA).....	Flotow
*WOMAN IS FICKLE (RIGOLETTO).....	Verdi
*SOLDIERS' CHORUS (FAUST).....	Gounod

*All numbers but those starred are found in the National 4-H Club Song Book.

STORIES TOLD BY MUSIC

Compiled by GERALDINE G. FENN

HOME SWEET HOME—*Bishop*. This is generally accorded first place as a song of sentiment. It is a song that came from the heart, speaks to the heart, voices the memories, the longings, the aspirations, the love of all human kind. It brings back childhood days and familiar faces. It appeals to the tenderest and purest sentiment of the human heart. Why was it written? Because John Howard Payne, while doing literary work in Paris in 1822 was overcome with homesickness. Recalling the happy days of his early home life, and seating himself on a bench in a little park, he wrote the lines. The melody was written by Henry Bishop and included in one of his operas the following year. It was an instantaneous success. As long as the love of home exists the love of this sweetly tender song will remain.

OLD FOLKS AT HOME—*Foster*. Stephen Collins Foster achieved great success with pleasing ballads descriptive of negro sentiment. Nothing like them had appeared before nor since. In this respect his career was unique. His first composition appeared in 1816 and there soon appeared about 175 in rapid succession. The songs are simple in melody, the words expressive and the style distinctive. Old Folks at Home is the most popular of his songs. He calls it his best song. It is often called "Swanee River." The story is that the composer wrote the words and music but lacked the name of a river in the South of only two syllables. He and his brother searched the maps of the southern states, and finally discovered a small, practically unknown river in Florida. The name of the river fits the song perfectly.

This song was a great favorite of President Lincoln who said "Old Folks at Home" and "Uncle Tom's Cabin," did more to free the slaves than he.

CARRY ME BACK TO OLD VIRGINNY—*Bland*. James A. Bland deserves long to be remembered if only for one song that never will be forgotten, "Carry Me Back to Old Virginy." Nevertheless, this ballad of a colored lad who loved Old Virginia had fallen almost entirely into the realm of forgotten things before Alma Gluck came to its rescue. The popular soprano dug it out and made a phonograph recording of it a few years ago. That revival, together with the increasing vogue of negro songs, both genuine and written in the negro style by white musicians, started a renaissance of the old tune which has brought it into what seems a permanent popularity. It is issued in almost every conceivable form for voices and instruments.

Although Bland's name has not come down into fame as securely as Foster's, he wrote a great many of the popular successes of the '70's and '80's. For instance, he is the author and composer of "O Dem Golden Slippers" which had a great vogue about this time when Harrigan and Hart were producing their theatrical successes. His were negro songs written by a negro.

One reason for the enduring appeal of "Carry Me Back to Old Virginy" is that Virginia serves therein as a symbol for home—no matter where one's home may be.

MY OLD KENTUCKY HOME—*Foster*. There is no American composer of music whose songs are more universally sung and loved than those of Stephen Collins Foster. He belongs to the Civil War Period. Foster frequently visited the home of Judge John Rowan, a mile east of Bardstown, Kentucky. As a child he enjoyed the intimacies of the Rowan home and became endeared to the estate with all of its enjoyments. Upon a visit in 1853 Mr. Foster wrote this immortal song that beautifully describes the life of the plantation.

SWING LOW, SWEET CHARIOT—*Spiritual*. The negro Spiritual is a form of musical expression that has resulted in the fusion of the native musical and rhythmical talent with that of Christianity as the negro knew and experienced Christianity. All spirituals have a fascinating rhythm. The melodies are simple in structure with much repetition of the principal themes. They may be called true folk songs and were originally intended only for group singing. Very likely they are the product of talented individuals who offered them at the camp-meetings and were wholeheartedly accepted by the masses.

This particular Spiritual is one of the most beautiful in melodic structure and sentiment. It was intended to be sung responsively by a leader and congregation, the congregation singing "Coming for to Carry Me Home" after each exclamation of the leader. In group singing this principle can be followed very effectively. The leader calls for the chariot that is to swing from heaven and pick up the negro who is intent in his longing for his heavenly home. Follow this thought and spirit of the selection and the interpretation will be correct.

4-H FIELD SONG—*Parish*. This is a song of the out-of-doors. It is frequently used in connection with conservation meetings and campfire programs. Companionship with the field and the growing things therein has special appeal for young farm people and are given excellent expression in this selection. Rena M. Parish, composer of this number, also wrote "Dreaming," the song for 4-H girls, and "Ploughing" the 4-H club song for boys. The words were written by Fannie R. Buchanan, extension assistant in community development, Ames, Iowa.

PRIDE O' THE LAND—*Goldman*. Music which expresses the spirit of club work is found in the "Pride O' the Land" which is the National 4-H Club March composed by Edwin Franko Goldman, president of the American Band Master's Association and dedicated to the 4-H clubs of America. It is a suitable number for orchestra and band or as a piano or cornet solo. Anna M. Priestly wrote words for the trio. The trio can be used for group singing.

