

Foster's Satchel

The Unknown Songs of Stephen Foster

"He was a rockin' muthahumper, Stephen Foster."

- Jerry Lee Lewis

Stephen Foster is arguably America's most important songwriter, his legacy virtually embedded in the cultural DNA of the country. Foster composed over two hundred songs between 1847 and 1864 yet few know more than a handful of his most enduring (Oh! Susanna, Camptown Races, Beautiful Dreamer, Jeanie With the Light Brown Hair, Old Folks At Home/Suwannee River, My Old Kentucky Home) and many are not aware Foster wrote these inexplicably familiar melodies.

Foster's Satchel takes a deep dive into his obscure and complex legacy, mining unknown songs from his entire catalog to illuminate Foster's life and the state of America as his writing progressed, from his optimistic and successful early years to wrestling with psychological survival at the end of his life with the country mired in civil war. The band has taken a Mermaid Avenue approach (the partnership between Wilco and Billy Bragg with Woody Guthrie's unknown writing), focusing on his often evocative lyrics and re-arranging music for modern ears to reveal one of the most remarkable and unknown stories in American music.



Foster's Satchel includes accomplished historical musicians Stace England and Charlie Tabing from Stace England and the Salt Kings (Greetings from Cairo, Illinois, The Amazing Oscar Micheaux), Jake and Mary Deleonardis from St. Louis based May Day Orchestra and Beth Koehler, back up singer for alt country legend Jason Ringenberg. Their show takes listeners on a journey through Foster's unlikely triumph and ultimate heartbreak. Multimedia projections of photographs and original sheet music give audiences additional insight into Foster's life.

Stephen Foster died in 1864 at age thirty seven with three cents in his pocket, in many ways the first person crushed by the developing music industry. His songs are all in the public domain, but if his heirs had retained publishing rights some insiders value his catalog at one hundred million dollars today. His wife received slightly over four thousand dollars from his work after his death.

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