

The Gelman Library System of
The George Washington University

Presents

THE ART OF THE NEGRO SPIRITUAL

Vocal Recital

Randye Jones, soprano
Francis Conlon, piano

November 14, 2002
6:00 P.M.

Western Presbyterian Church
Washington, District of Columbia

Benefiting



The Africana Research Center
And
The Art of the Negro Spiritual
Research Project

We would like to thank

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The Gelman Library System of The George Washington
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THE GEORGE
WASHINGTON
UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON DC

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Introduction

Francine I. Henderson, Curator
Africana Research Center

Program

I

It's Me, O Lord	Betty Jackson King (1928-1994)
Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel?	John Rosamond Johnson (1873-1954)
Deep River	Harry T. Burleigh (1866-1949)
Done Made My Vow	Edward Boatner (1898-1981)
Witness	Hall Johnson (1888-1970)

II

Cantata

Prelude
Rondo
Recitative
Air
Toccata

John Carter
(1932-1981?)

Intermission

III

Free At Last	Julia Perry (1924-1979)
Jesus, Lay Your Head in the Window	Hale Smith (b. 1925)
Lord, I Just Can't Keep from Cryin' from <i>Five Creek-Freedman Spirituals</i>	Margaret Bonds (1913-1972)
Steal Away	Maria Thompson Corley (b. 1966)
Great Day	Thomas Kerr, Jr. (1915-1988)

IV

Come Down Angels	Undine Smith Moore (1904-1989)
City Called Heaven	Boatner
Ev'ry Time I Feel the Spirit	William Grant Still (1895-1978)
Roun' About de Mountain	Roland Hayes (1887-1977)
Ride On, Jesus	Robert Nathaniel Dett (1882-1943)

During the second section, please reserve your applause until the end of the last song in that section.

This evening's program is sponsored by the Friends of the GW University Libraries and The Gelman Library System of The George Washington University. Proceeds will benefit both Gelman's Africana Research Center and The Art of the Negro Spiritual research project.

*This recital is the second of two programs being recorded for commercial production. The compact disc, **The Art of the Negro Spiritual**, is scheduled for release in February, 2003. For more information about the project, please visit www.ahhjay.com or www.artofthenegrospiritual.com.*

You are cordially invited to a reception to follow the recital.

Scores Used

Boatner, Edward. *The Story of the Spirituals: 30 Spirituals and Their Origins*. Melville, NY: Belwin-Mills, 1973.

Burleigh, Harry T. *The Spirituals of Harry T. Burleigh: High Voice*. Melville, NY: Belwin-Mills, 1984.

Carter, John. *Cantata: for Voice and Piano*. New York: Southern Music Pub., 1964.

Corley, Maria Thompson. "Steal Away." Score (photocopy). 1992.

Dett, R. Nathaniel. *Ride On, Jesus: Negro Spiritual*. Glen Rock, NJ: J. Fischer & Bro., 1940.

Hayes, Roland. *My Favorite Spirituals: 30 Songs for Voice and Piano*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2001, 1948.

Johnson, Hall. *Witness: Negro Spiritual*, sheet music ed. New York: Carl Fischer, 1940.

Johnson, J Rosamond, and Lawrence Brown. *The Books of American Negro Spirituals: Including The Book of American Negro Spirituals and The Second Book of Negro Spirituals*, ed. James Weldon Johnson. New York: DaCapo, 1977.

Patterson, Willis, comp. *The New Negro Spiritual*. Ann Arbor, MI: By the compiler, 608 E. William, 2002.

Still, William Grant. *"Ev'ry Time I Feel the Spirit*. New York: Galaxy Music Corp., 1948.

Taylor, Vivian, ed. *Art Songs and Spirituals by African-American Women Composers*. Bryn Mawr, PA: Hildegard Publishing, 1995.

