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A Spiritual Journey:

Bridging Blackness and Whiteness through Song

A supporting document submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Musical Arts
in Music

by

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June 2026

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A Spiritual Journey:
Bridging Blackness and Whiteness through Song

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June 2026

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ABSTRACT

A Spiritual Journey: Bridging Blackness and Whiteness through Song

by

Lorenzo Dewayne Johnson, Jr.

With the acceptance of Black art songs and spirituals in the Western Classical canon, published repertoire has become more readily available. However, today, Black repertoire is still neglected. There is an underlying fear of singing and performing Black art songs and spirituals. As it pertains to vocal technique, the technique of Black art music is equivalent to that of the classical technique. So, where does the fear manifest? Many non-Black singers fear the Black repertoire because of the social histories that surround the music; the fear of making a caricature out of the music; the fear of offending. It is first important to know and understand the history behind and the style within the repertoire, just as all classical musicians are challenged to learn that of Western Classical music. When we research and study repertoire as performers, we gain deeper understanding. We learn more about the composers and their experiences, including the histories surrounding them and their contemporaries. We find empathy for their experiences within ourselves, which allows us to present the repertoire with deeper emotion and connect with our audiences.

My overarching question regarding the lack of study of Black repertoire is *how can music scholars bridge the gap between Blackness and whiteness?* Historically, how and when did Black activists receive an empathetic listening ear from their white brethren? What is the bridge? The bridge to connect Blackness to whiteness is education. This document will serve as my effort to educate Western Classical singers about Black history, its role in the origins of Black music, the Black and white voices that championed Black music, why this knowledge is important for the purposes of Black song performance by singers of all races, and how this knowledge aids in sustaining the performance of African American art songs and Negro Spirituals.

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Preface

Being a young African American singer of Western classical repertoire, I have in recent years become more interested in the music compositions and arrangements of other Black voices in the Classical music industry. This repertoire includes African American art songs as well as Negro Spirituals. In my experience, thus far, I have found myself frustrated with the lack of literature and knowledge regarding the Black voice and its repertoire, more specifically addressing pedagogy regarding authentic approaches to the African American style that still maintains the Italianate *bel canto* technique of classical singing.

My study is not specific to African American singers like myself, but to singers of all races and historical backgrounds. My long-term goal is to assist in laying a blueprint, a style sheet, for Black and non-Black singers to feel more comfortable singing Black art music and spirituals. When is it okay to employ traditionally Black vocal techniques — sliding, scooping, bending the pitch, utilizing dialects? How much is too much? Is it ever okay to sacrifice *bel canto* technique for historical authenticity? If a sort of instruction manual of pedagogical technique existed like there is for Western Classical art music, non-Black singers and teachers would be less hesitant to utilize the repertoire.

Western Classical music schools were first established in the early sixteenth century. African American art songs and spirituals were accepted into the Western classical music canon only about one hundred years ago in the early twentieth century, about four hundred years later. This was during a time when Black people did not have the same freedoms and privileges as many social classes of White people. The privilege in this context is wealth, providing the ability to attend music schools and conservatories. This made it difficult for

Black people to become educated and achieve a higher social status, which would have given them a stage to authentically present their stories.

Songs present music on an elevated level because they utilize words, words that explicitly or figuratively communicate our emotions and experiences. The first serious music ensemble responsible for presenting the Black experience to diverse audiences through song and leading the establishment of Negro Spirituals as a Western Classical genre was the Fisk Jubilee Singers.¹ The Fisk Jubilee Singers was a choral group, founded in 1866 in Nashville, Tennessee. Throughout the 1870s, the group toured the northern United States and various European countries, including England, Scotland, Ireland, Holland, Switzerland, and Germany, singing hymns, parlor songs, and Negro spirituals. While the Fisk Jubilee Singers are central to the establishment and acceptance of the Negro spiritual as a classical genre, I do not discuss the group very much further because its medium was through choral music. There is much more scholarship about Negro Spirituals in choral repertoire than in solo art song. Therefore, my primary focus is the championship of the Negro Spiritual in solo repertoire, specifically.

