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INCORPORATING AFRICAN AMERICAN SPIRITUALS INTO SOLO  
LOW BRASS REPERTOIRE

by  
Shekinah Ball

A Dissertation  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Musical Arts

Major: Trombone Performance

The University of Memphis

May 2025

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## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to the memory of my late paternal grandfather, Moses Ball Jr., who gifted me with his love and passion for music. I would also like to dedicate this work to my family and friends in South Florida and the Bahamas who uniquely represent the African Diaspora in the United States and abroad.

## Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank Dr. Mark Butler, choral director and voice instructor at Florida A&M University. His dedication to preserving African American Spirituals through the choral tradition was my first introduction to them. Hearing choir members sing them before rehearsals sparked my first curiosity for this beautiful body of music. I would also like to thank Dr. Gail Robertson, my former euphonium professor at the University of Central Arkansas for always encouraging me to find and follow what I am passionate about preserving. She also provided me with scores of published music which were a tremendous help in developing my own arrangements. I would also like to thank Marc Lindy who provided me with early literature on African American Spirituals. Marie Douglas who recommended the book *The Spirituals and the Blues* by James H. Cone. It was an enlightening book that helped shape my understanding and perspective of African American Spirituals.

Lastly, I would like to thank each member of my committee for their various insights and support. Dr. Martin McCain for his encouragement in pursuing this topic and creating my own arrangements based on spirituals. To Dr. Spencer for his guidance and teachings on theory and jazz harmonic language. To Dr. Jack Cooper, for his immense musical and historical knowledge, and his feedback on my personal arrangements. Finally, to Dr. Zachary Corpus, who has been a great resource throughout my studies at the University of Memphis.

## **ABSTRACT**

The African American spiritual is a sacred folk genre that was created by African American slaves in the 18th century. These songs are the foundation of past and present forms of American Popular Music. Throughout my studies as a classical musician (Euphonium and Trombone), I have not had the opportunity to learn about or play solo literature based on this unique form of American music within traditional music academia. I was first exposed to African American spirituals while studying at Florida A&M University. I joined the choir during the fall semesters, after resigning from the marching band. It was there, through a vocal tradition that I was introduced to this genre by another classically trained musician. This introduction spurred my musical curiosity but also uncovered a rich and complex history surrounding the creation and development of the African American spiritual.

This is not the first paper on African American spirituals, but I do want to carefully highlight its origins and evolutions with consideration to American social and political culture of its time. In each chapter, the reader will find important historical and social context surrounding the creation and development of the African American spiritual. Unfortunately, a major theme in this paper is the dehumanization of Africans which evolved into racism in the United States. This cannot be hidden or overlooked because it is simply apart of the experiences of the creators and preservers of this body of music. What is astonishing is that from the African American spiritual's creation to its evolutions in art music, is it served a larger purpose than other forms of Western Music. It affirmed the humanity and suffering of its creators and preservers and ultimately gave each generation hope. The first three chapters trace the history and development of the African American spiritual from its creation as a folk tradition, to its evolution in an arranged choral format to the last evolution of the art song. Chapter Four is an anthology of

existing recordings and arrangements of African American spirituals for low brass. The final chapter discusses my pedagogical approach of performing and arranging the African American spiritual for low brass before arriving at the conclusion. The purpose of this paper is twofold: First, to provide a thorough yet concise history of the development of African American spirituals from its folk origins to its evolutions in Art Music; Second, to examine the need of preserving African American spirituals in solo low brass repertoire. I believe as a musician it is important to understand the history and vocal tradition of this music to properly integrate it into low brass repertoire.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### ORIGINS

Any discussion of African American music has to begin with the transatlantic slave trade.<sup>1</sup> In order to understand the origins of the African American spiritual, it is imperative to understand the culture and conditions that led to its birth. In this section, I will write a concise overview of the two major factors that birthed this folk genre: The transatlantic slave trade and the Great Awakening revivals of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

#### The Transatlantic Slave Trade

The transatlantic slave trade started in the 15<sup>th</sup> century with the Portuguese before the Spanish became involved in the latter quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. At the beginning of this movement, Africans were captured and transported to Europe to work as domestic servants. However, when Spain acquired the Canarian Islands they needed workers for their newly developing sugar plantations. Around this time, Christopher Columbus discovered the “New World”- the Americas and Caribbean countries. He saw underdeveloped civilizations that could be exploited to create additional plantations with the colonization methods modeled by the Portuguese. While indigenous people were discovered living in the Americas and Caribbean Islands, Europeans quickly concluded Africans were more resistant to European diseases, more productive, accustomed to working with horses, and less likely to escape.<sup>2</sup> Enslaved Africans became the choice workers for free labor. By 1530, a major shift happened in the slave trade.

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<sup>1</sup> Guthrie P. Ramsey. "African American music" *Grove Music Online*, (2012), <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002226838>.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Tandy Lewis. “Transatlantic Slave Trade Begins.” *Salem Press Encyclopedia*, (2022), *EBSCOhost*, [research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=f7245426-c00b-3b54-bd55-b1addf14c551](https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=f7245426-c00b-3b54-bd55-b1addf14c551).

Instead of capturing slaves, transporting them to Europe and then other destinations, there was an authorization for direct transportation from Africa to the country of choice. This drastically reduced costs and greatly increased the slave trade. By 1600, it is estimated that up to 500,000 Africans were enslaved and taken to the Americas and Europe.

In 1611, the Dutch became involved in the slave trade and built a fort on the African Gold Coast. In 1619, English settlers in Jamestown purchased their first slaves from Dutch traders and North America officially became involved in the trade. This trade went on until the 1870's although it was abolished in the United States in 1808 by Thomas Jefferson. The transatlantic slave trade resulted in the mass displacement and deportation of Africans to the Americas and Caribbean. It is estimated that 11-14 million Africans were enslaved, with half of this number being transported to Brazil under the rule of the Portuguese. Approximately 7% of Africans were transported to the United States.

What is important to note about the transatlantic slave trade is the dehumanization of Africans. They were treated as property and used to foster European capitalism. Although the smallest number of Africans (about 400,000) were transported to the United States, enslaved Africans had to live in a harsh reality. British Americans held a strongly rooted belief that "blackness of skin color connoted filthiness, sin, baseness, ugliness, evil, and the devil. Blacks were seen as heathens, lechers, and barbarians."<sup>3</sup> In addition to suffering the trauma of being taken away from their homes, family, culture, and surviving the journey overseas from Africa to the United States they arrived to a new land where they were not wanted or valued as humans.

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<sup>3</sup> James A. Rawley and Stephen D. Behrendt, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A History* (University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 266.

enslaved Africans were stripped of their language, cultural practices, religion and had to find a new way of being.

It is noted that with the first arrival of Africans, blacks were more resistant to learning English and taking on traditions from European slaveowners. As time progressed, the Africans became American. They learned English and took on some of the cultural and religious practices of the new land.

### **The Great Awakening Revivals and their effects on African American Slaves**

Well over a hundred years had passed between the first slaves' arrival in the United States to the creation of the Spiritual. The enslaved Africans conversion to Christianity was a major influence in the creation of this sacred folk genre. This conversion was largely due to the Great Awakening revivals that swept across the colonial United States. Prior to these revivals, conversion efforts were few and hindered by: language barriers of the African-born population, tacit resistance from slaves committed to maintaining their African religious identity, or opposition from slave owners who perceived of Christianity and its doctrine of egalitarianism (human equality) as counter to their socioeconomic self-interest.<sup>4</sup>

Although there are accounts of religious revivals in America in the early 1730's, what is known as the First Great Awakening did not occur until 1740 after the arrival of George Whitefield. This movement began in Germany with pietistic sects that generated large devotional literature which spread throughout Europe and eventually the United States. The writings of

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<sup>4</sup> Mellonee V. Burnim, "Religious Music," in *African American Music: An Introduction*. ed. Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby (Routledge, 2006), 52.

some of the leading German pietists- August Francke and Phillip Spener reached the English-Anglican clergyman William Law. Law disciplined John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield. All three were prominent English protestant figures. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, German pietists and English evangelicals (later became Methodists) migrated to the United States searching for religious peace and toleration. Both groups brought their religious devotion and spiritual concerns.<sup>5</sup>

During the early eighteenth century, American clergymen felt that religion was dead and desperately sought a change in the spiritual climate of their communities and began their own revivals soon before the arrival of Whitefield. According to J.M. Bumstead in his book *The Great Awakening*, free Americans were dealing with economic difficulties and rising concerns of a war between England and Spain. When Whitefield began his revival tours in 1739, he met a people ready for change. Slaves were only permitted to attend the revivals with the permission of their masters. If they did attend, they had to sit in the balcony or stand outside the tent meetings if the balcony was filled to capacity. When slaves attended the revival service, they were typically subjected to another sermon where they were strongly admonished to obey their masters because it was a necessity for being good Christians and servants.<sup>6</sup>

There was a movement prior to Whitefield's attempt to reach African Americans with the message of Christianity by The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts in 1701, but they were largely unsuccessful. Slave owners were very skeptical of allowing slaves to attend these revivals. There was an early belief amongst slaveowners that slaves would

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<sup>5</sup> J. M. Bumsted, editor. *The Great Awakening; the Beginnings of Evangelical Pietism in America*, (Blaisdell Publishing Company, 1970), 1-2.

<sup>6</sup> Frank Lambert, "I Saw the Book Talk': Slave Readings of the First Great Awakening," *Journal of African American History*, vol. 87, (2002):12, EBSCOhost, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.memphis.edu/10.1086/JAAHv87n1p12>.

become less useful if they became Christians. In 1739, Whitefield felt the necessity to reach African Americans with “the message of the gospel”. In 1740, he published a pamphlet to slaveowners with the strong message “God Has a Quarrel With You”. He did not agree with the harsh treatment of slaves as brutes although he owned 20.<sup>7</sup>

Most revivalists agreed with the institution of slavery and tailored their efforts of evangelism to African Americans in a way that soothed slaveowners apprehensions. Free and enslaved Africans were seen as a faceless and nameless group and not individuals by American society. They were considered passive auditors who were easily seduced by evangelists who pretended to have extraordinary inspiration and incapable of intellectual reflection on theological issues and only able to react with unbridled emotion to the message of Christianity. With these beliefs of the enslaved, revivalists made a conscious effort to control slaves’ interpretations of Christianity.

Whitefield did believe that sin was a condition that all humanity needed to be freed from. However, with enslaved African Americans, he and others distinguished that the message of the gospel only applied to their spiritual condition and did not apply to their physical freedom from slavery. Scriptures and teachings of the bible were manipulated to make slaves believe their sole purpose and identity in America was that of perpetual servitude. According to Frank Lambert, in his *Journal of African American History*, he mentions that Whitefield admonished African Americans to “watch against the sin of disobedience which angers the Father (God), brings disrepute to the Son (Jesus), and grieves the Holy Spirit.” He also taught the enslaved that “insubordination crucifies the Redeemer anew, causing infinite pain.” At the request of

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<sup>7</sup> Lambert, “I Saw the Book Talk’: Slave Readings of the First Great Awakening,” 15.

Whitefield, the English Evangelical Ann Dutton wrote to newly converted African Americans in South Carolina: “It is better to suffer, than sin; to die, than sin. Wherefore be valiant for the Cause of your Royal Master, and endure Hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Be faithful unto Death; and Christ, will give you the Crown of life.” To encourage an attitude of servitude amongst the enslaved and discourage them from seeking freedom Dutton also wrote: “And though [God] hath now called you into His own Family, to be His own Children and Servants; he doth not call you hereby from the Service of your Masters according to the flesh; but to serve Him in serving all their lawful Commands, and submitting to the Yoke that His Providence has placed you under.”<sup>8</sup>

Although enslaved African Americans were seen as nothing more than workers and servants by their owners and revivalists alike, the Great Awakening also carried with it an intellectual component that positively influenced African American converts. It was a movement of both the printed and spoken word. In its beginnings, evangelicals promoted literacy to free Americans and the enslaved alike because a major premise of this movement was to become grounded in the teachings of the Bible. For all Americans to return to the lifestyles that were modeled by the Puritans in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Slave owners were strongly against the idea of teaching slaves to read because they thought it would “sow seeds of discord” and cause them to think about pursuing freedom. Reading meant power to enslaved African Americans and many were fascinated with learning to read. African Americans eventually developed their own interpretations of scripture. In the Northeast, antinomianism, the view that Christians are released by grace from the obligation of observing the moral law began to spread. African American converts throughout the country had both intellectual and emotional responses to their

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<sup>8</sup> Lambert, “‘I Saw the Book Talk’: Slave Readings of the First Great Awakening,” 16.

conversions. Joining churches also presented Blacks with social opportunities to visit with slaves from different plantations. In the last quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Blacks were given small opportunities to lead their own congregations. Many slaveowners were against this because they believed it would foster a rebellion which eventually occurred in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Contrary to intellectual prejudices held by whites, slaves were able to differentiate between the Christianity taught to them by European Americans and the teachings found in scripture. According to Lambert, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Henry Bibb, a former slave who became an abolitionist wrote that “with few exceptions, slaves had no confidence in those ministers who preached a pro-slavery doctrine.” Frederick Douglas, a former slave who later became a prominent abolitionist, speaker, and writer also made distinctions between what he called “slaveholding religion” and “Christianity proper”. He believed that slaveholding religion was the Christianity of the land while the latter was the Christianity of Christ. It is believed that these sentiments reflected the collective thoughts of enslaved African Americans. This is also evidenced in the refrain of the Spiritual, *Heav’n, Heav’n*.

