

Best Kept Secrets

A Treasury of Passionate American Song

Maria Ferrante soprano • Lincoln Mayorga piano



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Music was everywhere in nineteenth-century America. But it was a different kind of ubiquity than we have today, where, by far, the greater part of the music is presented through electronic media at a distance from the live performance. A century and a half ago, music took place first of all in the home. The parlor was the place where family and friends gathered on a Sunday afternoon, or following dinner on a weekday evening, to make music and entertain one another until bedtime.

Of course, the major cities also boasted theaters or other performance venues in which professionals performed for a paying audience. Some of these performers were home-grown artists, others were superb European singers who made a fortune touring America. (The most famous of these was the "Swedish Nightingale," Jenny Lind, but many others followed in her footsteps.) But relatively few people had the opportunity to hear a Jenny Lind, whereas many thousands of American homes had a piano and at least one person in the family who could play the instrument. Others might join in with flute, violin, or some other instrument, and nearly everyone sang to some degree.

With so many musicians all over the country, ranging from rank beginners to professional performers, music publishers naturally issued large quantities of music to meet the available market. Songs most of all went straight to the hearts of listeners. The vast repertory of American song published, particularly from the middle of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, offered a wide range of musical styles and approaches.

It was a sentimental age. Many of the songs dealt with home and hearth, with family ties and friendship. Not surprisingly, many songs dealt with love in various ways—courting, passionate involvement, commitment, marriage, and—yes—also heartbreak. Composers often set words of significant poets (Tennyson and Browning are both represented here), but even more often, the songs were set to texts by currently popular writers like Mrs. Felicia Hemans or the Irish writer Thomas Moore or all-but-unknown writers.

Sentiment has come onto hard times in recent decades. But there is a difference between sentiment (honestly felt emotion, directly expressed) and sentimentality (over-emotionalized sentiments pushed for all they are worth). Though there were certainly plenty of songs that descended to bathos, the vast majority of them touched a real chord of human emotion, arousing the various passionate responses as they touched on some element of actual experience. It may surprise many listeners who think of the "sentimental age" as one that must have been unmitigatedly dreary to find the large number of songs that express their sentiments with wit and humor.

Indeed, hardly any aspect of human emotion is missing from the repertory. And among the many thousands of songs published in this half-century or so, there are superb pieces by well known composers, and delightful, catchy, touching, or even deeply moving pieces by virtually unknown composers who were able, once or twice, to capture the essence of real feeling in the form of a song.

Of the composers represented here, three are among the best known among American composers of the time.

Stephen Foster's fame has never been eclipsed and has even, in recent decades, grown to new heights as we understand the role he played in creating American songs out of the several traditions of bel canto opera, Irish ballad, and blackface minstrelsy. Though the songs associated with minstrelsy have remained generally the best known ("Oh Susannah," "My Old Kentucky Home," and "Old Folks at Home" (better known as "Way Down Upon the Swanee River"), the songs most highly regarded in his own day, and the ones on which he aimed to build a successful songwriting career, were the ones aimed at the American parlor, such as "Why, No One to Love?" heard here.

Louis Moreau Gottschalk was a brilliant and very successful pianist from New Orleans who enjoyed a brief, but spectacular, career. He captured the attention of audiences in France as well as in America and the Caribbean. Known primarily for his many piano works, ranging from the sentimental to the extremely virtuosic, he wrote wonderful songs, which have only recently been rediscovered as part of the American tradition. As befits his background in the "exotic" world of New Orleans, Gottschalk wrote songs in both French and English.

Amy Marcy Cheney Beach was the first American woman to have a symphony and a piano concerto performed (by the Boston Symphony Orchestra) and throughout her long life served as a model and inspiration to other women composers. Of her many dozens of fine songs, the three poems by Robert Browning have always been the best known.

Other songs are by composers who are little remembered or, indeed, virtually unknown. (It is possible that some of the names of composers are pseudonyms, which can make them even harder to track down.) These include an English translation of a German song by Franz Abt, a composer whose music was as popular in German parlors of the nineteenth century as were the songs by Americans here. Abt's popularity in America—both in German and in translation—reflects the large influx of German immigrants in the middle of the nineteenth century and their powerful effect on the nation's musical life.

The remaining selections include songs of longing for far away places or people ("Far Away"), humorous songs of courtship ("Come In and Shut the Door"), a musical "specialty number" calling for the pianist to imitate the sound of a music box ("The Musical Box"), and songs reflecting the most devastating experience of Americans during the course of the nineteenth century, the Civil War, which produced an entire literature of songs ranging from the aggressively patriotic to powerful expressions of loss and mourning ("Mother, Is the Battle Over?").