Finally, throughout the document, I will reference various hymnals from which I picked the hymns that I discuss and analyze. The different hymnals were chosen to show that Negro Spirituals are commonly used across many different religious denominations. This shows how religion also serves as a bridge between Blackness and Whiteness.

¹ Kira Thurman, *Singing like Germans: Black Musicians in the Land of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2021), 64.

Introduction:

An Overview of the Vocal Technique and Style of Black Art Music

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An Overview of the Vocal Technique and Style of Black Art Music

With the arrival of the first slaves from the distant shores in Africa, a new style of music was imminently born in the United States called the “spiritual”. This music was shaped by the act of slavery as its characteristics reflected resentment to a quality of life. As the quality of life brought adverse moments on the plantation where many slaves were housed, the “spiritual” was instrumental in helping them to communicate. This communication was used in the form of music. The masters, the owners of the slaves, introduced them to the new religion of Euro-Christianity; it greatly influenced the creators of the spiritual songs. This music was instrumental in giving a history of events relating to their environment. The slaves composed their text from heroes found in the bible.²

Negro spirituals, work songs, and slave songs aided in the establishment of the Traditional Gospel vocal technique. The traditional gospel technique utilizes the same technical foundation established in Western Classical music. This technical correlation helped the genre of the Negro spiritual’s acceptance into the Western classical music canon. Aided by Western Classical stylistic traits, Negro spirituals incorporate what became stylistic traits of genres such as blues, jazz, rock, soul, and country.³ After the enslaved African Americans were introduced to Protestant, Euro-American hymns by their slave masters, they established a tradition to create songs that told stories about their living conditions through the Negro spiritual, with “endurance of trials of this life with the reward of life after death” as

² Marietta Miller, "A Qualitative Study of the American Black Spiritual and Gospel Music," Order No. 1412906, Morgan State University, 2003.
<https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/qualitative-study-american-black-spiritual-gospel/docview/249976747/se-2>.

³ Trineice Robinson-Martin, "Performance Styles and Musical Characteristics of Black Gospel Music," *Journal of Singing* 65, no. 5 (2009): 595-599.
<https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/performance-styles-musical-characteristics-black/docview/229057392/se-2>.

the dominant theme.⁴ This led to the alteration of common stylistic elements like text, melody, rhythm and form.

The traditional gospel style features syncopated rhythms and altered tempos, which bring an expressive quality to the music. Basic stylistic traits include ornamentation, repetition of phrases, and driving rhythms. According to Marietta Miller, a scholar of the Negro spiritual and gospel music, “rhythm is the most striking feature in slave music because of its many complexities produced by polyrhythms...In Africa, the basic pulse of the music was derived from the drums and other percussive instruments. The slaves were prohibited from using these drums after their arrival in America. In keeping with their African heritage, they devised other means for producing their rhythms. This was done with the handclaps, stomping and body percussion...Syncopation, constant and continuous makes the music extremely exciting because of the shifting accents from the regular beats - [one] and [three] to beats [two] and [four].”⁵ Many of the rhythms and tempos in slave songs were dictated by their movements while working in the fields. Since these songs were how the enslaved African Americans communicated, they developed a form with verse and chorus, but also call-and-response, which I will explain in Chapter 2.

Since the traditional gospel technique is very similar to that of classically trained singers (due to the work done by the Fisk Jubilee Singers), they must utilize similar techniques, such as puckered lips, a released jaw, a regal and grounded posture, and keeping the throat open throughout the entire vocal range.⁶ However, there is a common misconception that all Black art music features the vocal technique of more contemporary

⁴ Miller, “A Qualitative Study of the American Black Spiritual and Gospel Music.”; Robinson-Martin, “Performance Styles and Musical Characteristics of Black Gospel Music.”

⁵ Eileen J. Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History*, Third (W. W. Norton & Company, 1997).; Miller, “A Qualitative Study of the American Black Spiritual and Gospel Music.”

⁶ Milik Kashad TV, “EXPLAINED || Whitney Houston’s Voice || Act One: The Early Years,” YouTube, December 8, 2023, https://youtu.be/mlFWJqOtdb4?si=OgNx8_R5GAulY3qm.

Black genres like Gospel. The truth of the matter is the contemporary gospel technique evolved from the traditional gospel technique, which evolved from the Western classical technique of Negro Spirituals.

