



# The Art of the Negro Spiritual

Voice Recital  
Part One

**Randye Jones, Soprano**  
**Francis Conlon, Piano**

**June 23, 2002**  
**4:00 P.M.**

**Ascension Lutheran Church**  
**Landover Hills, Maryland**



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### Program

#### I

Give Me Jesus	Hall Johnson (1888-1970)
Deep River	Harry T. Burleigh (1866-1949)
'Roun' About de Mountain	Roland Hayes (1887-1977)
Stan' Still Jordan	Burleigh Johnson
Witness	

#### II

My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord	Florence Price (1888-1953)
Roll, Jerd'n, Roll	Johnson
Is There Anybody Here That Loves My Jesus	Undine Smith Moore (1904-1989)
I'm Goin' To Thank God	Robert Nathaniel Dett (1882-1943)
Ride On, Jesus	Dett

**Intermission**

### III

<i>Cantata</i>	John Carter (1932-1981?)
Prelude	
Rondo	
Recitative	
Air	
Toccata	

### IV

Jesus, Lay Your Head in the Window	Hale Smith (b. 1925)
Calvary	Betty Jackson King (1928-1994)
This Little Light of Mine	Smith
City Called Heaven	Edward Boatner (1897-1981)
Oh, What a Beautiful City!	Boatner

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*This recital is being recorded for commercial production. During the third section, please reserve your applause until the end of the work.*

*You are cordially invited to a reception to follow in the Narthex.*

*The second recital of The Art of the Negro Spiritual project is scheduled for Thursday, November 14, 2002, at Western Presbyterian Church, 2401 Virginia Avenue, NW, Washington, DC. It will be sponsored by the Friends of the Library, the Gelman Library System of the George Washington University. Proceeds will benefit both The Art of the Negro Spiritual and Gelman's Africana Research Center.*

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## From Cotton Field to Concert Hall,... The Art of the Negro Spiritual

Negro Spirituals are songs created by the Africans who were captured and brought to the United States to be sold into slavery. This stolen race was deprived of their languages, their families, and their cultures; yet, their masters could not take away their music.

These slaves and their descendents embraced the religion of their masters, Christianity. Their songs, which were to become known as spirituals, reflected their need to express their new faith. The songs were also used to communicate with one another without the knowledge of their masters. This was particularly the case when a slave was planning to escape bondage and to seek freedom via the Underground Railroad.

Spirituals were created on the spur-of-the-moment, unaccompanied by any instruments. They were passed orally from person to person and were embellished as suited the singer(s). There is record of approximately 6,000 spirituals; however, the oral tradition of the slaves' ancestors—and the prohibition against slaves learning to read or write—meant that many were lost.

With the conclusion of the American Civil War in 1865 and the coming of freedom, most former slaves distanced themselves from the music of their captivity. The spiritual seemed destined to be relegated to a handful of historical accounts by whites who had attempted to notate the songs they heard.

Then, a group of students from newly founded Fisk University of Nashville, Tennessee, began to tour in an effort to raise money for the financially strapped school. The Fisk Jubilee Singers not only carried spirituals to parts of the United States that had never heard Negro folk songs before, the musically trained chorus

performed before royalty during their tour of Europe. The success of the Fisk Jubilee Singers encouraged other Black colleges to form touring groups. Professional "jubilee singers" also toured successfully around the world. Several collections of "plantation songs" were published to meet the public demand.

Then, in 1916, singer and composer Harry T. Burleigh published a setting of the Negro spiritual, "Deep River." By that point in his career, he had written a few vocal and instrumental works based on the plantation melodies he had learned as a child. However, his setting of "Deep River" is considered to be the first work of its kind to be written in art song form specifically for performance by a trained singer.

"Deep River," and other spirituals settings, became very popular with concert performers and recording artists, both black and white. It was soon normal for recitals to end with a group of spirituals. Musicians such as Roland Hayes and Marian Anderson made these songs a part of their repertoires. In 1925, Paul Robeson is credited as being the first to give a solo vocal recital of all Negro spirituals and worksongs at the Greenwich Village Theatre, New York, New York.

Over the years, composers published settings of Negro spirituals specifically for performance on the concert stage, and singers, such as Leontyne Price, Jessye Norman, and Kathleen Battle, have also successfully recorded them for commercial release.

These art songs challenge both the vocalist and the accompanist to display their technical skills and musicality. More importantly, the songs demand that both tap into the deep well-spring of feelings that inspired those slaves of ages past.

-- R. Jones

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## The Composers

**Francis Hall Johnson** was born in Athens, Georgia, on March 12, 1888, and died April 30, 1970, in New York, New York. Johnson began his musical professional career as a violinist, but in time, his interest turned to choral music. He wrote numerous works for choir as well as spiritual settings for solo voice and piano, including "Give Me Jesus," "Roll, Jerd'n, Roll," and "Witness," which was published in 1940.