Despite the efforts made to control the slaves’ religious interpretation and experiences, slaves found courage, strength, and a new way to express their feelings of humanity. The experience of salvation fostered a deep hope for freedom from slavery and sin. African Americans collective experience in light of their conversion to Christianity is largely documented in the songs they created- The African American spiritual. Although the lyrical content of many spirituals are religious, I believe these songs symbolized a black cultural identity and simultaneously black religious expression as it evolved in America.<sup>9</sup> The experience of slavery in America consistently taught Africans that they were less than human, barbaric, and

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<sup>9</sup> Burnim and Maultsby, *African American Music: An Introduction*, 53.

intellectually inept. It stripped them of their cultural identity and created the need for a new one. From its original creation to its evolutions in the vocal tradition, spirituals affirmed the humanity Blacks in America. For African Americans, religion was not merely an isolated phenomenon but it related to the desire for social and political freedom.<sup>10</sup> The spirituals contested the beliefs of American society towards enslaved Blacks. This new African American cultural identity was developed by Blacks for Blacks. It was largely influenced by “camp meetings” in the South and the independent Black church in the North. According to Howard Thurman, an early 20<sup>th</sup> century Black author, philosopher, and theologian, “the Ante-bellum Negro preacher was the greatest single factor in determining the spiritual destiny of the slave community.” He knew what slaves endured throughout the week and offered hope. He also gave validation to their existence in affirming their new identity as children of God- “...you are not slaves, you are not 'niggers'; you are God's children.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> James H. Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues*, (Seabury Press, 1972), 29.

<sup>11</sup> Howard Thurman, *Deep River: Reflections on the Religious Insight of Certain of the Negro Spirituals*, (Harper & Brothers, 1955), 11-12.

## The African American Spiritual as a Folk Tradition

There are a large number of African American Spirituals that have been preserved. Due to the song's folk tradition, many were passed down orally from each generation. This resulted in small variations in words, rhythms, and melodies. These variations are also a direct effect of differentiation of a region's dialect. This is exemplified in Figures 2.1 and 2.2, respectively. In this chapter, I have created six categories based on common themes found in African American spirituals. For each categorical listing, I have provided no more than two songs with an analysis of the lyrical content. Despite any prejudices of African Americans intellectual capabilities during the times spirituals were created, the lyrics speak for themselves. They tell a story of suffering, hope, and a yearning for freedom. It must also be noted that there are no examples of scores of commonly sung African American spirituals in the folk tradition. At the end of this chapter I have included two scores from the first collection of African American Spirituals (*Slave Songs of the United States*) and a score transcribed by Professor John Work III of Fisk University.

1. The Old Testament
2. The New Testament
3. Nature
4. Personal religious experiences
5. Songs of Sorrow
6. Code songs

## Songs of the Old Testament:

The Bible was the primary source that influenced the creation of all spirituals. Slaves were literalists in their interpretations of Old Testament themes relating to bondage, freedom, and judgement. They directly related to the experiences of bondage in the stories of the Israelites and other biblical characters.<sup>12</sup> Although there are many stories of the oppression and bondage of God's people in the Bible, there are also stories of their deliverance and freedom. Black slaves certainly believed that slavery was brutal and unjust, but they also believed that God would vindicate their suffering by someday granting them freedom. This fostered hope for a future day of freedom for slaves and their descendants.

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<sup>12</sup> Thurman, *Deep River*, 14-15.

I. Go Down Moses

When Israel was in Egypt's land,  
Let my people go,  
oppressed so hard they could not stand,  
Let my people go.

Refrain:

Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land,  
tell old Pharaoh: Let my people go.

The Lord told Moses what to do,  
Let my people go,  
to lead the Hebrew children through,  
Let my people go. [Refrain]

As Israel stood by the waterside,  
Let my people go,  
at God's command it did divide,  
Let my people go. [Refrain]

When they had reached the other shore,  
Let my people go,  
they let the song of triumph soar,  
Let my people go. [Refrain]

Lord, help us all from bondage flee,  
Let my people go,

and let us all in Christ be free,

Let my people go. [Refrain]

Just upon looking at these lyrics, it is hard to believe that this was inspired by “barbaric people with no intellectual capabilities. This song is about the Old Testament character Moses and his call to lead and deliver the enslaved Hebrews out of bondage from Egypt. Slaves found similarities between their circumstances and characters in the bible. In this song, there is a parallel between their experience and the enslaved Hebrews. Slaves also viewed the God of the Bible as a liberator which is clear in the lyrics of *Go Down Moses*. They believed that slavery contradicted God. Many reference deliverance and freedom, a day of freedom, for the slaves as they were politically, socially, and economically oppressed.

## II. Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel?

Refrain:

Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel,

Deliver Daniel, deliver Daniel,

Didn't my Lord deliver Daniel,

An' why not every man?

Stanza:

He delivered Daniel f'om de lion's den,

Jonah from de belly of de wale,

An' de Hebrew chillen from da fiery furnace,

An' why not every man?

This song references the story of Daniel in the Lion's Den. Daniel (Biblical character) was thrown into a Den of Lions by political oppressors because he would not conform his religious beliefs to the pagan society where he was an exile. To the ruler's surprise, Daniel came out of the closed Den unscathed- it was truly a miracle and a testament that the God of the bible is a liberator. This song also references two additional and separate accounts of the Lord delivering his people in the stanza. This song affirms the slave's belief in God as a liberator. At the same time, it poses an unanswered question of suffering. If you delivered them, why not me?

#### Songs of the New Testament:

Songs inspired by the New Testament were primarily about Jesus. Slaves were able to relate to His suffering and shameful death, His resurrection meant there was something to hope for in the next life and that Jesus was with them in their suffering. What is also interesting is that they were intentionally not taught about the nativity of Christ. So they did not celebrate Christmas. Christmas was seen as a day of their master's eating, drinking, and dancing. It is noted by James H. Cone in his book *The Spirituals and the Blues* that this was possibly intentional to make Christmas an indulgence of sensualities and not celebrate the reality of the Savior's birth. Howard Thurman mentions that " it was dangerous to let the slave understand that the life and the teachings of Jesus meant freedom for the captive and release for those held in economic, social, and political bondage.....this aspect of the career of Jesus was carefully overlooked."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Thurman, *Deep River*, 16.

I. Give Me Jesus

In the morning when I rise,

In the morning when I rise,

In the morning when I rise,

Give me Jesus.

Refrain:

Give me Jesus,

Give me Jesus.

You may have all this world,

Give me Jesus.

Dark midnight was my cry,

Dark midnight was my cry,

Dark midnight was my cry,

Give me Jesus. [Refrain]

Oh, when I come to die,

Oh, when I come to die,

Oh, when I come to die,

Give me Jesus. [Refrain]

This is a beautiful song that makes no reference to theology but reflects the slaves' experience of life from the start of the day, to the lament of their suffering, and eventually to the end of their life when suffering will finally be over. There is an acknowledgement of their human condition and affects of oppression but the refrain expresses where they find solace, comfort, and strength for another day. The last stanza acknowledges their mortality an ultimate hope of the day they will finally be free from suffering.

## II. Were You There?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble, tremble

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they nailed Him to the cross?

Were you there when they nailed Him to the cross?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble, tremble

Were you there when they nailed Him to the cross?

Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?

Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble, tremble

Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble, tremble

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

This song references the suffering at the end of Jesus' life. Slaves related to Jesus' suffering through their own. In my own inference, being able to relate to Jesus' suffering gave them hope to endure their own. In the response to each question (sometimes it causes me to tremble), there is an inference that the slave was there. Of course, we know this was not physically true or possible. It is an experiential inference relating to Christ's suffering.<sup>14</sup>

Songs about Nature:

Most songs about nature in the Spirituals held deeper meanings than what was perceived at the surface. References to nature were grounded on biblical themes, places, and beliefs.

I. Deep River:

Deep river, my home is over Jordan,

Deep river, Lord,

I want to cross over into campground.

Oh, don't you want to go to that gospel feast,

That promised land where all is peace?

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<sup>14</sup> Thurman, *Deep River*, 23.

Oh, deep river, Lord,

I want to cross over into campground.

In the nature category, there were many songs about rivers, many specifically about the Jordan River. *Deep River* interweaves themes of the Old and New Testament. The Jordan River was a river the Israelites had to cross to get out of bondage from the Egyptians. Crossing the river for slaves could literally mean escaping to freedom or simply expressing the desire for freedom which is represented by the phrases “I want to cross over into campground” and “that promised land where all is peace. The gospel feast is a theme of the New Testament that the slaves symbolize with peace.

## II. My Lord What a Mornin’

My Lord, what a morning;

My Lord, what a morning;

Oh, my Lord, what a morning,

When the stars begin to fall,

When the stars begin to fall.

You’ll hear the trumpet sound,

To wake the nations underground,

Looking to my God’s right hand,

When the stars begin to fall. [Refrain]

You'll hear the sinner cry,

To wake the nations underground,

Looking to my God's right hand,

When the stars begin to fall. [Refrain]

You'll hear the Christian shout,

To wake the nations underground,

Looking to my God's right hand,

When the stars begin to fall. [Refrain]

This song speaks to the slaves' eschatological views. Eschatology refers to the study of the end of the world, current age, or human history. The "morning" referred to in this song is about the end of the world when Jesus comes back to get His children. This also reaffirms their identity as God's children. The right hand of God refers to His judgement on the evil in the world. If they were not able to experience freedom and justice in this life, they held a great expectation for experiencing it after death.

## Songs of Sorrow:

There are a large number of songs that express sorrow. Many of the lyrics of these songs contain personal experiences and sentiments of tragedy. They express a deep-seated and personal grief. Although they express deep sorrow, they also look towards a day where they will no longer experience it. Death, is mentioned often in the sorrow songs because it was the only means for obtaining freedom.

### I. Soon I Will Be Done

Refrain:

Soon-a will be done-a with the troubles of the world,

Troubles of the world,

The troubles of the world.

Soon-a will be done-a with the troubles of the world.

Goin' home to live with God.

No more weeping and a-wailing,

No more weeping and a-wailing,

No more weeping and a-wailing,

I'm goin' to live with God. [Refrain]

I want to meet my mother,

I want to meet my mother,

I want to meet my mother,

I'm goin' to live with God. [Refrain]

I want to meet my Jesus,

I want to meet my Jesus,

I want to meet my Jesus,  
I'm goin' to live with God. [Refrain]

This song is a strong lament that acknowledges, in a general statement the troubles slaves' had to face. This song captures the deep sorrow and the deep anguish the slave community must have felt. The first verse certainly expresses the mourning that came with living for them- "weeping and a-wailing". Adding an "a" as part of a word was also a rhythmic folk practice of the slaves. What is also evident is the eschatological views of the slave- there ultimate hope and freedom was in death. Being done with the troubles of the world strongly implies no longer living in it, death and living in Heaven where they will be reunited with loved ones and be with God their father and His son Jesus.

#### I. Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

Refrain:

Swing low, sweet chariot,

Coming for to carry me home.

Swing low, sweet chariot,

Coming for to carry me home.

I looked over Jordan and what did I see?

Coming for to carry me home?

A band of angels coming after me.

Coming for to carry me home. [Refrain]

If you get there before I do,  
Coming for to carry me home,  
Tell all my friends I'm coming too,  
Coming for to carry me home. [Refrain]  
I'm sometimes up and sometimes down,  
Coming for to carry me home,  
But still my soul feels heavenly bound,  
Coming for to carry me home. [Refrain]

This song was born from great personal tragedy. There was a slave mother who had recently given birth to a child in Tennessee. Shortly after giving birth, she was told that she was going to be sold South to Mississippi. The woman contemplated taking her and the baby's life. She was walking towards the Cumberland River with her daughter and was planning on jumping into the river. She sang to herself "Before I'd be a slave, I'd be buried in my grave." An older woman heard her and encouraged her not to jump into the river. She comforted her and said "Don't you do it, honey; wait, let de chariot of de Lord swing low, and let me take one of de Lord's scrolls an' read it to you." Then, making a motion as reaching for something, and unrolling it, she read, "God's got a great work for dis baby to do; she's goin' to stand befo' kings and queens. Don't you do it, honey."<sup>15</sup> The woman contemplating jumping into the river with her

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<sup>15</sup> John Wesley Work III, *Folk song of the American Negro*, (Praeger, 1970), 80.

baby was Sarah Hannah Shephard, the mother of Ella Shepard who later became an original Fisk Jubilee singer and their pianist.