One big misconception and criticism of Black art music with its comparison to contemporary gospel music is the aggressive approach to singing high notes. This refers to the belt, a technique that we also find in Western classical songs. In fact, we find both belting *and* scooping in Western classical repertoire. However, the belt, or the use of the fuller chest voice mechanism, traditionally found in gospel music, is used *sparingly* in classical repertoire. It is normally done and should only be done for dramatic intent. While it is true that we may find its use in classical Negro Spirituals, it is never *full* chest voice. When people compare the voices of gospel singers to classical singers, they are often referring to their more dome-like, round quality. The singer's approach in Black art music, like Negro spirituals and art songs, should not be aggressive, aiming directly at the tone. The approach should incorporate the same up and over, lofty, released technique that we utilize to approach high notes in any Western classical song. The singer should incorporate head voice into their fuller tones, utilizing a mixed voice that keeps the voice navigable throughout the extreme range that is common in the Negro spiritual repertoire. Scooping is a technique choice that is made harmonically and used to accentuate the text. When you sing German Lieder, you want to color text a certain way, but you cannot do it the same way that you would in Gospel. Stylistic choices and techniques for Negro Spirituals utilize those of high art *and* what we recognize today as gospel music.

According to Darren Wicks, founder of Total Voice Studio, voice educator, jazz pianist and choral conductor, “the opera of contemporary music styles is gospel.”⁷ In an interview between Darren Wicks and Monique Thomas, R&B artist and Voice Coach, Thomas describes the gospel singing technique; however, many of the elements she describes are the same techniques that define the Negro spiritual and other Black art music. Therefore, it is important to understand the following:

- Good vocal technique is to have the ability to sing evenly from the bottom of the vocal range to the top with the same volume and effortlessness *and* to have the ability to produce vibrato evenly throughout your whole vocal range.
- Intensity is more important than volume, and these things should not be confused with each other. The singer must achieve a neutral laryngeal position to prevent “reaching” for the high notes.
- When choosing repertoire, knowing the strengths and weaknesses of your voice will allow you to choose keys that highlight your strengths.

Some other important elements to remember regarding the music style of the Negro spiritual are:

- Contrary to what many people think, spirituals utilize more bright and agile tones than dark and heavy tones. Brightness gives presence and clarity, and it carries better. To achieve a brighter sound, sing forward into the mask to employ an uglier and more resonant tone quality through the mouth and nose.

⁷ Darren Wicks, “Gospel Voice Technique - Singing Tips from a Pro,” Total Voice Studio, December 14, 2021, <https://www.totalvoice.com.au/gospel-singing/#:~:text=Gospel%20singers%20are%20known%20for%20their%20vocal,fold%20mass%20is%20used%20across%20the%20range>.

- The style mirrors speech, like someone is talking to you personally. Think about singing it in the same way that you would speak it if you were being extremely passionate.⁸
- There were three major languages and/or dialects that were commonly spoken among African Americans: Louisiana Creole, Gullah/Geechee, African American English.⁹ The dialects feature truncated words, misspelled words, and extra syllables that were used for rhythmic purposes. The retention of these speech patterns allowed enslaved individuals to maintain a connection to their African roots while adapting to a new language.
- There must be a belief behind what you sing, even if you are not a Christian. Have a look at the words and ask yourself: how does this apply to me? Try to find the story behind the song.¹⁰

Analyzing Text for Performance

When performing songs, be it art songs, *lieder*, *chansons*, *canzone*, or Negro Spirituals it should be the singer's duty to understand the meaning of the text they are singing before they perform the repertoire. Understanding the text ultimately enhances the singer's performance of the text.

To understand poetry and text, singers should start by translating their texts from the composed language to their native language, which for international students might not be

⁸ "Gospel Singing Advice," The Guardian, May 10, 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2009/may/10/gospel-singing-advice>.

⁹ Karen Cook Bell, "Literacy, History, and African American Spirituals," Black Perspectives, December 13, 2018, <https://www.aaihs.org/literacy-history-and-african-american-spirituals/>.

¹⁰ "Gospel Singing Advice," The Guardian.