The rediscovery of these and many other songs from the vast repertory of American music in the nineteenth century gives us in the twenty-first century a touchstone of what life was like 150 years ago—and helps us realize that we share the same universal human experiences as our forebears did in our great-grandparents' generation.

STEVEN LEDBETTER

1 *Far Away* Mrs. Bloede (c. 1862)
Text - Mrs. Felicia Hemans (1794-1835)

Far away, far away, my thoughts are far away,
Where the blue sea laves the mountain shore,
In the woods I hear my brothers play,
Midst the flow'rs my sister sings once more,
Sings once more, sings once more,
Far away, far away.

Far away, far away, my dreams are far away,
Where at midnight, stars and shadows reign,
Gentle child my mother seems to say,
Follow me where home shall smile again,
Smile again, smile again,
Far away, far away.

2 *Tell Me, O Bird of Thy Merry Green-Wood!*
op. 327, no. 4 (1869) Franz Abt (1819-1885)
Text - Francke

Tell me, O Bird! Of thy merry green wood,
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
Shall I grow old? Tell me, shall I grow old?
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
"Ah! Years but two or three."
Falsely, say'st thou to me;
Falsely to me.
Longer on earth I would pleasure to dwell.
Wait, awhile, wait, I shall help thee to tell.
Wait, Cuckoo! Wait, I shall help thee to tell:
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!

Sing away, Bird, I shall not let thee rest,
Thy tender note, ever makes me feel blest,

Ah! If sad thoughts me fill,
Sweet Bird! Thou then art still;
Longer on earth I would pleasure to dwell.
Wait awhile, wait, I shall help thee to tell;
Wait, Cuckoo! Wait, I shall help thee to tell. Cuckoo!

3 *The Musical Box* (c.1840) John Barnett(1802-90)
Text- Thomas Moore ESQ² (1779-1852)

"Look here," said Rose, with laughing eyes,
"Within this box, by music hid,
A tuneful Sprite imprison'd lies,
Who sings to me whene'er he's bid.
Though roving once his voice and wing
He'll now lie still the whole day long;
Till thus I touch the magic spring—
Then Hark, how sweet and blithe his song!"

- *A Symphony*

"Ah, Rose," I cried, "the poet's lay
Must ne'er ev'n Beauty's slave become;
Through earth and air his song may stray,
If all the while his heart's at home.
And though in freedom's air he dwell,
Nor bond nor chain his spirit knows,
Touch but the spring thou know'st so well,
And— hark, how sweet the love song flows!"

- *A Symphony*

Thus pleaded I for freedom's right;
But, ah, when Beauty takes the field,
And wise men seek defense in flight,
The doom of poets is to yield.
No more my heart th'enchantress braves,
I'm now in Beauty's prison hid;
The Sprite and I are fellow slaves,
And I, too, sing whene'er I'm bid.

4 *Mother, Is the Battle Over?* (1863)

Benedict E. Roefs (b.?)

Mother, is the battle over?
Thousands, thousands, have been kill'd they say;
Is my father coming? Tell me,
Have the soldiers gain'd the day?
Is he well or is he wounded?
Mother, do you think he's slain?
If you know I pray you tell me,
Will my father come again?

Mother dear, you're always sighing
Since you last the paper read...
Tell me why you now are crying.
Why that cap is on your head!
Ah! I see you cannot tell me,
Father's one among the slain;
Although he loved us very dearly,
He will never come again.

5 *Home They Brought her Warrior Dead*

Op.35(1866) W.K.Bassford (1832-1902)
Text - Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892)

Home they brought her warrior dead:
She nor swooned nor uttered cry:
All her maidens, watching said,
"She must weep or she will die."

Then they praised him, soft and low,
Call'd him worthy to be loved,
Truest friend and noblest foe,
Yet she neither spoke nor moved.

Stole a maiden from her place,
Lightly to the warrior stept,
Took the facecloth from the face:
Yet she neither moved nor wept.

Rose a nurse of ninety years,
Set his child upon her knee,
Like summer tempest came her tears,
"Sweet my child," I live for thee.

6 *Come In and Shut the Door* J.G. Callcott

Oh! Do not stand so long outside
Why need you be so shy!
The people's ears are open, John
As they are passing by!
You cannot tell what they may think
They've said strange things before;
And if you wish to talk awhile,
Come in and shut the door!

Nay do not say "No, thank you, Jane."
With such a bashful smile;
You said when ladies whispered "No,"
They meant yes all the while!
My father too will welcome you,
I told you that before;
It don't look well to stand out here,
Come in and shut the door!