Example of a Code Song:

The lyrics of African American Spirituals often held deeper meanings than what was seen or heard at the surface. References to physical places in the Bible were also used as metaphors for the North: the Promised Land and Canaan. Crossing the “Jordan River” also symbolized crossing the Ohio River to escape north. In the song listed below “Steal Away” could have meant sneaking away to have a prayer meeting or escaping north. Most of the Spirituals do not have documentation on how or when they were created. I was able to find documentation on the development and meaning of this Spiritual.

#### I. Steal Away

Refrain:

Steal away, steal away,

Steal away to Jesus.

Steal away, steal away home.

I ain't got long to stay here.

My Lord, he calls me,

He calls me by the thunder;

The trumpet sounds within my soul;

I ain't got long to stay here.

Green trees are bending,

Poor sinners stand a-trembling;

The trumpet sounds within my soul;  
I ain't got long to stay here. [Refrain]

Tombstones are bursting,  
Poor sinners are a-trembling;  
The trumpet sounds within my soul;  
I ain't got long to stay here. [Refrain]

This song was developed on a plantation near the Red River in the early nineteenth century. With the permission of their master, slaves were permitted to cross the river and have religious meetings with the Indians who lived there. One day their master learned that a white missionary was preaching to the Indians and did not want the slaves to be influenced with thoughts of freedom even "in a Bibleistic way". In turn, the master prohibited his slaves from traveling across the river. The slaves resolved privately to continue traveling across the river to "steal away to Jesus," as one slave expressed it. When this was sung during the day, the slaves knew that at night there would be a group sneaking across the river to worship with the Indians. When they reached the banks of the river they sang the first verse. The refrain "I ain't got long to stay here" is not sacred but was a reminder to slaves that they could not stay long in fear of getting caught disobeying their masters.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Work III, *Folk Song of the American Negro*, 77-78.

## Original Performance Practice and Preservation

Spirituals were sung individually or collectively as a group. As stated before, these songs were developed during religious gatherings held by African Americans and for African Americans. Here is a quote from an ex-slave, Lucretia Alexander documented in the book

*African American Music:*

“The preacher came...He’d just say, “Serve your masters. Don’t steal your master’s turkey. Don’t steal your master’s hawks. Don’t steal your master’s meat. Do whatsoever your master tells you to do. “ Same old thing all the time. My father would have church in dwelling houses and they had to whisper....Sometimes they would have church at his house. That would be when they would want a real meetin’ with some real preachin’...they used to sing their songs in a whisper and pray in a whisper. That was a prayer meeting from house to house once or twice-once or twice a week.”

Emotional expression was typically practiced and normalized by slaves when singing spirituals. White ministers held strong antipathy against slave’s emotional responses to preaching. This encouraged slaves to hold their own private meeting. Here is an account from John Watson who was a white Methodist minister in 1819 from his publication *Methodist Error or Friendly Christian Advice to Those Methodists Who Indulge in Extravagant Religious*

*Emotions and Bodily Exercises:*

“We have too a growing evil, in the practice of singing in our places of worship, merry airs, adapted from old songs, to hymns of our composing, often miserable as poetry and senseless as matter, and more frequently composed and sung by illiterate Blacks of the society...the evil is only occasionally condemned, and the example has already visibly affected the religious manner of some whites.”<sup>17</sup>

Although this account was published in 1819, many believe that Watson was speaking on black slaves’ performance of Spirituals. When heard and observed by whites, many were amazed at the musical ability of slaves. There was an early belief amongst many whites that African

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<sup>17</sup> Burnim and Maultsby, *African American Music: An Introduction*, 54.

Americans stole hymns from white church services but John Work III makes a great argument on the matter in his book *Folk Song of the American Negro*.

“When we see a flower with all the characteristics of the rose, and with those of no other flower, we never trace its source to the sunflower, but to the rose seed. ...So the conclusion is irresistible that the music which expresses the characteristic of the Negro's soul alone, was produced by the Negro alone. It would be a miracle if such a soul as his did not produce a music all its own.”<sup>18</sup>

The American Music Critic and respected musicologist Henry E. Krehbiel had this to say about the African American Spiritual in an article he published in the New York Tribune:

“...that the songs of the slaves are practically the only American product of this kind which meet the scientific definition of Folk Song. These songs certainly express the feelings of the Negro "as a whole." and these "feelings" are just as certainly expressive of the life of the Southern States of America.”

In addition to singing, peak emotional expression was displayed by the “Ring Shout” or “running spirchil”. Any song could be used for a ring shout, but it is highly unlikely that a sorrowful or slow song would be used for this practice. The Ring Shout included the practice of dancing along with singing Spirituals. This practice was viewed as “profane” and “heathenish” by White Americans.<sup>19</sup> A description of this practice was documented in *Slave Songs of the US* by Allen, Ware, and Garrison. Characteristic elements were:

1. High degrees of repetition
2. The continuation of songs for indefinite periods of time
3. Variations of tempo in different contexts
4. Robust timbres
5. Highly embellished melodic lines, with an abundance of slides from one note to another, and turns and cadences not in articulated notes.

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<sup>18</sup> Work III, *Folk song of the American Negro*, 53.

<sup>19</sup> Burnim and Maultsby, *African American Music: An Introduction*, 56.

Listed below are characteristic elements of the normal singing practices documented in *Slave Songs of the United States*:

1. There was no part-singing (intentional harmony)
2. The leader starts singing words of each verse and normally improvises
3. Others "base" him by entering at the refrain or with the solo where words are familiar (pitched an octave above or below the leader)
4. When base begins leader often stops
5. Basers drop out as they please, singing an octave above or below, or hitting harmony "slides from one note to another, turns and cadences not in articulated notes"
6. Odd turns made in throat, entrances of new voices create curious rhythmic effect, some irregularities with time

They also noted that the western system of notation did not accurately capture the individual singers "intonations and delicate variations". That "the negroes keep exquisite time in singing, and do not suffer themselves to be daunted by any obstacle in the words." This statement was made by the authors of *Slave Songs of the US* because only the essentials of the melodies and rhythms were preserved in their transcriptions. They claimed that the performance practice of adding different words or scriptures made it difficult to accurately capture all of the rhythms and rhythmic variations.<sup>20</sup> Listed below are examples of scores from *Slave Songs of the United States*.

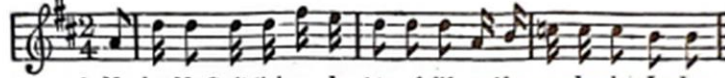
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<sup>20</sup> William Francis Allen, Lucy McKim Garrison, Charles Pickard Ware. *Slave Songs of the United States*, (Peter Smith, 1951), iii-vi.

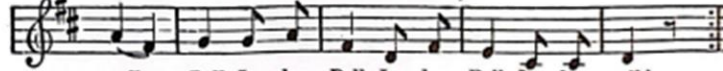
# SLAVE SONGS OF THE UNITED STATES.

## I.

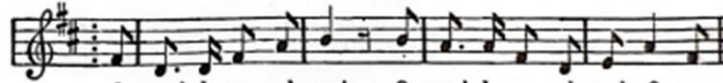
### 1. ROLL, JORDAN, ROLL.



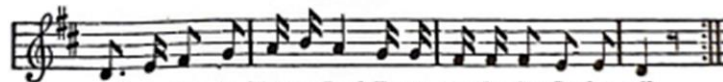
1. My brudder\* sit-tin' on de tree of life, An' he yearde when Jor-dan



roll; Roll, Jor-dan, Roll, Jor-dan, Roll, Jor-dan, roll!



O march de an-gel march, O march de an-gel march; O my



soul a-rise in Heaven, Lord, For to yearde when Jor-dan roll.

2 Little chil'en, learn to fear de Lord,  
And let your days be long;  
Roll, Jordan, &c.

3 O, let no false nor spiteful word  
Be found upon your tongue;  
Roll, Jordan, &c.

\* Parrr: Fuller, Deacon Henshaw, Brudder Mosey, Maasa Linkum, &c.

[This spiritual probably extends from South Carolina to Florida, and is one of the best known and noblest of the songs.]

Figure 1.1 *Roll Jordan Roll*, from *Slave Songs of the United States*

74. NOBODY KNOWS THE TROUBLE I'VE HAD.

The musical score is written on five staves in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature. The lyrics are: "No - bod - y knows de trouble I've had,\* No - bod - y knows but". The second staff continues: "Je - sus, No - bod - y knows de trouble I've had, (3/4)". The third staff has a repeat sign and the lyrics: "Glo - ry hal - lo - lu! 1. One morning I was a - walking down,". The fourth staff continues: "O yes, Lord! I saw some ber - ries a - hanging down,". The fifth staff is marked "Variation on St. Helena Id." and contains the lyrics: "O yes, Lord! O yes, Lord! I saw some berries hanging down."

- 2 I pick de berry and I suck de juice, O yes, Lord!  
Just as sweet as the honey in de comb, O yes, Lord!
- 3 Sometimes I'm up, sometimes I'm down,  
Sometimes I'm almost on de groun'.
- 4 What make ole Satan hate me so?  
Because he got me once and he let me go.

\* I see.

[This song was a favorite in the colored schools of Charleston in 1865; it has since that time spread to the Sea Islands, where it is now sung with the variation noted above. An independent transcription of this melody, sent from Florida by Lt. Col. Apthorp, differed only in the locus of certain measures, as has also been noted above. The third verse was furnished by Lt. Col. Apthorp. Once when there had been a good deal of ill feeling excited, and trouble was apprehended, owing to the uncertain action of Government in regard to the confiscated lands on the Sea Islands, Gen. Howard was called upon to address the colored people earnestly and even severely. Sympathizing with them, however, he could not speak to his own satisfaction; and to relieve their minds of the ever-present sense of injustice, and prepare them to listen, he asked them to sing. Immediately an old woman on the outskirts of the meeting began "Nobody knows the trouble I've had," and the whole audience joined in. The General was so affected by the plaintive words and melody, that he found himself melting into tears and quite unable to maintain his official sternness.]

Figure 1.2 *Nobody Knows The Trouble I've Had*, from *Slave Songs of the United States*

The next figure is a sample score from the book *Folk Song of the American Negro* by Professor John Work III. It is a close transcription to the original singing practice. This transcription starts on the chorus. The leader comes in on the last word of the chorus adding his own emotional expression.

\* THIS IS A SIN-TRYING WORLD

LEADER. *S:* O, Lord!

CHORUS. *S:* O, this is a sin - try - ing world, This is a

Help me, Je - sus!

sin - try - ing world, This is a sin - try - ing

Sing it, chil - dren! FINE.

world, This is a sin - try - ing world.

1. O Heav'n is so high, and I am so low,
2. *X* Jor - dan's stream is chil - ly and wide,
3. *X* Way o - ver yonder in the harv - est fields,
4. You may bur-y me in the East, you may bur-y me in the West,

I don't know whether I'll ev - er get to Heav'n or no.....  
 None can..... cross but the sanc - ti - fied.....  
 The an - gels..... shov-ing at the char-i - ot wheels.  
 But in that.... morning my soul will be at rest.....

Exclamations for Verses

- |                 |                     |                      |                    |
|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. High Heaven! | 2. Cold Jordan!     | 3. O the harvest!    | 4. In the Heavens! |
| Hard trials!    | Deep and wide!      | Few laborers!        | With my mother!    |
| Crown of Life!  | Can't you cross it? | Won't you join them? | And my Saviour!    |

Figure 1.3 *This Is A Sin-Trying World* from *Folk Song of the American Negro*

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE FIRST EVOLUTION: THE ARRANGED CHORAL SPIRITUAL

In this chapter, I will present social and political developments that led to the development of the first evolution of the African American spiritual to an arranged choral format. The major political developments that contributed to this were the Emancipation Proclamation and the establishment of educational institutions for newly freed slaves. This led to the founding of Fisk University where the arranged choral format was created and presented to the world. The presentation of the arranged choral spiritual helped build the esteem of Blacks in the pursuit of equality and positively went against racial prejudices that were perpetuated in American Popular culture.