English. Translating a text into a language that better suits the singer is key. Sometimes this means translating English into a more colloquial version of English.

The next step of understanding the text is the most critical. Once the singer has a surface level understanding of the text, I encourage the singer to dig deeper into the text for a more literal understanding. This may require the scholar to research the author or poet and his or her writing style. When was the text written? Is there anything significant about the author's writing style that may influence the singer's understanding of the text? For example, German *Lieder* utilize poetry from the German Romantic era. This poetry often has two meanings within its text. Heinrich Heine is known for his use of Romantic irony in his texts, meaning that a flower that opens itself to the moonlight, as in *Die Lotosblume* by Robert Schumann (1810-1856), is not always the exact interpretation of the poetry. Heine often used nature to depict sex, where the flower represents a woman and the moon represents a man.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe also utilizes double meanings within his texts, as in *Heidenröslein* by Franz Schubert (1797-1828). The protagonist is walking through a field and attempts to pick a rose. The rose does not want to be picked and pricks them with its thorns. However, they pick the rose anyway. This could be interpreted as a cute little poem, but the deeper meaning of this poetry is much darker. The rose represents a woman. This woman is being pursued by a man (the protagonist). The advances are unsolicited, and the woman fights the man off. Then the man takes advantage of the woman anyway against her will.

A singer may not know to interpret a deeper meaning of the poetry without having done research about Heine or Goethe. This kind of work is important because it gives the singer artistic liberties for how they choose to perform the text. This is the same grunt work

that a composer does before he or she composes a song. The composer must understand the meanings of the poetry they set because it also gives them artistic liberties with their compositions. This is how we end up with repertoire set to the same poetry but having different style traits and compositional elements.

The third step to performing text and poetry is to learn and analyze the music. This may mean something different for each singer because each singer utilizes different elements to determine meaning. For example, when I am learning music, if I have a trouble area where my brain and voice are not in sync with the composed harmony, I will complete a harmonic analysis of the section because my understanding of melody is often influenced by my understanding of harmony. At this point, I can begin to decipher why the composer set the text the way he or she did. Why is this word at the peak of the phrase? What words receive the stress within the vocal line? Where is the phrase heading? The composer's interpretation of the text may influence the singer's interpretation of the text. However, sometimes this is not the case. The singer's interpretation of the poetry may not coincide with that of the composer. The singer, then, must make a decision: Does the singer succumb to the composer's interpretation within the composition, or does he or she take their own liberties to convey their interpretation of the poetry with regard to phrase shape and expression?

The aforementioned steps were all about the establishing singer's interpretation of the text. The final step is the actual performance of the literature. The singer must utilize performance techniques that enhance their performance for the audience. Oftentimes, the audience has no idea of the text's meaning, so it is important for the student to depict the meaning of the text through facial expressions, gestures, body language, and vocal expression. Even if the audience does not understand the exact translation of the text, the

performance of the song should give them a general understanding. For example, if a song's text is about peace and quietude, the singer should not perform utilizing a *forte* dynamic level, large gestures, or disgruntled facial expressions. The singer must find a softer dynamic that is still healthy and vibrant. The singer should utilize softer facial expressions with a soft smile to imitate that of serenity. Gestures should be large enough for the audience to perceive it as a gesture but should be small and reminiscent of the peace suggested in the text and composition.

I present these steps to remind singers that, especially in Negro spirituals, they are performing texts much more than music. The music enhances the text; therefore, the performance should emote the text through the music and expression. Given these tools about the vocal technique and style of Black art music and text interpretation, the singer should be ready to perform the song!

Chapter 1

Building the Bridge:

The Birth of the Negro Spiritual

(Late Nineteenth Century to Early Twentieth Century)

Introduction

The African American experience was troubled from its coerced inception, when Africans were captured, enslaved, and brought by ship across the Atlantic Ocean in the early seventeenth century. One of the main causes of the Civil War (1861-1865) was slavery. The South (the Confederate states) relied heavily on slave labor for the production of goods.