You say I did not answer you
To what you said last night;
I heard your question in the dark,
Thought on it in the light;
And now my lips shall utter what
My heart has said before,
Yes, dearest, I but wait awhile,
Come in and shut the door!

7 Do You Really Think He Did? (1856)

Francis H. Brown

Text - Marietta Hutchings

I waited till the twilight,
And yet he did not come;
I stray'd along the brookside,
And slowly wander'd home.
When who should come behind me
But he I would have bid:
He said he came to find me,
Do you really think he did?

He said that since we parted
He'd thought of nought so sweet
As of the very moment,
The moment we should meet.
He show'd me where, half shaded,
A cottage home lay hid;
He said for me he made it,
Do you really think he did?

He said, when first he saw me,
Life seem'd at once divine,
Each night he dream'd of angels,
And every face was mine.
Sometimes a voice when sleeping,
Would all his hopes forbid,
And then he wakened weeping,
Do you really think he did?



8 The Katy-Did Song or Katy-Did's Answer to Katy (1853)

Thomas Baker

Oh, Katy, dear, you know you did, at midnight's silent hour,
Steal softly through the moonlight, to this my silent bow'r,
And here beneath its vines and leaves, by blushing roses hid,
You met the man you love Kate, you did, you know you did.
Ah, Katy, dear, you know you did, at midnight's silent hour,
Steal softly thro' the moonlight, to this my silent bow'r,
Kate you did, you know, you know you did.

And here you lean'd upon his breast, his arm 'round your waist,
Your hand was lock'd in his, Kate, and when he stoop'd to taste,
The nectar that was on your lip, how gently was he chid.
You lov'd to hear his whisper'd vows,
You did, you know, you did. *(refrain)*

I would not make you blush, Kate, your innocence I know—
I know your spotless purity is like the virgin snow.
And yet you'd better not, Kate, altho' you think you're hid,
Steal to my bow'r by moonlight, as once you know you did.
(refrain)



9 Little Fay, Pretty Fay John Barnett (1802-90)
Text - W. H. Bellamy

Little Fay, pretty Fay, there is work to be done,
Come hither, come hither, to me;
The banquet is ready, but dew there is none.
You must fetch it where ever it be,
Search ev'ry blade of grass, See if it's dry;
Feel ev'ry flower and leaf you go by;
Under them, over them into them, peer,
Find it, or fight for it, it must be here.
Little Fay, pretty Fay, there is work to be done,
Come hither, come hither to me.
The banquet is ready, but dew there is none,
You must fetch it wherever it be.

Heed not the humble Bee, he never stings;
Battle the Butterfly, rumple his wings;
Bee, Beetle, or Butterfly, hinder what will,
Pretty Fay, you must fetch it, Your cup you must fill.
Quick! For our Queen is fatigued with the day,
She's been to Bagdad, and has cross'd from Cathay,
Under the Ocean, and over the ice,
So, be gone, pretty Fay and be back in a trice.

Little Fay, pretty Fay, there is work to be done,
Come hither, come hither to me;
The banquet is ready but dew there is none,
You must fetch it wherever it be.

10 Why, No One to Love? (1862)
Stephen Foster (1826-1864)
Text - Ellen Clemintine and M.H. Frank

No one to love in this beautiful world,
Full of warm hearts and bright beaming eyes?
Where is the lone heart that nothing can find
That is lovely beneath the blue skies?

No one to love! No one to love!
Why no one to love?
What have you done in this beautiful world,
That you're sighing of no one to love?

Dark is the soul that has nothing to dwell on,
How sad must its brightest hours prove!
Lonely the dull brooding spirit must be
That has no one to cherish and love.

Many a fair one that dwells on the earth
Who would greet you with kind words of cheer,
Many who gladly would join in your pleasures
Or share in your grief with a tear.

No one to love! No one to love!
Why no one to love?
Where have you roamed in this beautiful world,
That you're sighing of no one to love?

11 O Loving Heart, Trust On!

Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1829-1869)

Text - Henry C. Watson (1818?-1875)

There are thoughts which seem
to come from heaven
To calm all pain, all pain and strife,
As dew falls on the parched flow'r
To nurture it to nourish it to life.
There came to me a happy thought
One morn when hope seem'd gone.
It whisper'd low... in accents sweet,
O loving heart, trust on, trust on,
One true heart beats for you alone.
O loving heart, trust on, trust on,

That happy thought shed o'er my life...
A bright and joyful ray
As sunlight gilds the night's dim clouds,
Ere breaks, ere breaks the glorious day.
My soul is bathed in the sun.
All gloomy dreams are gone,
For that happy thought still whispers:
O loving heart trust on, trust on
One true heart beats for you alone.