#### The Abolishment of Slavery and the Morrill Acts

In 1863, slaves soon got the freedom their souls yearned for. President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation and freed all slaves from slavery. As stated in the previous chapter, this new-found freedom of hopefully leaving the terrors of slavery in the past also diminished the practice of singing spirituals. For Blacks, the search for freedom and economic opportunity also included the pursuit of education. In Antebellum America, a public-school system did not exist for Blacks or whites. According to the law scholars, Kate Stith and Claire Blumenthal in their article *The Dartmouth College Case and the Founding of Historically Black Colleges*, wealthy landowners opposed the building of schools in fear of “socioeconomic disruption”. Whites were divided amongst themselves with relegating public education but they were unified in strong opposition to educating Blacks. Although Blacks were freed from slavery many found opposition in attaining work and possibly more in pursuing education for themselves and their children.

Stith and Blumenthal detail an account of some of the opposition Blacks faced in pursuing education: “[B]lack schools were burned; teachers and students harassed or attacked; and Black parents fired from jobs if their children were known to be attending school.”<sup>21</sup>

In 1862, the Federal Government passed the Morrill Land Grant Act. The government allotted Federal land for states to create liberal and practical educational institutions. A total of sixty-nine land grant institutions of higher education were founded nationwide. However, White southerners refused to allocate any resources for Blacks to pursue public education. This changed in 1890 when the federal government passed the Second Morrill Act.

With the reality of strong opposition towards educating Blacks in the south, some took it upon themselves to legally circumvent this obstacle. This was achieved by establishing private institutions. Private institutions were able to operate without any government interference or negligence. Scholar Kristen Broady stated that “African Americans in [Southern] states... relied on private [historically black colleges and universities] as they were prohibited from attending white institutions,” private or public.

Shortly after the Civil War, Northern Freedmen's societies, religious missionary groups, and black southern communities assisted by the Freedmen's Bureau partnered together to charter private schools for newly freed slaves. Most of these schools started as primary or secondary schools and evolved into higher education institutions. With this collective force, between the years of 1866-1870, the number of black educational institutions went from 740 to 2,677. During this time, some of the nation's first Historically Black Colleges were founded: Shaw University

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<sup>21</sup> Claire Blumenthal and Kate Stith, “The Dartmouth College Case and the Founding of Historically Black Colleges,” *University of New Hampshire Law Review*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2019): 35, *EBSCOhost*, [research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=c8f83c66-15dc-3df7-bae8-983ca6b96b7d](https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=c8f83c66-15dc-3df7-bae8-983ca6b96b7d).

in NC (1865), Fisk University in TN (Fisk Free Colored University 1866), Howard University (1867).<sup>22</sup> In the next section, I will focus on Fisk University and factors that led to the development of the arranged choral spiritual.

### **Fisk University, George White, and the Jubilee Singers**

Fisk University endured some initial successes before finding itself in financial trouble shortly after opening. George White was a Migrant from New York who moved to Nashville, Tennessee after being medically discharged from the US Union Army. Upon migrating to Nashville, he joined the Freedman's Bureau chapter and voluntarily taught music and penmanship at Fisk. White was eventually hired as the school's treasurer with the duty of collecting tuition money. While at Fisk, during the financial crisis, he heard some of the students singing what he called "peculiar" songs. According to an account from John Work III in his book *Folk Song of the American Negro*, White, "felt a moving of emotion as those weird melodies struck his soul". He was touched by the meaning and beauty these songs held. These songs were the songs the newly freed students learned from their parents, the African American Spiritual. White was illuminated with hope. He envisioned creating a choir that would sing arranged versions of the African American Spiritual to raise funds for Fisk.

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<sup>22</sup> Claire Blumenthal and Kate Stith, "The Dartmouth College Case," 36-39.



Figure 2.1 George White, conductor of the Fisk Jubilee Singers

The students were against singing these songs in public. Ella Sheppard, a charter member of the Jubilee singers wrote this about the spirituals in her diary, “the songs were associated with slavery and the dark past, and represented the things to be forgotten”.<sup>23</sup> White’s dream of sharing these songs with the world were met with deep feelings of shame and ambivalence from his students. These songs were also seen as sacred by African Americans. They only sang them to or with each other or to God. Since America had never valued the existence of the negro in America, they felt the same about America’s perspective of their music. It was a hard task for White to get the students to practice arrangements of the African American Spiritual. The choir did not regularly rehearse spirituals, they preferred standard European arrangements. Eventually, the student’s parents learned of the tour and were enraged at the thought of their children singing

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<sup>23</sup> Vann R. Newkirk II, “The Years of Jubilee,” *Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 332, no. 5, (2023):78, *EBSCOhost*, [research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=7c1bfa90-72ae-31b5-a1a7-77e8e38284f7](https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=7c1bfa90-72ae-31b5-a1a7-77e8e38284f7).

Spirituals to the public. They truly viewed this music as sacred, untouchable by the American society that so deeply wounded their souls.

George White never gave up on his dream of having his choir perform written and arranged settings of their parent's music. He truly saw the value of these "weird melodies". As the students embarked on tour, they initially sang standard choral music, because they wanted to prove their equality with white choirs. This was important to the students since Blacks were stereotypically viewed by whites in America as inferior in every way- intellectually and artistically. The tour initially, was not financially successful. That all changed at the Oberlin, Ohio concert. Prior to this concert, the students under the direction of White, had been working on new repertoire- settings of Spirituals. At the Oberlin performance, members of the National Council of Congregational Churches were in the audience. In addition to the choir's standard repertoire, they performed White's arrangement of *Steal Away*. They received exuberant praise from the audience. Here is an account of A. F. Beard who was in the audience listed by John

Work III:

"Leading Congregational ministers and laymen from all parts of the land were thrilled not only by the sweetness of their voices and the accuracy of execution, but were charmed also by the wonderful feeling of the plantation melodies which were entirely new to them. As a member of that Council in 1871, I was present and well remember the marvelous magic of their song with its accompanying rhythm and the revelation it gave of the Negroes' religious nature and experience. This was the introduction to the American people of the folk songs with which the Jubilee Singers of this University went on a triumphant tour around the world, the new world and the old."

Another member of this Oberlin concert, Henry Ward Beecher was also in attendance. Beecher was a highly influential abolitionist and preacher based in New York. He invited the singers to perform for his congregation in Brooklyn, New York. The group began the concert with the Spiritual that garnered Beecher's interest, *Steal Away*. The careful orchestration heightened the meaning of the lyrics for listeners. White's vision was successfully coming to pass. According to Vann R. Newkirk II in his article *Years of Jubilee*, Beecher approved of their

singing with this statement, “Only they can sing them (Spirituals) who know how to keep time to a master’s whip.” After this concert, donations were beginning to increase but White faced a paralyzing moment when the singers were billed as “Nigger Minstrels” by New York newspapers. Before this moment they had no formal name and if they were only seen as “Nigger Minstrels” this would destroy the rest of their fundraising efforts. George White is said to have gone into deep prayer after this event and the next day, he proclaimed to his students, "Children, you are the Jubilee Singers."<sup>24</sup> Despite how anyone else saw them, be it an abolitionist or those stuck in the days of slavery, White affirmed and validated his students and their music.



Figure. 2.2 The Original Fisk Jubilee Singers

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<sup>24</sup> Work III, *Folk Song of the American Negro*, 106.

The original tour of the Jubilee singers lasted from 1871- 1878. The Jubilee Singers traveled to various states, cities, and even internationally. The group experienced a very successful tour in England and Germany where they sang for royalty and other prominent figures. They received great adulation while in Europe despite any preconceived prejudices. This was a significant development for the spirituals. There was no dancing, hand clapping, or foot stomping, no spontaneous emotional interjections, no infinite cycles of repetition, and no improvisation. There was syllabic singing with appropriate harmonies, carefully planned dynamics and articulations. George White integrated his standard music training to accentuate the beauty of these songs and present them to the world. This adaptation to an arranged choral format marked the first evolution of the African American Spiritual. The arranged choral format established the Spiritual in Western Art Music.

Another significant impact of this tour is that it helped to positively influence Americans and Europeans perceptions of the Black race. George White embarked on tour with his students while Blackface Minstrelsy was the popular form of entertainment for many Americans. Minstrelsy was America's first form of popular entertainment and began in the northern states in the 1830s amongst white urban populations. The minstrel show was a form of theatrical and musical entertainment with primarily white performers. The performers artificially blackened their skin and enacted parodies of African American music, dance, dress, and dialect. Eventually, the popularity of minstrelsy grew and there were tours of various troupes throughout the U.S. during the 1840s through 1870 and remained popular through the 1880s. Some troupes were also able to tour in Europe. Europeans regarded Minstrelsy as the first form of American

entertainment. This mockery and appropriation of enslaved Black culture helped to “reinforce racist attitudes among whites”.<sup>25</sup>

Although the Jubilee Singers had to endure racist prejudice from American society, their performance and elevation of Spirituals helped to foster some respect for African Americans in the United States. According to John Work III, On January 9, 1874, the Harwick paper in England wrote this about the Jubilee Singers:

"In personal appearance they are far from unprepossessing, three of the young ladies being both handsome and pretty, and their complexion present every variety of the 'colored' from deep black to almost white. Their service of song, regarded as a musical performance is chiefly remarkable for its novelty. The melodies and choruses are of the simplest possible construction, but one or two of them were very picturesque and the harmony exquisite, if not perfect. They have been very highly spoken of by Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Bright, and by the Metropolitan and provincial press."

Unbeknownst to the reluctant Jubilee Singers and George White, they helped give validation to the experiences and humanity of their previously enslaved parent's and the generations that preceded them. While the songs were created by the generation of slaves that became Christian converts, they captured the experiences of suffering, the longing for freedom, hope, faith, joy, and love experienced by the slave community. This makes them personally sacred, I understand the original Jubilee Singer's reluctance in sharing them with the world that did not care for them or see them as humans. However, their performance and elevation of the Spiritual helped to foster a new black identity in the search for freedom and equality after slavery.

The Jubilee Singers established a choral tradition that is still in practice today at most Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Amongst the first Universities to follow in Fisk's

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<sup>25</sup> Brad Osborn, Larry Starr, and Christopher Waterman. "American Popular Music: From Minstrelsy to MP3," (Oxford University Press, 2021), 53.

footsteps were: Hampton, the Fairfield Normal Institute in South Carolina, and Tuskegee Universities respectively.

STEAL AWAY TO JESUS

Steal a - way, steal a - way, steal a - way to Je - sus!

The first system of musical notation consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains a melody in 4/4 time, starting with a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5. The bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes.

Steal a - way, steal a - way home, I ain't got long to stay here!

The second system continues the melody and accompaniment. The treble staff features a melodic line with some grace notes and a final cadence. The bass staff continues with a steady accompaniment.

1. My Lord calls me, He calls me by the thun - der ;  
2. Green trees are bend - ing, poor sin - ner stands a - tremb - ling ;  
3. Tomb - stones are burst - ing, poor sin - ner stands a - tremb - ling ;  
4. My Lord calls me, he calls me by the light - ning ;

The third system includes four numbered verses of lyrics. The musical notation for the treble staff shows a melodic line with some grace notes. The bass staff continues with a steady accompaniment.

The trum - pet sounds with - in - a my soul, I ain't got long to stay nere.

The fourth system concludes the piece. The treble staff features a melodic line with a final cadence. The bass staff continues with a steady accompaniment.

Figure 2.3 *Steal Away to Jesus*, arranged by John Work III

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE SECOND EVOLUTION AND ITS CONCIOUSNESS: THE ART SONG

In this chapter, I have detailed the second evolution of the African American Spiritual to the modern art song adaptation. The first adaptation into classical instrumental music was pioneered by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. The art song adaptation for solo voice with piano accompaniment began with Harry T. Burleigh. I will discuss the cultural, social, and political climate in which the latter was created. The African American spiritual grew to prominence with the art song adaptation and was also developed in New York during the *Harlem Renaissance*. Black Americans during this time found a new strength, courage, and confidence that was encouraged by the singing of spirituals. Even in a new generation, it affirmed their humanity and gave them hope. There were debates surrounding the “correct” performance of African American spirituals which I have included later in the chapter.

#### Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and the Evolution into Instrumental Art Music

In addition to establishing the first evolution of the Negro Spiritual into an arranged choral format, the Jubilee Singers also inspired a young Afro-European composer to incorporate these folk melodies into his compositions. This composer was Samuel Colridge-Taylor. He was born to his West African father and English mother in 1875. Due to the racial discrimination his father faced in practicing medicine in England, he deserted the family soon after Colridge-Taylor was born to practice as a physician in his native country, Sierra Leone. Coleridge-Taylor began playing the violin and singing in his church’s choir at the young age of five. He also learned to write his own music under the guidance of H. A. Walters who also helped him with his studies at England’s Royal College of Music. Coleridge-Taylor earned recognition from some of England’s

leading composers and musicians and also his local community in London. His compositions were well-received by the public. After hearing the Jubilee Singers, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor pioneered the adaptation of Negro Spirituals into Art Music. This would have a profound impact on the rising generation of African American composers in the United States.