A Negro spiritual is a song created by enslaved African Americans while working in the fields or while gathering at camp meetings before emancipation.¹¹ Once the enslaved Africans were brought to America, they were taught Euro-American Christianity. These teachings became a means of survival that protected them from white Americans. “If the slave wanted to exist, he had to obey [the laws of the Old Testament] or pretend to appease his master.”¹² As a result, the enslaved were taught Euro-American hymns that they adapted to reflect their lived experiences. Thus, the birth of the Negro spiritual. Most spirituals were expressions of deep religious faith. However, through these melodies, the enslaved held on to the hope of survival.¹³

Through the melodies and lyrics of their spirituals the slaves expressed not only their own personal weariness and sorrow but also their hope and determination to overcome and live on. These songs of hope were partially engendered by the slaves’ newfound belief in the teachings of the Christian Bible. Differing from African cultures they knew, the Christian doctrine of a Heaven promising a glorious afterlife for suffering people was new to them and provided much-needed hope. It was not unusual for slaves and their masters or owners to attend daily or weekly church services together. In time, the slave populations embraced Christianity and believed that the religion of their European American captors would provide “deliverance” for them as well.¹⁴

¹¹ Mark O’Connor, “Deep River,” New American School of String Playing, accessed March 1, 2026, <https://americanstrings.blogspot.com/2012/01/deep-river.html>.

¹² Marietta Miller, "A Qualitative Study of the American Black Spiritual and Gospel Music," Order No. 1412906, Morgan State University, 2003. <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/qualitative-study-american-black-spiritual-gospel/docview/249976747/se-2>.

¹³ O’Connor, “Deep River.”

¹⁴ O’Connor, “Deep River.”

While Negro Spirituals sounded like religious praise songs, it is known that the songs were coded with messages that only other enslaved African Americans could understand and used to help them escape from their cruel slave masters. Their escape route was called the Underground Railroad, a route from the South to the Northern states and Canada with secret meeting places that were manned by both black and white volunteers. Most enslaved African Americans traveled at night because it was safer to travel under the cover of darkness. They were provided food and water and were sheltered during the day at the meeting places and connection points.¹⁵

Many of the coded names and songs like, “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot,” when sung softly at night in a secret meeting in the woods behind the masters home, signaled to the escapees that the coast was clear, and the chariot referred to the underground railroad car.

“Steal Away” was also a sign to make a run for it and travel as far as possible before daylight. When the spiritual referred to the River Jordan it meant the Ohio River, or the Mississippi River or another body of water that had to be crossed to reach freedom.¹⁶

In 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation was issued by President Abraham Lincoln, freeing enslaved people in the Confederate states. Yet slave labor continued through the end of the Civil War in April 1865; however, the enslaved African Americans in Texas were the final group to learn of their emancipation on June 19, 1865 (Juneteenth). Following the end of the Civil War, with the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment of the Constitution in December 1865, hundreds of thousands of formerly enslaved African Americans were freed.

¹⁵ Warren Shiver, ““Deep River,”” Hendersonville Times-News, January 12, 2017, <https://www.blueridgenow.com/story/lifestyle/faith/2017/01/12/8216deep-river8217/22735424007/>.

¹⁶ Shiver, ““Deep River.””

They sought “fuller participation in American society, including political empowerment, equal economic opportunity and economic and cultural self-determination.”¹⁷

By the late 1870s, white supremacy was restored to the Reconstruction South, where white lawmakers passed strict racial segregation laws, called Jim Crow laws, making African Americans second-class citizens. This was a system designed to keep African Americans poor and powerless. Hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) perpetrated lynchings and conducted campaigns of terror and intimidation to keep African Americans from voting or exercising other fundamental rights.¹⁸ This caused “The Great Migration,” when African Americans that were subjected to Jim Crow laws in the Reconstruction South migrated to the North, Midwest, and West coast, where environments were more racially tolerant.

The earliest and first major collection of published spirituals published after the Civil War were *Slave Songs of the United States* and Thomas Wentworth Higginson’s words-only article, “Negro Spirituals,” both in 1867.¹⁹ My study begins in December of 1866, one year before the first published spirituals and only a year after the enslaved were officially freed, with the birth of the renowned African American composer, activist, and baritone, Harry T. Burleigh, the Father of the Negro Spiritual.