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 Christianity, the religion of their masters. Their songs, which were to become known as spirituals, reflected their need to express their new faith:

My people told stories, from Genesis to Revelation, with God's faithful as the main characters. They knew about Adam and Eve in the Garden, about Moses and the Red Sea. They sang of the Hebrew children and Joshua at the battle of Jericho. They could tell you about Mary, Jesus, God, and the Devil. If you stood around long enough, you'd hear a song about the blind man seeing, God troubling the water, Ezekiel seeing a wheel, Jesus being crucified and raised from the dead. If slaves couldn't read the Bible, they would memorize Biblical stories they heard and translate them into songs.¹

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 usually created on the spur-of-the-moment, unaccompanied by any other instrument than the stamping feet of their creators. These songs were passed orally from person to person and were embellished as suited the singers. 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 the actual number is unknown.

With the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and the conclusion of the American Civil War in 1865, 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 tours of Europe in the 1870's. 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.

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 spiritual settings became very popular with concert performers and recording artists, both black and white. It was soon common 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. Paul Robeson is credited as being the first to give a solo vocal recital of all Negro spirituals and worksongs in 1925 at the Greenwich Village Theatre, New York, New York.

Over the years, composers have published numerous settings of Negro spirituals specifically for performance on the concert stage, and singers, such as Leontyne Price, Jessye Norman, Kathleen Battle, and Simon Estes, 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 musicians tap into the deep well-spring of emotions that inspired those slaves of ages past. As noted by composer Hall Johnson:

True enough, this music was transmitted to us through humble channels, but its source is that of all great art everywhere—the unquenchable, divinely human longing for a perfect realization of life. It traverses every shade of emotion without spilling over in any direction. Its most tragic utterances are without pessimism, and its lightest, brightest moments have nothing to do with frivolity. In its darkest expressions there is always a hope, and in its gayest measures a constant reminder. Born out of the heart-cries of a captive people who still did not forget how to laugh, this music covers an amazing range of mood. Nevertheless, it is *always* serious music and should be performed seriously, in the spirit of its original conception.²

Soprano Ruby Elzy simply expressed the art of singing spirituals by stating, "the singer who strives to sing the spirituals without the divine spirit will be like the man who plants pebbles and expects them to grow into lilies."³

¹Velma Maia Thomas. *No Man Can Hinder Me: The Journey from Slavery to Emancipation through Song* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2001), 14.

²Hall Johnson. *Thirty Spirituals: Arranged for Voice and Piano*. (New York: G. Schirmer; dist., Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 1949), [5].

³Ruby Elzy. "The Spirit of the Spirituals: Religion and Music, a Solution of the Race Problem," *Etude* 61, no.8 (August, 1943): 495-496.

The Composers

Betty Lou Jackson King (Born, 17 February 1928, in Chicago, Illinois; died, Wildwood, New Jersey, 1 June 1994). King received her B.A. in piano and masters in music composition from the Chicago Musical College of Roosevelt University. She established a career as an educator, church musician, lecturer, choral director, composer, and music publisher.

John Rosamond Johnson (Born, 11 August 1873, Jacksonville, Florida; died, New York, New York, 11 November 1954). This composer, singer, educator and conductor studied voice and piano at the New England Conservatory. He partnered with his brother, James Weldon Johnson, to become successful writers and performers in vaudeville and musical theatre. The pair also collaborated on the creation of the anthem, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," and on two of J. Rosamond Johnson's African American music anthologies. "Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel?" appeared in *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, first published in 1925.

Harry Thacker Burleigh (Born, 2 December 1866, Erie, Pennsylvania; died 12 September 1949, Stamford, Connecticut). Burleigh attended the National Conservatory of Music, where he introduced the plantation songs he had learned from his grandfather to composer Antonin Dvořák. During his career, he was baritone soloist at St. George's Episcopal and Temple Emanu-El (New York), editor for G. Ricordi, lecturer, and a charter member of the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP). His compositions included over 200 songs. Among them is the setting of the spiritual, "Deep River," which is considered the first work of that genre to be written in art song form specifically for performance by a trained singer.

Edward Hammond Boatner (Born, 13 November 1898, New Orleans, Louisiana; died, New York, New York, 16 June 1981). Boatner became known as a successful singer, composer and educator. He was instructor at his own academy, the Edward Boatner Studio. "City Called Heaven" was one of over 200 spirituals he set for solo voice and piano.