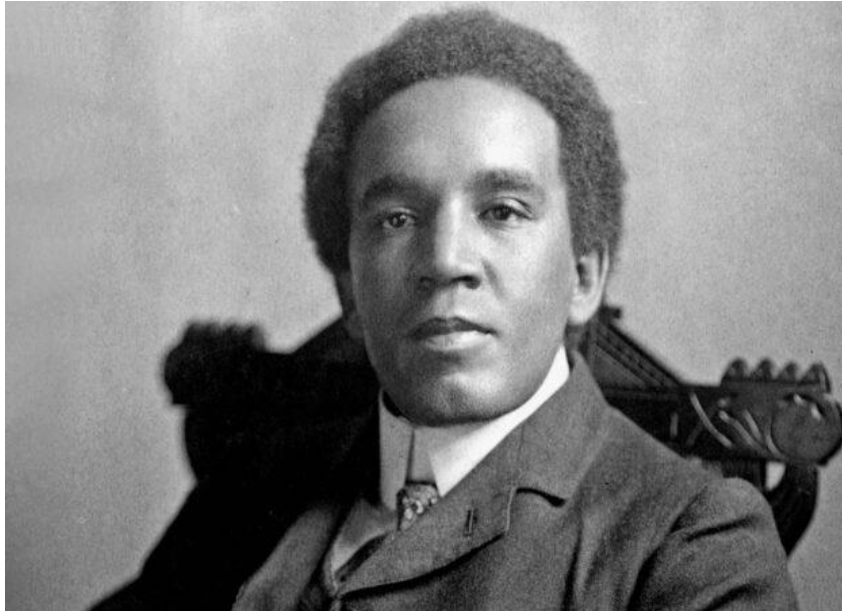


Figure 3.1 Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor  
Twenty-Four Negro Melodies  
I'm Troubled In Mind  
Op. 59, No. 14

American Negro

I'm trou-bled, I'm trou-bled, I'm trou-bled in mind. If  
Je - sus don't he-lp me, I sure - ly will die.

Andante moderato

*p*  
*sempre Ped*  
*f* *dim.* *pp*  
*rall.* *pp*

One of the most beautiful of negro melodies. It is said that a certain slave used to sing this song with so much pathos that few could listen without weeping from sympathy.

Figure 3.2 Art Song Adaptation of the African American spiritual, *I'm Troubled in Mind*

## Harry T. Burleigh and the Art Song Adaptation

Another major development of the folk spiritual was the adaptation to the art song format. This format should be the model for any solo instrumental arrangements and transcriptions, which I will discuss further in the next chapter. The pioneer of this evolution was Harry T. Burleigh. He was born in Eerie, Pennsylvania to the daughter of a former slave. He learned spirituals through the oral tradition from his blind grandfather, who was born as a slave. His grandfather used to sing spirituals as they walked together through the streets of Eerie. Harry grew up singing in his family's Episcopal church where he was able to start his musical training. Upon graduating from high school, Burleigh began his musical studies at the National Conservatory of Music in New York City.<sup>26</sup> His studies in New York would change the trajectory of his life. While at the Conservatory, he was assigned the task of being the newly emigrated Antonin Dvorak's Orchestral Assistant. Antonin Dvorak was a Bohemian composer who taught at the New York Conservatory from 1892-1896. While in New York, Burleigh and Dvorak became good friends. One of Burleigh's friends, Victor Hebert, had this to say about their relationship: "Dr. Dvořák was most kind and unaffected and took great interest in his pupils, one of which, Harry Burleigh, had the privilege of giving the Dr. Dvorak some of the thematic material for his Symphony. ... I have seen this denied - but it is true."<sup>27</sup>

While enrolled in school, Burleigh took a choir audition as a Baritone at Saint George's Episcopal Church and won. This position as a Baritone soloist allowed him to build connections

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<sup>26</sup> William J. Reynolds. Harry T. Burleigh. *Hymnology Archive*, [www.hymnologyarchive.com/harry-t-burleigh#:~:text=Burleigh's%20%E2%80%9CLittle%20Mother%20of%20Mine,Laurence%20Hope%E2%80%9D%20Burleigh's%20best%20works](http://www.hymnologyarchive.com/harry-t-burleigh#:~:text=Burleigh's%20%E2%80%9CLittle%20Mother%20of%20Mine,Laurence%20Hope%E2%80%9D%20Burleigh's%20best%20works), accessed 16 Mar. 2025.

<sup>27</sup> African American Influences, *Dvorak American Heritage Association*, [www.dvoraknyc.org/african-american-influences](http://www.dvoraknyc.org/african-american-influences), accessed 12 Mar. 2025.

with New York's white social elite. He sang there for fifty-two years and also joined the choir of Temple Emanu-El where he sang for twenty-five years. Burleigh was an active singer and recitalist; shortly after graduating, he began composing his own art songs beginning in 1898. He composed eighty-eight secular art songs between 1898 and 1940. His art songs were written for the sole purpose of performance in a recital. It is important to note that Burleigh was an established classically trained singer and composer. At home, he learned the music of his enslaved grandparents and received training in church choirs but also learned classical Western Music Theory practices in school. All of these experiences would propel Burleigh as the perfect pioneer for the Art Song adaptation of the African American spiritual.



Figure 3.3 Harry T. Burleigh

Dvorak proved to be a great influence on Burleigh. In 1916, Burleigh wrote his first African American Spiritual in the art song format. This song was "Deep River." This new performance practice was debated amongst whites, but Burleigh did not expect to receive strong reactions of disapproval from African Americans. Through Dvorak's inspiration, Burleigh believed that these songs should be shared amongst all people. He felt African American

spirituals had messages relevant to all humanity but meant something different for the Negro in America. Burleigh believed that if every human being was able to find meaning in the songs of previously enslaved Blacks, this positively challenged America's racist perceptions on Black potential. How could barbaric savages create songs that spoke to the humanity of all people if they had no intellect or value?

Burleigh stood strong in his stance of writing and performing spirituals for classical settings despite opposition from both Blacks and whites in America. He was certainly the largest influence in preserving spirituals through the art song adaptation. He held a profound belief that this music gave esteem and value to African Americans. This belief aligned with the ideals of the Harlem Renaissance. In the next section, I will discuss the Harlem Renaissance, its importance, and factors that lead to its development.

*Respectfully dedicated to Miss Mary Jordan* 11

## Deep River

Old Negro melody  
Arranged by  
H. T. BURLEIGH

*Lento*

The musical score for 'Deep River' is presented in three systems. Each system consists of a voice line and a piano accompaniment line. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with the tempo marking 'Lento' and a dynamic marking of 'p'. The lyrics 'Deep riv - er, my' are written under the voice line. The second system continues the melody with the lyrics 'home is o - ver Jor - dan, Deep'. The third system concludes the phrase with the lyrics 'riv - er, Lord, I want to cross o - ver in - to camp-ground.' The piano accompaniment features a steady, rhythmic pattern of chords in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand.

Figure 3.4 *Deep River* by Harry T. Burleigh

### **Developments of the Harlem Renaissance**

The Harlem Renaissance was the outward literary and artistic expression of Black's psychological liberation from slavery, that was later billed as the "New Negro." This attitude was evidenced with the first Great Migration of Southern Blacks to urban Northern cities. Although slavery had been abolished in the South for around fifty years, Blacks had to live with the realities of Jim Crow Segregation, disenfranchisement, the emergence of sharecropping, and lynchings. Most African Americans feared moving North because of uncertainty and unfamiliarity of a new culture. Despite the horrible conditions of the South, it was home. There were some prominent Blacks such as W. E. B. Du Bois, W.C. Handy, and Robert S. Abbot who moved north before the mass migration but most remained in the South. There were two major factors that spurred the mass migration to Northern cities. The first was a series of floods and infestations of boll weevils that ruined crops. The second was the federal quotas on European immigration put in place in the 1910s, which created an industrial labor shortage. The First Great Migration took place between 1915-1930 (the Great Depression significantly decreased the migration of African Americans). During the fifteen years listed above, 1.25 million Southern Blacks moved primarily to Northern cities and a few to the Midwest.

During the years 1916-1919, 500,000 Blacks migrated to Northern cities. There was opposition against Blacks leaving the South amongst both whites and Blacks. One prominent Black voice against migration was Booker T. Washington, who held accommodationist views. In this theory, Washington encouraged Blacks to accept racial inequalities and to pursue economic stability through vocational trades. The first mass migration was in direct rebellion of accepting Southern conditions and pursuing economic freedom through forms of manual labor. This was a

significant action for people who had a history of being immobilized. The migration to Northern cities created a growing white hostility towards individual Blacks that generalized into hatred of the entire race.<sup>28</sup> Racial tensions continued to escalate and resulted in a series of race riots across the country. The first was in East St. Louis, Illinois in 1917. In 1919 (the climax was after World War I), race riots broke out in twenty-five different Northern and Southern cities because of this pursuit for change and freedom that was evidenced by the migration. Hence, the Summer of 1919 is referred to as the Red Summer and this period of riots lasted until October 1919. Blacks were murdered and attacked, but many fought back. There was not a collective passive response from Blacks (which had been a coping mechanism to survive before this point). Instead, there was a shift in the mentality towards protest, declaring humanity, pursuing equality, and freedom through active resistance. This was the birth of the New Negro.

### **Ideals of the Harlem Renaissance and the New Negro**

The philosophical ideals of this cultural and social shift in African Americans were best captured by Alain Locke in his book *The New Negro: An Interpretation*. I will give a brief biography of Alain Locke before discussing the importance of *The New Negro: An Interpretation*. Alain Locke was a leading African American philosopher and educator during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. He studied at Harvard, Oxford University in England (Rhodes scholarship recipient), and the University of Berlin. Upon completing his studies, Locke became an Assistant Professor of English and Philosophy at Howard University, where a new generation of Black intellectuals and creatives were cultivating their talents. Many of his students became leading figures of the Harlem Renaissance. Locke's study of philosophy at Harvard greatly shaped his

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<sup>28</sup> William M. Tuttle Jr., "Red Summer of 1919," in *The Great Black Migration: A Historical Encyclopedia of the American Mosaic*, ed. Steven A. Reich. (Greenwood Publishing, 2014), 316.

views on the development of what he believed was an adolescent Black cultural identity. Alain Locke adopted a view of pragmatism from William James that encouraged the belief of African Americans taking pride in their culture and coexisting with European culture. The other philosophical view that encouraged Locke's views was that of Josiah Royce who taught the importance of group memory and group hope. Both of these ideals flourished in what became known to the world as the *Harlem Renaissance*. The *Harlem Renaissance* was a cultural artistic expression of Black creatives that celebrated Black culture and humanity of the past and present. This creative expression also occurred in different musical forms of the time.

Locke's book *The New Negro: An Interpretation* aptly captured the ideals of the movement. His book was a comprehensive anthology of essays, poems, fiction, and articles. *The New Negro* also made commentary on music, drama, art, and also included comprehensive lists of publications for each of the aforementioned. The purpose of *The New Negro* was to offer a positive and constructive remedy to the wounded self-esteem of African Americans as a result of centuries years of being oppressed and patronized.<sup>29</sup> The book was an affirmation of Blacks' human experience and existence in America. I will include a majority of the foreword from Locke's book here as it speaks well for itself and gives an insight to Locke's ideals of the cultural movement:

"THIS Volume aims to document the New Negro culturally and socially, to register the transformations of the inner and outer life of the Negro in America that have so significantly taken place in the last few years. There is ample evidence of a New Negro in the latest phases of social change and progress, but still more in the internal world of the Negro mind and spirit. Here in the very heart of the folk-spirit are the essential forces, and folk interpretation is truly vital and representative only in terms of these. Of all the voluminous literature on the Negro, so much is mere external view and commentary that we may warrantably say that nine-tenths of it is about the Negro rather than of him, so that it is the Negro problem rather than the Negro that is known and mooted in the general mind. We turn therefore in the other direction to the elements of truest social portraiture, and discover in the artistic self-expression of the Negro to-day a new figure on the national canvas and a new force in the foreground of affairs. Whoever wishes to see the Negro in his essential traits, in the full perspective of his achievement and

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<sup>29</sup> Douglas Edward LaPrade, "Alain LeRoy Locke," *Salem Press Biographical Encyclopedia*, (2023) EBSCOhost, [research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=54a887a4-03f4-3c33-926c-b760b73e59d9](https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=54a887a4-03f4-3c33-926c-b760b73e59d9).

possibilities, must seek the enlightenment of that self-portraiture which the present developments of Negro culture are offering. In these pages, without ignoring either the fact that there are important interactions between the national and the race life, or that the attitude of America toward the Negro is as important a factor as the attitude of the Negro toward America, we have nevertheless concentrated upon self-expression and the forces and motives of self-determination. So far as he is culturally articulate, we shall let the Negro speak for himself . . . .