Harry T. Burleigh

Harry T. (Henry Thacker) Burleigh was one of the first African American musicians to become internationally recognized as a singer, composer, and arranger. He played a

¹⁷ “A New African American Identity: The Harlem Renaissance,” National Museum of African American History and Culture, accessed February 15, 2026, <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/new-african-american-identity-harlem-renaissance>.

¹⁸ “A New African American Identity,” National Museum of African American History and Culture.

¹⁹ “History of Hymns: ‘Deep River,’” Discipleship Ministries, February 5, 2020, <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/history-of-hymns-deep-river>; Wayne D. Shirley, “The Coming of ‘Deep River,’” *American Music* 15, no. 4 (1997): 493, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3052384>.

leading role in American music and culture throughout the last years of the nineteenth century and the first third of the twentieth century. He was the first African-American composer acclaimed for his concert songs as well as for his adaptations of African-American spirituals.²⁰ His publications and arrangements of African American spirituals are considered his most important contributions to music because they were the products of his long-lived experiences with spirituals in Black communities from childhood.

Burleigh composed numerous vocal works, including choral arrangements for mixed, men's, and women's choirs. He composed over two hundred art song works, notably "Adoration" and "Lovely Dark and Lonely One," his final art song, composed in 1934. He also composed song cycles such as, *Saracen Songs* (1914), *Five Songs of Laurence Hope* (1915), and *Passionale* (1915), which live as his best representations of his solo writing style.²¹ Furthermore, he transcribed more than six hundred spirituals and folksongs, some published in *Old Songs Hymnal: Words and Melodies from the State of Georgia* (New York: Century, 1929), a collection of 187 spirituals in simple four-part harmonies, based partly on his collaborator, Dorothy Bolton's, memories and partly on extensive in-person interviews and transcriptions of melodies and texts.²² Burleigh has been credited as the composer most responsible for turning spirituals into concert songs.²³ According to James Wintle, a Music Division Reference Specialist at The Library of Congress, "Burleigh's compositions and arrangements of African-American spirituals transported a musical tradition that was born

²⁰ James Wintle, "H. T. Burleigh," The Library of Congress, accessed February 16, 2026, <https://www.loc.gov/item/n83127097/h-t-burleigh/>.

²¹ Wintle, "H. T. Burleigh."

²² John Michael Cooper, "On Harry T. Burleigh, His Life and Legacies," Jmc3, May 28, 2022, <https://cooperm55.wixsite.com/jmc3/post/on-harry-t-burleigh-his-life-and-legacies>.

²³ Rupert Allman, "More than Music: Harry Burleigh Turned Spirituals into Concert Songs," 1A, April 11, 2024, <https://the1a.org/segments/more-than-music-harry-burleigh-turned-spirituals-into-concert-songs/>.

out of the plight of enslaved people, onto the concert stage, where they are revered as masterful examples of uniquely American music.”²⁴

Early Life

Burleigh was born on December 2, 1866 to Henry Thacker Burleigh, Sr. and Elizabeth Waters. His father settled in Erie, Pennsylvania, “a lively sanctuary and transfer point on the Underground Railroad.”²⁵ He married Elizabeth Waters, a musician and teacher, who instilled Harry T. Burleigh with a strong appreciation for freedom, equality, education, and music.

He was surrounded by music from a very young age. His mother was his first music teacher. Burleigh’s mother and his formerly enslaved maternal grandfather, who purchased his freedom, taught him African-American spirituals. Young Harry had become a sought-after singer in local churches and synagogues, and he had also learned guitar, piano, and bass viol.²⁶ He sang with multiple choirs across different denominations simultaneously, due to their staggered performance schedules. Those churches were the Cathedral of St. Paul’s, the Park Presbyterian Church, and the Reform Jewish Temple. As a teenager, he had opportunities to experience classical performers by working as a doorman for a local music lover, for whom his mother sometimes worked, who hosted salon recitals at her home.²⁷

The family values focusing on education and music converged in 1891, when Burleigh applied to the National Conservatory of Music of New York and was accepted on a scholarship for the Artist’s Course.²⁸

²⁴ Wintle, “H. T. Burleigh.”

²⁵ Cooper, “On Harry T. Burleigh, His Life and Legacies.”

²⁶ Cooper, “On Harry T. Burleigh, His Life and Legacies.”