Francis Hall Johnson (Born, Athens, Georgia, 12 March 1888; died 30 April 1970, New York, New York). Johnson received his bachelor's degree from University of Pennsylvania, with additional study at the Juilliard School and the University of Southern California. He began his professional career as a violinist, but in time, his interest turned to choral music. His Hall Johnson Choir performed in the films *The Green Pastures* and *Lost Horizon*. He wrote numerous works for choir as well as spiritual settings for solo voice and piano, including "Witness," which was published in 1940.

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.

Julia Perry (Born, 25 March 1924, Lexington, Kentucky; died, Akron, Ohio, 24 April 1979). Perry attended Westminster Choir College, where she studied voice, piano, drama, and conducting, and received her bachelor's and master's degrees. She gained international acclaim for her *Stabat Mater* for contralto and string orchestra. Her compositions included over 50 works for a variety of solo instruments and large and small ensembles, as well as solo vocal and choral works. "Free at Last" was written in 1950 for high voice and piano.

Hale Smith (Born, Cleveland, Ohio, 29 June 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 setting of "Jesus, Lay Your Head in the Window" was written in 1986 and published by his Halsco publishing company.

Margaret Bonds (Born, 3 March 1913, Chicago, Illinois; died, Los Angeles, California, 26 April 1972). Bonds received her bachelor's and master's degrees in music from Northwestern University, with additional study at the Juilliard School. The pianist was the first African American to perform with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. An educator and composer, Bonds wrote works for the theater, ballet, orchestra, and piano, but the majority were art and popular songs. Her best known is the setting of the spiritual, "He's Got the Whole World in His Hand", commissioned by Leontyne Price in 1963. Bonds composed "Lord, I Just Can't Keep from Cryin'," from her *Five Creek-Freedman Spirituals*, in 1946.

Maria Thompson Corley (Born, Jamaica, 1966). Corley's undergraduate work was completed at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, and she received both masters and doctorate degrees in piano performance from the Juilliard School. She is an author, composer and arranger of music for both solo voice and chorus, as well as an educator. Her first CD, a collaboration with tenor Darryl Taylor, was released internationally on the Naxos label this summer. She noted that for her setting of "Steal Away," "...the trills at the beginning are to create an aura of expectancy and mystery--the feelings of the slave who is going to steal away before the departure. It also must be quiet, because no one can know. Then, the chromaticism in the piano is the 'sneakiness' needed to accomplish the objective of leaving undetected...."

Thomas Kerr, Jr. (Born, Baltimore, Maryland, 3 January 1915; died, Washington, DC, 26 August 1988). Kerr attended the Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester, New York, where he received the Bachelor of Music degree. He joined the faculty at Howard University, Washington, DC, in 1943 and served for 35 years as a piano and composition instructor and organist. He also toured extensively as a concert pianist. Kerr composed primarily for the organ; however, he also wrote piano, choral, and solo vocal works. He composed "Great Day" in September 1966.

Undine Smith Moore (Born Jarrett, Virginia, 25 August, 1904; died, Petersburg, Virginia, 6 February, 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.

William Grant Still (Born Woodville, Mississippi, 11 May, 1895; died, Los Angeles, California, 3 December, 1978). Known as the "Dean of Black Music," Still studied at Wilberforce University and Oberlin College and received a Guggenheim Fellowship. His *Afro-American Symphony* was the first by an African American composer to be performed by a major orchestra. While he wrote for the operatic stage and for television, as well as vocal and instrumental works for the concert stage, he set few spirituals as art songs. He preferred, instead, to use blues elements for his inspiration. However, he did set "Ev'ry Time I Feel the Spirit" for voice and piano in 1930.

Roland Hayes (Born 3 June, 1887, Curryville, Georgia; died, Boston, Massachusetts, 1 January, 1977). 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 "African American Tennessee folk song."

Robert Nathaniel Dett (Born Drummondsville, Ontario, Canada, 11 October, 1882; died, Battle Creek, Michigan, 2 October, 1943). He attended Oberlin College Conservatory, becoming the first of African descent to receive a bachelor's degree there, and studied at several other prestigious schools in the U.S. and Europe before earning his Master of Music from Eastman School of Music. A choral director and educator, Dett also composed approximately 100 works for piano, chorus, and solo voice. He wrote "Ride On, Jesus" especially for soprano Dorothy Maynor in 1940, during his tenure as choral director at Bennett College, Greensboro, North Carolina.