America seeking a new spiritual expansion and artistic maturity, trying to found an American literature, a national art, and national music implies a Negro-American culture seeking the same satisfactions and objectives. Separate as it may be in color and substance, the culture of the Negro is of a pattern integral with the times and with its cultural setting. The achievements of the present generation have eventually made this apparent. Liberal minds to-day cannot be asked to peer with sympathetic curiosity into the darkened Ghetto of a segregated race life. That was yesterday. Nor must they expect to find a mind and soul bizarre and alien as the mind of a savage, or even as naive and refreshing as the mind of the peasant or the child. That too was yesterday, and the day before. Now that there is cultural adolescence and the approach to maturity,—there has come a development that makes these phases of Negro life only an interesting and significant segment of the general American scene.

Until recently, except for occasional discoveries of isolated talent here and there, the main stream of this development has run in the special channels of "race literature" and "race journalism" . . . . . But more and more the creative talents of the race have been taken up into the general journalistic, literary and artistic agencies, as the wide range of the acknowledgments of the material here collected will in itself be sufficient to demonstrate.

Negro life is not only establishing new contacts and founding new centers, it is finding a new soul. There is a fresh spiritual and cultural focusing. We have, as the heralding sign, an unusual outburst of creative expression. There is a renewed race-spirit that consciously and proudly sets itself apart. Justifiably then, we speak of the offerings of this book embodying these ripening forces as culled from the first fruits of the Negro Renaissance."<sup>30</sup>

Locke was an exceptional writer and sums up this historical movement in a concise foreword. The development of the African American Spiritual to an art song during this time was not a coincidence. These songs gave validation to Blacks' experience and existence in America. As the Spiritual evolved, so did the esteem of African Americans. It was also used by singers, starting with Burleigh to share the experience of the Negro in America to the world. These songs are mentioned in Black intellectuals' literature: Frederick Douglas, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Alain Locke to name a few. Frederick Douglas dedicated a chapter to Spirituals in his book *My Bondage and My Freedom*. Du Bois also dedicated a chapter to Spirituals in his book, *Souls of Black Folk*. He started each chapter with notated measures of different Spirituals. Alain Locke, began his book *The New Negro: An Interpretation* with two measures of the spiritual, *O rise shine for thy light is a'coming*, and dedicated the book "to the younger generation". In the first

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<sup>30</sup> Alain Locke, *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, (Albert and Charles Boni, 1925), ix-xi.

evolution of the choral format, Locke mentions that it “introduced the Negro to himself”. He also dedicated a chapter to the Spirituals that accurately traces and explains the depths of its meaning, origins, and developments of the time. There was certainly collective agreement of the immense value of these songs and that they should be developed beyond their original format. However, the methods by which they should be developed were not agreed upon by Blacks.

### **Debates of Authenticity**

The authentic preservation and performance of the African American Spiritual is an old debate that started amongst Blacks and is still relevant today. Harry T. Burleigh’s art song adaptation faced unexpected criticism within the Black community, particularly amongst leading creatives of the Harlem Renaissance, including Alain Locke. He believed the true preservation of the African American Spiritual was through the polyphonic texture of the choral format. Multiple voices would help to develop and perform these songs in a similar way as the original performance practice. Many felt the art song adaptation was too “European”. There was a belief that the spirituals could not be transformed for any purpose, at least, not without diminishing the song’s value as something inherently African American<sup>31</sup>. The writers Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes were key influencers of this argument. Both studied at Howard University before moving to New York and preserved black dialect and speech in their writings. They also studied different black cultures in context to correctly preserve their folk traditions and give dignity to different black experiences. This argument was based on preserving the folk tradition of the Spiritual, not on its’ development.

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<sup>31</sup>Brian Alan Moon, "The “Old Songs Hymnal”: Harry Burleigh and His Spirituals during the Harlem Renaissance" (PhD diss., University of Colorado at Boulder, 2006), 201, ProQuest (3239436).

I believe this original argument of authenticity is valid, however, it is narrowly biased. The only true people who knew the correct rhythm and performance practices were the enslaved. In the first attempt to preserve the melodies of Spirituals in *Slave Songs of the US*, the authors admitted that standard notation could not capture all of the vocal inflections of the singers. They also noted that the practice of voices entering and exiting throughout a given song added to the rhythmic texture. This original practice cannot be replicated. Simply because no recordings exist from that time to accurately imitate. However, Burleigh's grandfather was a former slave, so he knew the authentic dialect. Since Burleigh was an educated musician, he could correctly notate pitches and rhythms. He published various collections of African American Folk Music: *The Old Songs Hymnal, Plantation Melodies, and Negro Spirituals*. Burleigh's *Album of Negro Spirituals* incorporated the dialect of slaves in the lyrics. Although the dialect is preserved, I do agree that because of the new performance practice (classically trained singing with piano accompaniment) elements of the folk tradition were lost.

# Heav'n, Heav'n

Negro Spiritual  
arranged by  
H. T. BURLEIGH

Joyfully, but not fast

Voice

I got a robe, you got a robe;

Piano



All of God's chil-dren got a robe; When I get to Heav-en goin' to



put on my robe, goin' to shout all o-ver God's Heavh- Heav'n,



a) The second syllable like a hum.

Heav'n, Ev'ry bod-y talk-in' bout heav'n ain't go-in' there, Heav'n, Heav'n,  
 Heav'n, Goin' to shout all o-ver God's Heav'n, I got a shoes,  
 you got a shoes, All of God's chil-dren got a shoes;  
 When I get to Heav-en goin' to put on my shoes, Goin' to walk all o-ver God's Heav'n.

Figure 3.5 *Heav'n, Heav'n* by Harry T. Burleigh

The debate of authenticity started with leaders of the *Harlem Renaissance*, however, I firmly believe it goes against the ideals of the movement. There was an emphasis on preserving folk culture but all forms of Black culture were expressed and preserved. There was no specific mode of expression, the expression itself was the emphasis. The negative views of the art song adaptation were also made by non-musicians. Burleigh was an educated musician who was the grandson of a slave. An outsider, Dvorak, had to encourage Burleigh to see the value he heard in these songs and that they should be presented to the world. Elements of the original folk practice

were lost but not the melodies and meaning from the original creators. The mere fact that Burleigh adopted the songs of his grandfather to fit into his new world of a respected classical lecturer, recitalist, and musician is a profound self-assertion into his artistic world. This embodies the ideals of the *Harlem Renaissance* and the new esteem amongst African Americans of his time. He was an advocate of what he called sacred dialect songs. They combine dialect and religion. He had this to say about his sacred dialect songs in 1917 (African American Spiritual art songs):

“It is a serious misconception of their meaning and value to treat [spirituals] as “minstrel” songs, or to try to make them funny by a too literal attempt to imitate the manner of the Negro in singing them, by swaying the body, clapping the hands, or striving to make the peculiar inflections of voice that are natural with the colored people. Their worth is weakened unless they are done impressively, for through all these songs there breathes a hope, a faith in the ultimate justice and brotherhood of man.” (The Spirituals of Harry T. Burleigh)

In the book, *Folk Song of the American Negro*, Professor John Work III mentions in the chapter “Agencies of Preservation”, that he believes Spirituals should be developed by Blacks. He also acknowledges that these songs originally existed with no harmony, so it’s use is subject to individual taste. Most importantly, is the acknowledgement that they will never be performed in the same manner as the creators:

“These songs, however, lose much of their character when taken out of their settings. Certain intonations and a certain inexplicable something imparted by those in whose hearts they were born, can never be reproduced otherwise or represented by musical notation.”

Professor John Work III taught at Fisk University and was also a composer and musicologist. He collected spirituals and was thorough in his knowledge and understanding of the stories behind some of the songs and in the general development of Spirituals through his time. His father also taught at Fisk University and collected African American Spirituals. He also mentioned colleges that pioneered the preservation and collection of Spirituals. He also mentioned

composers like Burleigh and Coleridge-Taylor who were early contributors of the art song adaptation at the time his book was written. Burleigh paved the way for the songs of African American slaves to be heard by the world in a new format. There was a rising generation of singers and composers that followed in his footsteps.

### **Pioneering Singers and Composers of the Art Song Adaptation**

I could speak extensively in this section, but I will briefly mention some of the early figures who followed in Burleigh's footsteps. Many of the early African American singers of the Art Song Spiritual had ideals that aligned with the Harlem Renaissance and believed in performing these songs to uplift African Americans and tarnish stereotypical perceptions. Others went as far to perform Spirituals as a form of political activism. Some of the early vocal pioneers were: Roland Hayes, Marian Anderson, and Paul Robeson. A few early composers of the art song adaptation were: J. Rosamond Johnson, Edward Boatner, William Levi Dawson, Eva Jessye, Hall Johnson, Florence Price, and William Grant Still. Many of these composers also wrote standard solo and orchestral works that incorporated other vernacular forms of African American music. Composers of the arranged choral tradition were: R. Nathaniel Dett, Francis Hall Johnson, and Eva Jessye.

The evolution of the African American spiritual to the solo art song format during the late 1910's and throughout the 1920's spread its popularity nationally and abroad. It vindicated the suffering of its creators and gave hope to a new generation in a fight for equality. Spirituals were of immense value to African Americans at this time. In the next chapter, I will detail existing recordings and arrangements of the instrumental art song adaptation for low brass.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESERVATION THROUGH THE ART SONG ADAPTATION FOR LOW BRASS

#### Adaptations for low brass

Before detailing my thoughts on methods of preservation for lower brass, I will first provide a list of available recordings and arrangements of spirituals for trombone, euphonium, and tuba. This list will certainly prove the need for arrangements in solo low brass literature. Included with each listing is the artist's name, album name, song titles, the year, and record label if it applies. I also included a brief annotation for each listing as it occurs.

#### Available Recordings

Artist: Velvet Brown, tuba

Album: *Velvet*

Titles: *Four Spirituals* for solo tuba and trombone quartet- *Gospel Train*, *Deep River*, *Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child*, *Joshua Fought the Battle of Jericho*

Label: Crystal Records

Format: Audio CD

Year: 1999

This is a multi-movement work that features the four spirituals listed above. This piece was written by Velvet Brown who is a prominent African American tubist. This was written for solo tuba and trombone quartet as the accompaniment. This has also been performed with a

tuba/euphonium quartet for the accompaniment instead of a trombone quartet. Both options work well for the accompaniment. I was unable to find a publishing website or point of purchase.

Artist: Vincent Nilsson, trombone

Album: *Jazz Trombone Spirituals by the Vincent Nilsson Quartet*

Titles: *Go Down Moses, Standin' in the Need of Prayer, Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho, Were You There?, Nobody Knows, sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child, Little David Play On Your Harp, Lord I Want To Be A Christian in My Heart, When the Saints, Down By The Riverside, Going to Shout All Over God's Heaven*

Label: Storyville

Format: Audio CD

Year: 2000

Vincent Nilsson is a Swedish trombonist who has played in various orchestras and big bands in Europe. This album is very unique. It features Nilsson with a jazz rhythm section (piano, bass, and drums) playing spirituals in a traditional combo style. Nilsson plays the melody for each spiritual and also improvises over the chord structure. The pianist also improvises over a good portion of these songs. For the most part, the integrity of the melody is maintained but the rhythmic accompaniment can vary as well as the harmonies.

Artist: James Markey, bass trombone and Virginia Perry Lamb Piano

Album: *on base*

Titles: *Suite of Negro Spirituals I: Deep River, Suite of Negro Spirituals II: Swing Low, Sweet Chariot, Suite of Negro Spirituals III: Go Tell It On The Mountain*

Label: Independent

Format: Audio CD

Year: 2009

James Markey is the bass trombonist for the Boston Symphony Orchestra and teaches at the New England Conservatory. This Suite was written by Markey and recorded on his first bass trombone album, *on base*. The suite features bass trombone with piano accompaniment. It is available for purchase through Cherry Classics Music Publishing.

Artist: Kenneth Thompkins, trombone with Zhiua Tang, Piano

Album: *Sonatas, Songs, and Spirituals*

Title: *Every Time I Feel The Spirit*

Label: Kenneth Thompkins

Format: Digital

Year: 2017

Kenneth Thompkins is the former principal trombonist of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and an active solo performer. This album features standard literature for the trombone in addition to various songs and the spiritual listed above. *Every Time I Feel The Spirit* was written by Chad “SirWick” Hughes.