²⁷ Wintle, “H. T. Burleigh.”

²⁸ Cooper, “On Harry T. Burleigh, His Life and Legacies.”

Burleigh's Bridge:

Education, Publishing Success,

Western classical baritone performing for diverse audiences, &

His friendship with Antonín Dvořák

Today Burleigh is known primarily for introducing Czech composer Antonín [Dvořák] to the African American oral music tradition and as an arranger of spirituals. Indeed, Burleigh led the way for both black and white composers in his solo and choral arrangements of spirituals in the early part of the twentieth century. His work helped preserve and transform one of America's earliest contributions to the world of music, the songs that arose out of the sufferings of slavery but that give voice to an indomitable human spirit and have endangered some of America's most vibrant musical traditions.²⁹

Jeannette Thurber, the visionary music educator who owned the National Conservatory of Music in New York, was part of a community of cultural leaders who looked to Black America for direction. She invited Czech composer Antonín Dvořák to lead the conservatory, and not long after Dvořák arrived, she added a department “for the instruction of colored pupils of merit” with free tuition. The conservatory soon enrolled 150 Black students – out of a student body totaling 750. In 1892, Burleigh received a scholarship to the National Conservatory of Music in New York, an experience that had great influence on his career. However, American historian Joe Horowitz notes that the opportunities did not merely arise because of his skin color; “sometimes, they materialized because – dignified and composed — he was self-evidently a young Black American unusual in talent, character, and promise.”³⁰

When Burleigh first arrived in New York, he joined the men and boys choir at the Free African Church of St. Philip's, New York City's first African-American congregation of

²⁹ Jean E. Snyder, “Preface,” preface, in *Harry T. Burleigh: From the Spiritual to the Harlem Renaissance*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016), xii.

³⁰ Joe Horowitz, “Harry Burleigh’s ‘Deep River’ of Common Humanity on NPR,” Unanswered Question, April 13, 2024, <https://www.artsjournal.com/uq/2024/04/harry-burleighs-deep-river-of-common-humanity-on-npr.html>.

Protestant Episcopalians which traces its origin to 1809.³¹ To help support himself during his studies at the Conservatory, Burleigh worked as a handyman, cleaning and repairing. He sang spirituals while cleaning the Conservatory's halls, which drew the attention of the conservatory's director, Czech composer Antonín Dvořák, who asked Burleigh to sing for him. According to ethnomusicologist Jean E. Snyder, Burleigh recounted, "I sang our Negro songs for [Dvořák] very often, and before he wrote his own themes, he filled himself with the spirit of the old Spirituals."³²

At the Conservatory, Burleigh and Dvořák became friends and colleagues. Dvořák led the conservatory orchestra, which met twice a week. Burleigh served as the orchestra librarian and copyist, and filled in on double bass and timpani. However, their most significant relationship was as composition student and teacher...and vice versa. Dvořák saw a reflection of himself in Burleigh, having, too, come from poor parents and struggle. Also, Dvořák's musical nationalism resonated with Burleigh's knowledge and belief in the artistic beauty of Black American music. Dvořák would make his students compose themes and fit them into the skeleton of an existing Beethoven sonata, imitating the modulations and key relationships. When he heard Burleigh sing "Go Down Moses," he told him that it was "as great as a Beethoven theme." This helped catapult Burleigh into arranging spirituals. Burleigh considered spirituals to be the primary and most artistically rich repertoire of Black people. He felt the popularity of jazz, minstrel songs, and ragtime had overshadowed the spiritual.³³

³¹ "African American Influences," Dvořák American Heritage Association, accessed February 24, 2026, <https://www.dvoraknyc.org/african-american-influences>.

³² Jean E. Snyder, "'A Great and Noble School of Music': Dvořák, Harry T. Burleigh, and the African American Spiritual," *In Dvořák in America: 1892-1895*, ed. John C. Tibbets, (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1993), 131.

³³ "African American Influences," Dvořák American Heritage Association.; Cooper, "On Harry T. Burleigh, His Life and Legacies."