12 Le Papillon L. M. Gottschalk (1829-1869)

Beau papillon qui fuyes rapide sous
le soufflé de la brise roudoutez de l'oiseau
perfide de l'oiseau les atteintes cruelles
Elles dites, dites, dites moi quelle fleur aimée fait
battre vos ailes, dites moi.
Beau messenger du printemps
qui des fleurs êtes l'amant

pourquoi done ne voulez vous jamais
vous arrêter dans votre vol votre inconstant.

Beautiful butterfly on the swift flight of the breeze,
Do not trust the cruel birds for they may harm you!
Tell me, which beloved flower charms you the most!
Beautiful messenger of spring, won't you stop your
flight just for a moment?

13 Ah, Love, But a Day! (1899)

The Year's at the Spring (1841)

from *Three Browning Songs*, op. 44

Amy Marcy Cheney Beach (1867-1944)

Text - Robert Browning (1812-1889)

Ah, Love, but a day, And the world has changed!
The sun's away, And the bird's estranged;
The wind has dropped, And the sky's deranged;
Summer has stopped.

Look in my eyes! Wilt thou change too?
Should I fear surprise? Shall I find aught new
In the old and dear, In the good and true,
With the changing year?
Ah, Love, look in my eyes,
Wilt thou change too?

14 The Year's at the Spring

from *Pippa Passes*

The year's at the spring, And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven; The hillside's dew pearled;
The year's at the spring, And day's at the morn;
The lark's on the wing; The snail's on the thorn;
God's in his heaven, All's right with the world!

15 *Ave Maria* Louis M. Gottschalk (1829-1869)

Ave, Maria! Gratia plena,
Dominus tecum, benedicta et in mulieribus,
Et benedictus fructus ventris tui.
Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus
Nunc et in hora mortis nostrae.

Hail Mary, full of Grace the Lord is with Thee;
Blessed are Thou among women,
And blessed is the fruit of Thy womb.
Oh holy Mary, mother of God, Pray for us sinners,
Now and at the hour of our death.

16 *Pensez à moi* L. M. Gottschalk
Text - Jules Ruelle (d.1892)

Pensez à moi, Ce coeur qui vous adore,
Ce coeur ravi, N'existe que pour vous,
Pensez à moi, Lorsque le soleil dort,
Les hauts palais, Et nos retraits si doux,
Pensez à moi, Quand la nuit calme et pure
Au vaste azur, Plane dans sa beauté,
Pensez à moi, Quand la brise murmure,
Rappelez vous, Notre rêve enchanté.
Quand le clocher perdu dans le fond des vallées,
Semble appeler aux cieux, Des âmes exilées,
Alors de nos amours Evoquez les beaux jours
Pensez à moi...
(English translation next page)

17 *I Don't See It, Mama* Gottschalk (1829-1869)
Text - Henry C. Watson (1818?-1875)

I was sitting in a ballroom, not a "wallflower", but alone,
For I'd refus'd the proffer'd hands of partners one by one.

Mama said: "Celestina, Won't you dance my dear!"
"I won't. It is a bore, Ma, I don't see it."

Mama look'd back and said, "My child, you're really quite a fool,
To sit quite all alone, like a dunce upon a stool;
While De Smythe a splendid match awaits your
hand, come dance." "I won't. It is a bore, Ma,
Upon my word, I don't, I don't see it."

"Here's Cousin Harry, look, Mama. He's coming right to me!
I suppose I'll have to dance next dance.
I promised him you see."
Mama said, full of spite: "Take care, it will bore you."
"No it won't. I don't see it, Ma. Indeed, I don't.
This time, I don't Ma. I don't see it."

18 *Viens O Ma Belle!* Louis M. Gottschalk

Toi la plus belle Chère adorée, Ecoute
Dans la nuit somber Ma voix qui chante
Nos amours chastes Viens O ma belle,
O mon adorée.
La vie est un rêve, Rêvons ensemble
Jusqu'au matin... Et l'aurore éternelle
Nous trouvera... Toujours unis.
Viens, O viens ma belle, Mon adorée, O viens
Ma belle, Mon adore, O viens.

Idol of beauty, Listen, oh! While glisten bright stars,
To music swelling, our pleasures telling;
Oh, come and listen, Idol of beauty, my fondest, my fairest.
Life is but a dream, love, a vision glowing;
'Till dawn we see,
And when that glorious morning illumines the skies,
In bliss united, In joy and bliss united we shall be!
Come, oh! Come, my fairest, my dearest,
Idol of beauty, Joy of my heart... oh! come.