BATTLE HYMN OF THE REPUBLIC—*William Steffe Howe*. This song belongs to the early days of the Civil War when the Union forces had just established camp at Washington. The famous Tiger battalion of the 12th Massachusetts regiment was waiting to be sent into the thick of the fight. The men were known as the "Singing Regiment" because they enjoyed singing while on the march. They loved to sing an old march tune telling of a hero, John Brown of Harper's Ferry, that was originally a camp meeting song of

the negroes. Because the soldiers did not like the words they improvised words relating their dislike of a Scotch officer, John Brown of their regiment. Julia Ward Howe, President Lincoln and other notables listened to the Tigers sing. They disliked the kind of words used with this splendid tune. Upon her return to Washington Julia Ward Howe wrote the words which are used today. This song was very popular in the English and American armies during the World War. It is a battle hymn of righteousness. Sing the song with a march rhythm which expresses righteous thought and feeling.

DIXIE—*Daniel Decator Emmett*, a famous negro minstrel has given America in "Dixie" a melody which ranks in popularity with the songs of Stephen Collins Foster. Dixie was composed as a walk-around dance for a minstrel troupe in New York. The words "I wish I was in Dixie," is not a Southern phrase but one that originated among the circus men of the North who longed for the South upon the approach of winter. The song expresses restlessness, humor, and optimism. It must be sung with vigor or it becomes meaningless. Oddly enough this is the only song of strictly American origin to gain and retain prominence as a patriotic song. It was played at the inauguration of Jefferson Davis as president of the Confederacy and was adopted as the Southern war song, although it does not reflect in any way the Southern war sentiment. Even to this day it arouses the old Southern spirit and is enthusiastically greeted wherever it is sung or played before a Northern audience.

THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER—*Smith*. Music for the Star Spangled Banner, national song of the United States of America, traces back to John Stafford Smith, an English composer of the eighteenth century. The words were written by Francis Scott Key during the bombardment of Fort McHenry at Baltimore during the war of 1812. As a young lawyer, Key sought the release of an American doctor who was held prisoner by the English. Under a flag of truce he boarded one of the English vessels, but was detained as a prisoner because of an attack on Fort McHenry. During the night he watched the American fort withstand the fire and at dawn saw the Stars and Stripes still waving in triumph. He was filled with joy. He wrote the song and adapted it to a tune the English were singing. The song has met with great favor from the American people. It is the accepted national anthem and is so designated by act of Congress. The anthem should be sung with an expression of sincere patriotic devotion to the flag.

THE LITTLE BROWN CHURCH IN THE VALE—*Pitts*. Away back in 1855 the folks living near what was then the little village of Bradford in Chickasaw county, Iowa, organized a church with five charter members. Along with the names of these courageous pioneers and the names of two men, Rev. John K. Nutting, pastor of the church for many, many years, and his friend, William Savage Pitts, a young music teacher. We are told that Mr. Pitts was much impressed with a certain open space in the woods near Bradford as a desirable site for a church. Seven years later a church building, which was later painted brown, was constructed on this particular site. Someone furnished the trees

from which the lumber was sawed, stone for the foundation was obtained from a nearby quarry, and the bell was hauled in by ox team from the nearest railroad. It was in truth a pioneer church.

Some years later Mr. Pitts returned and conducted a singing school in the little church, and one of the songs he used was "The Little Brown Church in the Vale," which he had composed while at his home in Wisconsin. The song seemed to fit their little brown church so well that the congregation adopted the name, and since then it has been known as the Little Brown Church in the Vale.

The little village no longer exists, but the church still stands in the vale and it is still painted brown. Over the door is a tablet which reads "The Little Brown Church in the Vale, Built 1862." The old Bible is still used during the services on each Sunday. It is said that between fifty and sixty thousand people visit this now-famous church each year, and that many a happy bride has pulled the bell-rope after a romantic wedding ceremony there. The little church might rightly be named as one of America's religious shrines.

FOR THE BEAUTY OF THE EARTH—*Kocher*. This hymn is known as one of the most delightful hymns of thanksgiving in our language. It is a universal hymn of praise and has been used quite generally for congregational singing and for a processional. It was written originally for the Communion service. The words were written by Folliot Pierpont, an Englishman, while he was a young man in his twenties, seven years before he graduated from Queen's College, Cambridge University with classical honors. The tune was composed by Conrad Kocher, a German teacher. His interest in music caused him to cease teaching for a musical profession. He studied the works of Palestrina very closely; worked towards the reform of German church music; and succeeded in popularizing four-part singing in the churches. While organist at Stuttgart he edited and revised hymn books.

HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING—*Mendelssohn*. Words to this Christmas hymn were written by Charles Wesley and in the course of its history has had many changes and alterations. From the poetical standpoint it is one of our finest English hymns and appears in a great number of hymn books.

Doctor Cummings, principal of the Guildhall School of Music, and organist at Waltham, England, regretted that Wesley's fine Christmas hymn during its one hundred and twenty years of use had never been linked with any one tune. In 1855 he found a tune in Mendelssohn's "Festgesang," a work composed to commemorate the beginning of the art of printing, and adapted it to Wesley's hymn.