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. Ms. Jones continues to perform in the D.C. metro area. She is currently studying with Millicent Scarlett at The George Washington University. 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. Her professional affiliations include: the National Association of Negro Musicians, the Recording Academy, and the Washington Area Music Association.

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 Africana Research Center (ARC)

University Librarian Jack Siggins and Africana Curator Francine I. Henderson are leading a major initiative to develop an Africana Research Center (ARC) at The George Washington University in Washington, D.C. The Center acquires, preserves, and makes accessible resources supporting Africana study and research.

Building on a long history of collecting resources about Washington, DC, the Library is creating the Africana Research Center to support research by all scholars interested in the African American experience here. The Center is a focal point for collection development and management, reference services, outreach, fundraising and donor relations. The Center's resources, facilities, programs and exhibits serve the University's growing Africana Program as well as the needs of others researching and documenting African American history in the nation's capital and elsewhere.

For more information about ARC, visit the Web site at <http://www.gwu.edu/gelman/spec/arc>.

The Art of the Negro Spiritual

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 goal of the project is to develop a resource that will be useful to the performer, teacher, accompanist, and historian of Afrocentric music.

The anticipated results will be published as a book with accompanying recording of selected spirituals performed by the researcher, soprano Randy Jones.

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

Further Reading

Cruz, Jon. *Culture on the Margins: The Black Spiritual and the Rise of American Cultural Interpretation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Cruz explores how 19th-Century White Americans became interested in the Negro Spirituals, which they had previously considered the meaningless noise of slaves. He defines this phenomenon as ethnosympathy: the mainstream American's interest in the minority cultures.

Epstein, Dena J. *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977.

Epstein debunks the myth that Africans lost all their cultural ties to their homeland by showing how their musical traditions survived the Transatlantic middle passage and continued in full force in the Americas. Her detailed history charts the evolution of African American music from the 1600s to the Civil War.

Garrett, Romeo B. "African Survivals in American Culture." *Journal of Negro History* 51 (October 1966): 239-245.

Garrett's article looks at the words, music, stories and foods, which descend from the African continent, that were spread and adapted in the Africana Diaspora.

Jones, Arthur C. *Wade in the Water: The Wisdom of the Spirituals*. New York: Orbis, 1999.

Jones sees spirituals as an embodiment of the rich tradition of values concerning human relationships, community, and hope.

Keck, George R. and Sherrill V. Martin, ed. *Feel the Spirit: Studies in Nineteenth-Century Afro-American Music*. Contributions in Afro-American and African Studies, no. 119. New York: Greenwood Press, 1988.

(continued, back cover)

Further Reading

(Continued from inside back cover)

The result of two Harvard University seminars on 19th-Century African American music, this compilation brings together lectures by 11 small American college and university faculty members on the subject.

Lawrence-McIntyre, Charshee Charlotte. "The Double Earnings of the Spirituals." *Journal of Black Studies* 17 (June 1987): 379-401.

This article argues that what the slave master heard in spirituals was not the message that his slaves were transmitting, but rather their views of religion or freedom.

Lovell, John. *Black Song: the Forge and the Flame: the Story of How the Afro-American Spiritual Was Hammered Out*. New York: Macmillan, 1972.

Lovell looks at the spiritual from a historical, social and cultural context. He also includes a literary analysis of selected lyrics.

Perry, James A. "African Roots of African-American Culture." *Black Collegian* 29 (October 1998): 145-146.

Perry's article analyzes the African Roots of African American cultural forms such as music and dance.

Thomas, Velma Maia. *No Man Can Hinder Me: The Journey from Slavery to Emancipation through Song*. New York: Crown, 2001.

Thomas' colorful book, with a variety of graphics, traces the spiritual from its arrival in America, through its use as codes for slave escape and secret communication, to its role after Emancipation.

-- Cipperly Good