Artist: McCain Duo, Martin McCain, bass trombone

Album: *Renew*

Title: *Every Time I Feel The Spirit*

Label: Kairoi Music

Format: Audio CD

Year: 2021

The McCain Duo is comprised of Artina McCain on piano and Martin McCain on bass trombone. They are a phenomenal performing duet and the piano is featured as an equal collaborative voice rather than simple accompaniment. This album features various hymns and the spiritual listed above. *Every Time I Feel The Spirit* was written by Chad “SirWick” Hughes.

## Available Arrangements

The listings below contain only twelve works that are available to be played as solo literature. Velvet's work for tuba is well-written but the general public does not have access to her arrangement. Of the twelve works listed, only nine are specifically based on the African American Spiritual. The others, are an amalgam of hymns and Spirituals. Some of the Spiritual arrangements listed are also written generically for other wind instruments and not exclusive to low brass. This certainly proves my point of the need we have to integrate this historic body of music into low brass repertoire. I am pointing out a problem, but also working to provide a part of the solution with my own arrangements for low brass. In the next section, I will discuss important points to consider for making palatable arrangements and a few of my own arrangements as reference material.

Title: *Fantasy for Trombone on Spirituals*, live YouTube Recording on website

- i. *Ezekiel saw the wheel*
- ii. *Sometimes I feel like a motherless child*
- iii. *Sing ho! That I had the wings of a dove*
- iv. *Ev'ry time I feel the Spirit'.*

Composer: Ray Steadman-Allen

Publisher: Salvation Army Index

Year: 1997

This piece was written for solo trombone with brass band accompaniment. It was designed as a virtuosic showpiece and requires maturity from the soloist to be performed well. Each of the four spirituals listed above are used as the thematic material for this work.

Title: *Three Traditional Spirituals -*

- i. *Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child*
- ii. *My Lord, What a Morning*
- iii. *Steal Away*

Arranger: David Marlatt

Publisher: Eighth Note Publications

This set is not written exclusively for trombone. This solo part has also been written for flute, alto saxophone, French horn, and trumpet. A sample midi recording is available on the publisher's website.

Title: *9 Spirituals for Solo Trombone in Bb and Piano-*

- i. *O When The Saints Go Marching In*
- ii. *Swing Low Sweet Chariot*
- iii. *This Little Light Of Mine*
- iv. *Joshua Fit The Battle Of Jericho*
- v. *Deep River*
- vi. *Michael Row The Boat Ashore,*
- vii. *Kum Ba Yah,*
- viii. *He's Got The Whole World In His Hands,*
- ix. *Amazing Grace*

Arranger: Tim Curd

Publisher: JW Pepper

Each of the songs in this collection are to be performed individually. Some of the songs listed above are not spirituals but hymns: *Kum Ba Yah* and *Amazing Grace*. The pieces are fairly attainable for an early intermediate player. However, most trombonists read bass and tenor clefs and this was written in Bb. It would be more suitable for a euphonium player who can read treble clef.

Title: *Deep River* for Solo Trombone and Piano

Arranger: not listed

Publisher: Con Spirito Music

The composer for this arrangement was not listed on the publisher's website. The solo line is almost identical to the original vocal line.

Title: *Spirituals of Faith* for Solo Trombone/Bassoon/Euphonium-

- i. *Every Time I Feel the Spirit*
- ii. *Give Me Jesus (In the Morning When I Rise)*
- iii. *He's Got the Whole World*
- iv. *I'm Going to Sing (I'm Going to Sing When the Spirit Says Sing)*
- v. *Lord, I Want to Be a Christian*
- vi. *Mary Had a Baby*
- vii. *Rise Up, Shepherd (There's a Star in the East)*
- viii. *Steal Away*

- ix. *There is a Balm in Gilead*
- x. *Were You There(?)*

Arranger: Stan Pethel

Publisher: Choristers Guild

This is a unique collection of spirituals arranged for all band instruments. Each band instrument has a separate solo part (to be played as feature) and an ensemble part (to accompany a featured soloist). The solo music listed above is apart of the bass clef collection.

Title: *Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child* for Trombone and Piano

Arranger: Brett Baker

Publisher: Studio Music

This arrangement is the first solo work in this list written by a trombone player as a piece of solo repertoire. Brett Baker is an active soloist, performer, and teacher. He is also passionate about creating new repertoire for the trombone. There are no professional recordings of this work but there is a good recording listed on YouTube.

Title: *Spirituals* arranged for Trombone/Euphonium and Organ

- i. *Nobody knows the trouble I've seen*
- ii. *Sometimes I feel like a motherless child*
- iii. *Swing low, sweet chariot*

Arranger: Ernst Thilo-Kalke

Publisher: Ficks Music

This is a unique suite because it is written for organ as the accompanying instrument instead of the piano.

Title: *Traditional Spiritual Medley no.1* for unaccompanied bass trombone

- i. Cryin' to the lord- *I Want Jesus To Walk With Me, Wade in the Water, Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child*
- ii. Praise God!- *My Lord, What A Mornin'; O For A Thousand Tongues to Sing; Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing;*
- iii. Prayer and Consolation- *Precious Lord Take My Hand; Swing Low, Sweet Chariot, Amazing Grace*
- iv. Redemption and Rebirth- *What Can Wash Away My Sin; Hush, Hush, (Somebody's Callin' My Name), When the Saints Go Marching In*

Arranger: Robert Mott

Publisher: Cimarron Music

This is a four-movement work for solo unaccompanied bass trombone. Although the word “spiritual” is used in the title each movement contains an amalgam of standard hymns and African American spirituals. The arranger states that this was written out of necessity for a church performance.

Title: *Spiritual Medleys* for unaccompanied trombone

- i. “Second Line” Spiritual Medley- *Just a Closer Walk; Blessed Quietness; On the Battlefield for My Lord*

- ii. Men's Day Medley- *Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee; This is My Father's World; Rise Up, O Men of God*
- iii. Freedom Medley- *Go Down Moses; Praise the Lord, Hallelujah I'm Here;*
- iv. *I'm So Glad; Glory, Glory, Hallelujah*
- v. Easter Medley- *Christ the Lord is Risen Today, Crown Him with Many Crowns, I'll Fly Away*

Arranger: Robert Mott

Publisher: Cimarron Music Press

This set is similar in style to the first. The score indicates that the solo part is for tenor trombone but the range is also accessible for bass trombonists.

Title: *Concerto for Euphonium*

Movement III: Deep River

Movement IV: Deep River Finale

Composer: Thomas Bough

Publisher: Cimarron Music Press

This is a four-movement work for solo euphonium with piano accompaniment. The third movement is a setting of the spiritual *Deep River*. The fourth movement is based on *Deep River* but is developed and played at a brisk tempo to close this beautiful work.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH TO ARRANGING AND PERFORMING**

#### **Personal Methods of Arranging and Performing**

In order to render a sustainable arrangement, I believe the arranger has to have some knowledge of the history of Spirituals, which has been carefully documented in the first three chapters. These songs began as an oral tradition by a largely uneducated group of African American slaves. This is important to consider because although we can notate the melody today or reference a score, we have to remember the original creators of this music. Being that slaves were uneducated, they were not confined by strict rules of practice and these songs were primarily used as a vehicle of expression. They were not constructed using traditional Western compositional approaches to melody, harmony, or thematic development. They were sung as an outlet of expression and helped to foster hope amongst the African American community. Expressing the meaning of the text should be the primary focus for the arranger and performer.

## Using a Vocal Approach

Considering the text of the songs should help the arranger in transcribing the melodies in a way that renders the proper expression. For the performer, it would be important to consider the text like a vocalist to know where to add rubato to the piece. This first step in both arranging and performing African American Spirituals is to listen to a good vocal recording. I must reemphasize that in order to perform Spirituals correctly, we have to learn how to imitate a good vocal performance. Since the trombone is the wind instrument closest to the human voice and is capable of a wide range of timbres and dynamics it is the perfect instrument for performing music that was originally for voice. In my arrangements, I use the versatility of the trombone by use of: glissandi, growls, falls, straight mutes, and plunger mutes. The extended techniques and use of mutes previously listed create changes in timbre that simulate the voice. This is what makes the trombone unique in performing my arrangements. The arrangements can still be played on tuba and euphonium but the trombone is capable of achieving wider timbres than both instruments.

Listening to vocal performances as a playing/arranging reference will aid with the interpretation of rhythm. If you look at a vocal score of a Spiritual and perform it as written in comparison to hearing a good vocal interpretation, you will notice that the rhythm is naturally syncopated. In hindsight, this is similar to the swing style of jazz. The arranger can write out the syncopation or indicate the playing style on the score to help the performer play the rhythms correctly. Some rhythms can be notated correctly with syncopation, but others are implied. This is why listening to a vocal performance is still a necessity for both the performer and arranger. Listed below are scores of the Spiritual *Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child*. The first, was composed by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor for Piano and the Second by Harry T. Burleigh for solo

voice and piano. In both examples, there is a wide-degree of rubato used in the performance. In the first, the syncopation is reduced to half of its original written value but performed with no additional syncopation. In the second, the rhythms are still syncopated, but if the vocalist sings the rhythms *loco*, then the rhythmic interpretation would be incorrect. The tenor, Lawrence Brownlee's recording of *Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child* is a good reference recording of the correct rhythmic interpretation.

Example of notated syncopation:

Twenty-Four Negro Melodies  
Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child  
Op. 59, No. 22 American Negro

Some-times I feel like a moth-er-less child, Some-times I feel like a  
moth-er-less child. A long ways from home. True be-liev-er, etc.

*Larghetto* *mp* *rall*

*mp* *f* *poco rall.*

*dim.* *rall*

Figure 5.1 *Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child* by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

Example of notated and implied syncopation:

H. T. BURLEIGH

\*) The original form of this measure was written  In order to facilitate vocalization I have taken the liberty of altering it as above. H. T. B.

Figure 5.2 *Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child* by Harry T. Burleigh

ways\_ from home\_ a long ways\_ from

*rit.*

This system of music features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with the lyrics "ways\_ from home\_ a long ways\_ from". The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. A *rit.* (ritardando) marking is placed above the final measure of the system.

home. A long ways\_ from home\_

*a tempo*

*a tempo*

This system continues the musical score. The vocal line has the lyrics "home. A long ways\_ from home\_". The piano accompaniment continues with chords and a bass line. A *a tempo* marking is placed above the first measure, and another *a tempo* marking is placed below the first measure of the piano part.

a long ways\_ from home\_

This system concludes the musical score. The vocal line has the lyrics "a long ways\_ from home\_". The piano accompaniment continues with chords and a bass line.

Figure 5.2 *Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child*, pg. 2

## Use of Harmony and Melodic Embellishments

As quoted earlier from John Work III, the use of harmony in arrangements of Spirituals, is to the personal taste and skill of the arranger. The challenge in adapting Spirituals for instruments lies in creating variation while preserving the melodic integrity of the piece. The melodies for many of the Spirituals are based on the major pentatonic scale. The major pentatonic scale includes scale degrees: 1-2-3-5-6. For example, in the key of F, the notes would include: F-G-A-C-D. In most cases, there is no use of a leading tone except in minor keys as found in the Spiritual *Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child* listed above. The use of traditional harmony works well with major keys and the major pentatonic scale. The arranger today has more harmonic possibilities available by using harmonic substitutions or extended chords. African American Spirituals sung in minor keys naturally lend themselves to a wider palate of harmonic colors and the use of modes.

Many of the spirituals have several stanzas. It is much easier for a vocalist to sing a repetitive melody than an instrumentalist. The fact the words change for the vocalist creates a difference in performance for both the performer and listener. The listener's mind is able to relate to the words being sung unlike listening to a musician. I believe it is acceptable practice to transcribe the original melodies with simple harmonies or to transcribe from preservers of the art song adaptation. In my own practice, I have sought to create melodic variations by embellishing the melody and at times varying the accompaniment. If the melody contains sustained tones, I like to use the accompaniment to create a rhythmic momentum.

Although I use melodic embellishments, I do not believe they should ever detract from the meaning of the text. Rendering the proper expression of the text should be the priority of the arranger and performer. For each of my current arrangements, I always start with listening to a

vocal performance of both classical and vernacular settings. It is important to base our instrumental adaptations on the vocal tradition. Spirituals started as an oral folk tradition and were largely preserved and popularized by the art song adaptation. Having a vocal reference will help in interpreting the melody, rhythm, and musical expression. Most of my arrangements were inspired by the art song adaptation but I have also used Mahalia Jackson as a listening reference. Her interpretation of rhythm, vocal inflections, expression, and musicality are certainly a model for any performer of sacred and popular music. I have discussed important points of consideration for arranging and performing and will now provide examples using a few of my personal arrangements.

## Examples of Scores

### *Steal Away:*

For vocal interpretation, I referenced the album *Great Day* by Indra Thomas. This piece is more of a transcription from J. Rosamond Johnson's arrangement for Roland Hayes with edits and embellishments adapted for the trombone. This work can also be performed on the euphonium.