THE LAST ROSE OF SUMMER—(*Martha*) *Flotow*. For this number, Flotow has taken an old Irish ballad and fitted it into this opera, *Martha*, with charming effect. Lady Henrietta, an attendant of the Queen takes her maid to the market place. They assume the names of Martha and Nancy and disguise as servant girls. They are employed by farmer Plunkett and Lionel who is his brother by adoption. The ladies are entirely unfamiliar with the work to be

done in a farmhouse. They try patiently to operate the spinning wheel. Nancy, disgusted, kicks her wheel over and runs off followed by Plunkett. Lionel, left alone with Martha, finds himself violently in love with her. He snatches a rose which she wears, and refuses to return it unless she consents to sing. She replies with the familiar ballad " 'Tis the Last Rose of Summer" which is now known and sung in every schoolroom in America. Lionel declares his love. He is the victim of Martha's sport, although his devotion and sincerity make a deep impression on her. The ladies return to their royal home but some time later by chance meet their employers again. Lady Henrietta is very delighted for she loves Lionel. He thinks she is still pretending. She dresses as a servant and seeks Lionel in the market place. Touched by this evidence of submission, Lionel discovered that she loves him truly and they are united.

WOMAN IS FICKLE (*Rigoletto*)—*Verdi*. At first suppressed because it pictured a king in an unfavorable light, this opera was altered slightly and re-named. It met with great success. Nearly all critics consider "Rigoletto" as Verdi's musical masterpiece, although the story is far from pleasant. "Woman is Fickle" (*La donna e mobile*) with its lightly tripping measures, is among the finest numbers that Verdi has given to the world. Rigoletto, knowing the bad character of the Duke, tries to persuade his daughter Gilda to have nothing more to do with him. In carrying out his plan Rigoletto takes Gilda past a house in which he knows the Duke is courting another woman. She sees him and hears him sing what perhaps has become the best known of all the songs in the opera, an aria of extreme elegance and graceful abandon. It pictures the gay, irresponsible character of the young nobleman who thus sings of changeable womankind. And with his supposed sweetheart within sight and hearing! Gilda is heartbroken, yet she tries to prevent assassination of the Duke. In doing so she loses her own life. "Over the Summer Sea" is another set of words using the same tune as in the opera, and is found in some song-books.

SOLDIERS' CHORUS (*Faust*)—*Gounod*. There have been many Faust operas, but others have disappeared from the stage since the advent of Charles Gounod's composition. It has been said that this opera is today sung throughout the world more than any other five operas combined. At the Paris opera alone it has been presented more than 1500 times. Gounod was known as a thorough musician and a great master of orchestration. A certain mysticism pervades most of his works. The story of Faust is based on Goeth's tragedy. Dr. Faust a discouraged scientist sells his soul to Satan for earthly pleasures. He admires Marguerite, a beautiful peasant girl. The Soldiers' Chorus is sung by the soldiers of Valentine's victorious army as they return from war and are welcomed by their wives and sweethearts. Valentine is Marguerite's brother. It is a jubilant, inspiring number and one of the best marches ever written. It had been written for a previous opera by Gounod but was taken bodily and added to "Faust," a happy thought which added another splendid touch to a successful work. Later in the opera Marguerite is imprisoned. Faust tries to save her but is repulsed. Faust flees with Satan, Marguerite dies in prison and angels bear her to Heaven.

Making Best Use of Music Program Numbers

- I. In the club meeting.
 - A. Use facts about composer or selection as roll call topics.
 - B. Have members take turns presenting interesting facts about the selection and composer.
 - C. Club learn to sing the numbers together (in parts if possible).
 - D. Have selection played by different members on piano, violin, mouth organ, accordian, cornet, clarinet, or whatever instrument is available.
 - E. Club dramatize the song.
 - F. Listen to selections on phonograph or radio broadcast.
 - G. Prepare a music scrapbook.
 - H. Conduct music memory test.
- II. For a community program.
 - A. Sing selections as chorus, trio, quartet, etc.
 - B. Play on instruments as solo, duet, band, orchestra, etc.
 - C. Dramatize by using part of club as characters and remainder providing music.
 - D. Dramatize by presenting a tableau and rest of club providing music.
 - E. Illustrate songs by means of shadow pictures.

Radio Program

State College station, KFDY, Brookings, South Dakota, will broadcast two music program numbers each Saturday afternoon between 1:30 and 2:00 P. M. during the 4-H club broadcast. From time to time a group of members will be presented and occasionally a music memory test will be conducted over this station. Watch for the announcement of these broadcasts and assemble the club members so they can hear them.

Phonograph Record Loan Service

A set of recordings for the music program numbers will be maintained for loan purposes to clubs studying these selections. The only fee required is the cost of postage to and from Brookings. Have your county extension agent make application for these from the Extension Service, Brookings, S. Dak.

Extension Service
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