



Stephen Foster Song Book (Dover Song Collections)

Stephen Foster

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Stephen Foster's music "Is part of every Americans culture," wrote composer Virgil Thomson, and certainly this is true, for few American composers have created songs as lastingly popular as "Beautiful Dreamer," "Oh! Susanna," "Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair," "Swanee River" (properly "Old Folks at Home"), "Camptown Races," and "My Old Kentucky Home, Good Night." The fact remains, however, that Foster's melodies have suffered continually at the hands of revisers and arrangers, so that often whet we hear today is only a corrupt version of what Foster actually composed.

This book corrects that situation by assembling 40 songs as Foster originally wrote them. Many have been reproduced from original first-edition sheets, others from early editions, others from facsimiles of first editions. All are reproduced with their covers, to help capture the flavor of the period. Along with the old favorites listed above you will find "The Glendy Burk," "Ah! May the Red Rose Live Always," "Massa's in de Cold Ground," "Old Dog Tray," "Old Black Joe," "Nelly Bly," and 28 more. Among these are patriotic songs about the Civil War, plantations slave songs written in dialect, minstrel songs written for traveling companies — most notably the original Christy Minstrels, and the soft, easy, sentimental ballads that have endeared Foster's music to so many for so long.

Musicologically this volume is an important contribution to the reevaluation of Foster's work. It will also help bring people a little closer to the original work of one of America's best-loved composers. The text by Richard Jackson, head of the Americana Collection of the Library and Museum of the Performing Arts, New York Public Library, covers Foster's life and music and gives a short critical examination of each piece reproduced in this book.

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