Original Score with text and accompaniment:

Arranged by J. Rosamond Johnson To Roland Hayes

*Very slowly (With expression)* *mf*

Steal a-way, steal a-way,

steal a-way to Je - sus! Steal a - way,

steal a - way home, I aint got long to stay here.

*pp* *rit.*

Figure 5.3 *Steal Away* by J. Rosamond Johnson

An important difference with this piece would be increasing the tempo for the instrumentalist. Most vocalists perform this around 50bpm. It is suitable to perform this at such a slow tempo with the melodic sustains for voice because of the words, but I think that performing this at such a slow tempo for instrumentalists would cause the listener to lose interest and it would be more tiresome for a brass player. For the main melody, I suggest a tempo of 60bpm. The focus for this example is mm. 3-10 where the first A section is played.

J. Rosamond Johnson  
S. Ball

♩ = 60

The musical score is arranged for Trombone and Piano. It begins with a tempo marking of ♩ = 60. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The score is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 3-4) shows the Trombone part with a melodic line and the Piano part with chords. The second system (measures 5-8) continues the Trombone melody with a *dim.* marking and the Piano accompaniment. The third system (measures 9-10) features a *f* dynamic and a *con moto* instruction, with the Trombone part including some slurs and the Piano part continuing its accompaniment.

Figure 5.4 *Steal Away* arranged for Trombone and Piano by Shekinah Ball

Example of Melodic Embellishment:

After the second B section, in keeping with the form of the song, the melody should be played again. Instead of voicing it in the trombone part, I voiced it in the piano accompaniment. The trombone at this point is imitating a song leader and is used to also create call and response in the music.

The image displays a musical score for two instruments: Trombone (Tbn.) and Piano (Pno.). The score is divided into two systems, each starting at measure 32 and 37 respectively. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. In the first system (measures 32-36), the Trombone part is marked 'straight mute' and the Piano part is marked 'mf'. The Trombone part features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the Piano part provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving bass lines. In the second system (measures 37-40), the Trombone part is marked 'open' and the Piano part features a triplet in the right hand. The Trombone part continues with a melodic line, and the Piano part provides a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and moving bass lines.

Figure 5.5 *Steal Away*, mm. 32-40 by Shekinah Ball

At measure 40, the trombone takes the melody from the piano to close the song. The closing melody, is not the same as the opening melody but slightly embellished with different notes and rhythms. The examined embellishments do not take away from the melody but were created with the intent to add more personal expression and feeling. The final example of melodic embellishment is pictured below:

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Steal Away" by Shekinah Ball, covering measures 41 through 49. The score is arranged in two systems, each featuring a Trombone (Tbn.) part and a Piano (Pno.) part. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The first system begins at measure 41. The Trombone part starts with a melodic line that includes a trill (marked with a double bar over the notes) and a crescendo (cresc.) marking. The Piano part provides harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines in both hands. The second system begins at measure 45. The Trombone part features a dynamic marking of *ff* (fortissimo), followed by a *molto rall.* (molto rallentando) section with a triplet of notes, and then a *mf* (mezzo-forte) section. The Piano part continues with accompaniment, including a triplet in the bass line and a *rit.* (ritardando) marking at the end of the system.

Figure 5.6 *Steal Away*, mm. 46-49 by Shekinah Ball

*Give Me Jesus:*

The next piece we will look at was inspired by a recording of Jessye Norman with the Dalton Baldwin Ambrosian singers from her album *Spirituals*. It features Norman singing the solo part in a bel canto style with choral accompaniment. First, I will start with referencing the original score for solo voice and piano by Harry T. Burleigh. The following examples are to be used as a reference point for the melody.

**Give Me Jesus**

Negro Spiritual  
arranged by  
H. T. BURLEIGH

Andante

Voice

Piano

O — when I come to die, O

when I come to die, O — when I come to die, Give me Je —

The image shows a musical score for the piece 'Give Me Jesus'. It is arranged by Harry T. Burleigh and is a Negro Spiritual. The score is for voice and piano. The tempo is marked 'Andante'. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into three systems. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a piano introduction. The second system shows the first vocal line with the lyrics 'O — when I come to die, O'. The third system shows the second vocal line with the lyrics 'when I come to die, O — when I come to die, Give me Je —'. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and moving lines in both hands.

Figure 5.7 *Give Me Jesus* by Harry T. Burleigh

The image shows a musical score for the song "Give Me Jesus" by Harry T. Burleigh. It is arranged for voice and piano. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of two systems. The first system shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment for the first two lines of the chorus. The vocal line has lyrics: "sus. Give me Je - sus, Give me Je - sus, You may". The piano accompaniment features chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Dynamics include *mf*. The second system shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment for the next two lines of the chorus. The vocal line has lyrics: "have all dis worl' Give me Je - sus, Dark - mid-night was my". The piano accompaniment continues with chords and a bass line. Dynamics include *p*.

Figure 5.7 *Give Me Jesus* by Harry T. Burleigh

For this arrangement, I created my own piano part and included some contemporary voicings. I structured the chorus of this spiritual much like the reference recording. The piano is used to create a response to the trombone melody at its peak. This piece also has a longer piano introduction than the aforementioned. It starts with the piano playing the melody of the chorus section in the right hand with accompaniment in the left. The melody in the right hand is used to imitate the choir in Norman's recording. However, I changed some of the chords and rhythms. It is audibly noticeable at measure five.

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Give Me Jesus" by Shekinah Ball, covering measures 1 through 15. The score is written in 4/4 time and has a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). It consists of three systems of staves:

- System 1 (Measures 1-5):** Features a Piano part. The right hand has a melodic line starting with a "rubato" marking. The left hand provides harmonic accompaniment.
- System 2 (Measures 6-10):** Features a Trombone (Tbn.) part that is silent (indicated by a whole rest) and a Piano (Pno.) part. The Piano part includes "Xca" markings, likely indicating a specific performance technique or ornamentation.
- System 3 (Measures 11-15):** Features a Trombone (Tbn.) part that enters with a melody at measure 11, marked with Roman numerals (IV). The Piano part continues with accompaniment, marked with "espress. mp" (expressive mezzo-piano).

Figure 5.8 *Give Me Jesus*, mm. 1-15 by Shekinah Ball

The trombone comes in with the melody for the first verse at measure eleven. Beats 3&4 of 19 are pick-ups to the melody for the chorus. For each of my spirituals, as shown here, the melody is stated plainly before I add any embellishments.

2 Give Me Jesus

The image displays a musical score for the hymn "Give Me Jesus" by Shekinah Ball, specifically measures 16 through 27. The score is arranged for Trombone (Tbn.) and Piano (Pno.).

**System 1 (Measures 16-21):**

- Measures 16-17:** The Tbn. part begins with a melodic line marked with an accent (>) and a fermata. The Pno. part provides harmonic accompaniment.
- Measures 18-21:** The Tbn. part continues with a melodic line, marked with *dim.* (diminuendo) and *cresc.* (crescendo). The Pno. part continues with harmonic accompaniment.

**System 2 (Measures 22-27):**

- Measures 22-23:** The Tbn. part begins with a melodic line marked with an accent (>) and a fermata. The Pno. part provides harmonic accompaniment.
- Measures 24-27:** The Tbn. part continues with a melodic line, marked with *f* (forte) and *dim.* (diminuendo). The Pno. part continues with harmonic accompaniment.

Figure 5.9 *Give Me Jesus*, mm. 16-27 by Shekinah Ball

The next example from this arrangement will show how I embellished the trombone melody to create contrast from the opening statement. The pickup into measure 32 was cut off but you are still able to see the melody. Measures 32 to beat 1 of measure 39 are an embellished version of the first verse or A section. Measures 39-44 contain most of the second chorus with embellishments added. The last two measures of the phrase are also cut off.

32

Tbn.

Pno.

36

Tbn.

Pno.

41

Tbn.

Pno.

*poco*

*f*

*appassionato*

IV IV IV IV

Figure 5.10 *Give Me Jesus*, mm. 32-45 by Shekinah Ball

*Deep River:*

I will end my score comparisons with the first solo art song spiritual which was Harry T. Burleigh's *Deep River*. I found that there are different recordings that exist of this specific arrangement. Some vocalists sing the part *loco* and others such as Indra Day add an extra A or B section before bringing the piece to a close. I referenced two singers for interpretation and stylistic interpretations: Marian Anderson and Indra Day. First, I will provide an example of the opening melody from the original score.

Respectfully dedicated to Miss Mary Jordan

11

## Deep River

Old Negro melody  
Arranged by  
H. T. BURLEIGH

Lento

Voice

Piano

Deep riv - er, my

home is o - ver Jor - dan, Deep

riv - er, Lord, I want to cross o - ver in - to camp-ground.

Figure 5.11 *Deep River* by Harry T. Burleigh

To honor the historical significance of this song, I did not add any embellishments to the melody. This song in particular also naturally lends itself to not needing any tampering. The original melody and accompaniment carry an unexplainable nostalgia and have a song-like quality that works well for lower brass. I originally wrote this for trombone in the key of F, but it also works well on euphonium. I have also transcribed this work for solo tuba but changed the key to Ab major. Since I decided not to add any embellishments to the melody, I had to think of a way to create contrast within this piece. To do this, the opening melody starts an octave lower and is then written an octave above. Below is an example of the contrast created through playing the melody in two different octaves:

Negro Spiritual

Harry T. Burleigh  
Shekinah Ball

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Deep River" by Shekinah Ball, arranged by Harry T. Burleigh. The score is presented in three systems, each with a Trombone (Tbn.) part and a Piano (Pno.) part. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/D minor) and the time signature is 4/4. The first system shows the Trombone part starting with a melodic line marked *mf* and the Piano part with a rhythmic accompaniment marked *mp*. The second system continues the Trombone melody and the Piano accompaniment, with the Trombone part marked *mf*. The third system shows the Trombone part with a melodic line and the Piano part with a rhythmic accompaniment. The score includes measure numbers 6, 12, and 18.

Figure 5.12 *Deep River* by Shekinah Ball

This arrangement is primarily a transcription, but most of my editing was on the accompaniment for this song. In the example below you will see that the piano introduction is the same as the original- anyone who hears the first two measures and knows this piece will automatically register that they are hearing Burleigh's *Deep River*. I added an "A" section in the beginning after the opening trombone melody to be played by the piano. This is not in the original score but was written by me. You can see the new addition for piano below in measures 19-26.

The image displays a musical score for the piece 'Deep River'. It consists of three systems of music, each with a Trombone (Tbn.) part and a Piano (Pno.) part. The first system, starting at measure 17, shows the Tbn. part with a fingering of 'IV' and the Pno. part. The second system, starting at measure 22, is marked 'poco rall.' and shows the Tbn. part with rests and the Pno. part. The third system, starting at measure 27, is marked 'mp' and shows the Tbn. part with a fingering of 'IV' and the Pno. part.

Figure 5.13 *Deep River*, added piano melody by Shekinah Ball

Listed above are a few of my personal arrangements for lower brass. All of my arrangements for trombone can be played on euphonium and adapted for tuba. I do have one work specifically written for euphonium that was also adapted for tuba called *Fix Me Jesus* which was inspired by the vocal performance of Kathleen Battle. The other arrangements were written primarily for trombone first. A key part of my process is analyzing scores and primarily listening to vocalists. My overall approach is similar to Johannes Rochut's approach with transcribing vocalises for trombone that were and still are used by euphonium students and

adapted for tuba. The only difference is that I am using a body of music that lends itself to a wide variety of expressions and would require stylistic versatility from the performer. All spirituals are not the same and neither are my arrangements of them. I have seven with one commissioned work. The melodic integrity of each piece has been preserved but I do experiment with harmony and rhythm. The rhythmic feel is not always the same for each spiritual but most contain elements of syncopation. I truly believe that there is much to learn and explore with Spirituals. This is simply a starting point.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Conclusion

The African American Spiritual uniquely traces the complex and tragic history of African Americans in this country. It is also a foundational block for what later became American Popular Music. Most of the music we are able to enjoy in America today would not be possible if the African American spiritual was not created and preserved. Although these songs were created in inhumane conditions, they spoke and continue to speak to all humanity. Many intellectuals and artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century believed this to be true. Since the African American spiritual's development into classical music in 1916 with Burleigh's *Deep River*, they have yet to become a part of standard repertoire for low brass musicians. Because this is true, I found it necessary to concisely detail the history and major developments of this genre as I seek to integrate the latest evolution into solo low brass repertoire. Currently, a limited number of adaptations exist for solo low brass performance. I have created my own arrangements in an effort to increase this number. As I seek to include the African American Spiritual into solo low brass repertoire, It is my deepest hope that the significance of its history not lost.

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