**Henry Thacker Burleigh** was born on December 2, 1866, in Erie, Pennsylvania, and he died on September 12, 1949, in Stamford, Connecticut. By 1916, Burleigh had published several works, mostly art songs. He also wrote a few vocal and instrumental works based on the plantation melodies he had learned as a child. However, his 1916 setting of the spiritual, "Deep River," is considered the first work of that genre to be written in art song form specifically for performance by a trained singer. "Stan' Still Jordan" was published in 1926 and dedicated to singer/composer Roland Hayes.

**Roland Hayes** was born on June 3, 1887, in Curryville, Georgia. He died on January 1, 1977, in Boston, Massachusetts. Hayes was the first African American to establish an international career as a classically trained vocalist, becoming one of the highest paid musicians of his era. He was also a composer of numerous spiritual art songs. His setting of "Roun' About the Mountain" was derived from what Hayes described as an "Aframerican Tennessee folk song."

**Florence Beatrice Smith Price** was born on April 9, 1888, in Little Rock, Arkansas, and she died on June 3, 1953, in Chicago, Illinois. Music was an important part of her life from an early age, as evidenced by her public performance at the age of four. Price was a teacher and

composer, especially of works for the piano. As with many of her compositions, she drew upon her exposure to Negro folk music for her setting of “My Soul’s Been Anchored in the Lord.”

**Undine Smith Moore** was born in Jarrett, Virginia, on August 25, 1905, and died in Petersburg, Virginia, on February 6, 1989. Moore’s career as an educator included a 45-year tenure at Virginia State College. She shared her interest in the music of Black America through workshops and lectures across the United States. She composed choral works, chamber and orchestral music, and solo works for the voice and for various solo instruments.

**Robert Nathaniel Dett** was born in Drummondville, Ontario, Canada, on October 11, 1882, and died in Battle Creek, Michigan, on October 2, 1943. He wrote “I’m Goin’ to Thank God” and “Ride On, Jesus” especially for soprano Dorothy Maynor. The works, for voice and piano, were published in 1940, during his tenure as choral director at Bennett College, Greensboro, North Carolina.

**John Carter** was born in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1932. It is assumed that he is no longer living; however the reported year, 1981, is uncertain. Carter served as composer-in-residence with the National Symphony Orchestra (Washington, DC) in 1968 and was an instructor at Federal City College, Washington, in the 1970’s. He published *Cantata* in 1964. After a short piano prelude, he used four Negro spirituals—“Peter Go Ring Dem Bells,” “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child,” “Let Us Break Bread Together,” and “Ride On, King Jesus”—as melodic source material for the individual sections of the work.

**Hale Smith** was born in Cleveland, Ohio, on June 29, 1925. His professional career included serving as an editor and music consultant for various music publishing houses and teaching at Long Island University and the

University of Connecticut, Storrs. He has composed numerous orchestral and chamber works, as well as several choral and solo vocal pieces. His settings of “Jesus, Lay Your Head in the Window” and “This Little Light of Mine” were written in 1986 and published by his Halsco publishing company.

**Betty Lou Jackson King** was born on February 17, 1928, in Chicago, Illinois; she died in Wildwood, New Jersey, on June 1, 1994. After completing her education in music composition, she developed a career as an educator, church musician, lecturer, choral director, composer, and music publisher.

**Edward Hammond Boatner** was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, on November 13, 1898, and died in New York, New York, on June 16, 1981. Boatner had become known as a successful singer, composer and educator. He was instructor at his own academy, the Edward Boatner Studio, when he composed “Oh, What A Beautiful City” in 1940. It, and “City Called Heaven,” were two of over 200 spirituals he set for solo voice and piano.



## The Performers

**Randy Jones** received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Music Education from Bennett College, Greensboro, North Carolina, where she was named to "Who's Who Among Students in American Colleges and Universities." She completed her Master of Music degree in Vocal Performance from Florida State University, Tallahassee, where she studied with Barbara Ford and Enrico Di Giuseppe. She served as a music cataloger for the Florida State University Libraries before accepting a library manager position at the George Washington University, Washington, D.C. Ms. Jones continues to perform in the D.C. metro area. In addition to her ongoing research on "The Art of the Negro Spiritual," she maintains the much-cited Web site, Afrocentric Voices in "Classical" Music.

**Francis Conlon** received both his Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees from the Catholic University of America. He has played in New York City at Carnegie Recital Hall, and in Washington at such notable sites as the Kennedy Center, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Library of Congress. He has performed with several orchestras, including the Washington Chamber Orchestra, the Montreal Chamber Orchestra, and the Washington Sinfonia. His awards include the National Society of Arts and Letters competition and the Jordan Awards Contest here in Washington. He has served as official accompanist for the National Symphony Young Soloist Competition, the National Opera Institute Auditions, and the National Federation of Music Clubs Contest. His teaching duties include his current position on the music faculty of the George Washington University.



**The Art of the Negro Spiritual** is a research project that will look into the rich historical and performance aspects of the Negro Spiritual as set into art song form. The anticipated results will be published as a book with accompanying two-volume recording of selected spirituals performed by the researcher, soprano Randy Jones.

For more information about the project, visit the Web site at <http://www.artofthenegrospiritual.com>.