This heart entranced, only exists for you,
Think of me, when the gold-colored sun,
The lofty palace, and our retiring so gentle,
When the night calm and pure
To the vast azure, soaring in its beauty,

Think of me, when the breeze murmurs,
Recall our enchanted dream.
When the forgotten bell is in the field and valley,
Seem to call the skies, the exiled souls,
Of our love, evoking the good days. Think of me.



“Maria Ferrante broke my heart Sunday night. Or, through her, Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly* did,” wrote Richard Dyer of the *Boston Globe* in January, 2003. Her “combination of delicacy and intensity. . . brought tears to my eyes. . . In her honesty, imagination, and investment, she was infinitely superior to the last *Butterfly* I saw at the Met.” She has appeared throughout the United States in concert and oratorio and opera. This petite soprano’s operatic roles range from the great stage heroines (Violetta in Verdi’s *La Traviata*, Pamina in Mozart’s *Magic Flute*, Desdemona in Verdi’s *Otello*, Liù in Puccini’s *Turandot*, Rosalinda in Strauss’ *Die Fledermaus*, and Mimì in Puccini’s *La Bohème*) to serving girls (Despina in Mozart’s *Così fan Tutte*, Barbarina in Mozart’s *Marriage of Figaro*, Serpina in Pergolesi’s *La Serva Padrona*, and in Engelbert Humperdinck’s *Hänsel und Gretel*).

Equally at home on the concert stage, Maria has sung Brahms’ *Ein Deutsches Requiem*, Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9*, Mahler’s *Symphony No. 4*, Poulenc’s *Gloria*, Fauré’s *Requiem*, Gounod’s *St. Cecilia Mass*, Handel’s *Acis and Galatea*, Haydn’s *Lord Nelson Mass*, Orff’s *Carmina Burana*, Verdi’s *Requiem*, and Respighi’s *Il Tramonto*. Critic Alice Parker wrote that Maria “handled the wide tessitura, complex lines and German diction [of Berg’s *Seven Early Songs*] with ease, matched by Mr. Gilbert Kalish’s accomplished pianism.” She has collaborated with world-renowned artists such as: Abba Bogin, Richard Stoltzman, Colin Jacobsen, Miroslav Sekera, Seymour Barab, Sheldon Harnick, Susan Davenny Wyner, Xavier de Maistre (harp), Ben Verdery, Arnold Steinhardt and composers Joseph Summer and Arnold Black. All New Englanders will remember Robert J. Lurtsema as the voice of WGBH radio, and some will have had the pleasure of hearing him in concert with Maria. She is a member of the highly acclaimed chamber ensemble, *Mistral*.

Her recent CD *Sea Tides and Time*, devoted to the theme of water and its preservation (with pianist Alys Terrien-Queen), received a rave review from the *Boston Herald*: “[Ms. Ferrante] known for her lilting soprano voice and probing mind...brings a supple and colorful approach to a broad variety of repertoire.” The *Boston Globe* said, “Superb!”

The range of **Lincoln Mayorga's** professional success transcends the varied worlds of classical music, popular music, and jazz. He was the staff pianist for Walt Disney Studios and contributed to the soundtracks of such motion pictures as "Chinatown," "Pete's Dragon," "The Competition," "The Rose," and "Ragtime," to name a few. In popular music, he has made many recordings with such artists as Johnny Mathis, Barbra Streisand, Vikki Carr, Mel Torme, Phil Ochs, Andy Williams, Frank Zappa, and Quincy Jones.

Having performed in classical solo recitals and orchestral appearances in over two hundred fifty cities in the United States, Canada, Europe, and Russia, he has also collaborated with such musicians as Itzhak Perlman, Richard Stoltzman, Michael Tilson Thomas, Gerard Schwarz, and many distinguished American orchestras.

The Moscow Philharmonic invited him to perform Gershwin's *Rhapsody In Blue* and "*I Got Rhythm*" Variations, for their first concert devoted to American music. The recordings from that concert have been widely praised in the music press and are often aired on the radio.

Lincoln has been the featured guest on *Piano Jazz*, Marion McPartland's popular program on National Public Radio. He recently completed the composition of a piano concerto, *Angels' Flight*, a nostalgic tribute to the city of Los Angeles and the cinematic musical idiom, a work which had its first performance with the composer as soloist, assisted by the Henry Mancini Institute Orchestra.

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Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society

(born: Paris, ME; member of the bar; a self-taught artist;
came to Worcester in 1848)