After spending countless hours recalling and performing the African-American spirituals and plantation songs he had learned from his maternal grandfather for Dvořák, Burleigh was encouraged by the elder composer to preserve these melodies in his own compositions... In turn, Dvořák wrote themes inspired by the songs introduced to him by Burleigh in his Symphony no. 9 in E minor ("From the New World").³⁴

Dvořák's Bridge:

Attraction to & Championship of "Negro melodies"

Part of this old 'spiritual' ['Swing Low Sweet Chariot'] will be found in the second theme of the first movement ... given out by the flute. Dvořák saturated himself with the spirit of these old tunes and then invented his own themes. There is a subsidiary theme in G minor in the first movement with a flatted seventh [a characteristic passed on to jazz, known as a "blue note"] and I feel sure the composer caught this peculiarity of most of the slave songs from some that I sang to him; for he used to stop me and ask if that was the way the slaves sang.

-written by Harry T. Burleigh³⁵

Thus far, I have provided various ways that Harry T. Burleigh has contributed to bridging the gap between Blackness and whiteness. While there is more to inform on that subject, I would like to take a sidebar to address how Antonín Dvořák contributed to bridging the gap.

There are several historical accounts and claims about the impact of Dvořák's relationship with Burleigh, but a May 21, 1893 newspaper article by James Creelman in the New York Herald provides direct accounts from Dvořák about his newfound research experience with what he called "negro melodies" and why they are significant to the American music canon.

"I am now satisfied [...] that the future music of this country must be founded upon what are called the negro melodies. This must be the

³⁴ Wintle, "H. T. Burleigh."

³⁵ "African American Influences," Dvořák American Heritage Association.

real foundation of any serious and original school of composition to be developed in the United States. When I first came here last year I was impressed with the idea and it has developed into a settled conviction. These beautiful and varied themes are the product of the soil. They are American. I would like to trace out the individual authorship of the negro melodies, for it would throw a great deal of light upon the question I am most deeply interested in at present.”

“These are the folk songs of America and your composers must turn to them. All of the great musicians have borrowed from the songs of the common people. Beethoven’s most charming scherzo is based upon what might now be considered a skillfully handled negro melody. I have myself gone to the simple, half forgotten tunes of the Bohemian peasants for hints in my most serious work. Only in this way can a musician express the true sentiment of his people. He gets into touch with the common humanity of his country.”³⁶

This direct account from Dvořák helps support my initial claim that in order to bridge the gap between Blackness and whiteness through Black music, one must first understand the history of the Black experience. While Burleigh, by way of his educational experience at the National Conservatory (his connection to whiteness), shared his Blackness through singing many “negro melodies” and answering numerous questions about the music style for Dvořák, Dvořák was able to empathize with and understand the stories told within “negro melodies.” Consequently, Dvořák learned and utilized those “negro melodies” to help establish a sense of nationalism in American culture, suggesting that Black people played a large role in the foundation of American culture and history. Thus, Dvořák encouraged Burleigh to arrange those “negro melodies.”

“Among my pupils in the National Conservatory of Music I have discovered strong talents. There is one young man [Burleigh] upon whom I am building strong expectations. His compositions are based upon negro melodies, and I have encouraged him in this direction.”

³⁶ James Creelman (May 21, 1893), "Real Value of Negro Melodies: Dr. Dvorak Finds in Them the Basis for an American School of Music" (PDF), The New York Herald, Accessed February 16, 2025, <https://static.qobuz.com/info/IMG/pdf/NYHerald-1893-Mai-21-Recadre.pdf>

“I did not come to America to interpret Beethoven or Wagner for the public. That is not my work and I would not waste any time on it. I came to discover what young Americans had in them and to help them express it.”³⁷

Burleigh’s Bridge (continued)

From the beginning of the twentieth century to the end of his performing career, Harry T. Burleigh’s name was internationally known as an authoritative advocate for spirituals as well as European and American art songs and opera arias. An accomplished baritone, in 1894, he secured a position as baritone soloist for St. George’s Protestant Episcopal Church, an all-white church, where the congregation was against him being hired because he was African American. However, the church hired him anyway, and he won the hearts and the respect of the church community. Consequently, he maintained the position for fifty-two years, finally retiring in 1946. In that position he began an annual tradition of singing a Vesper service of spirituals that attracted large crowds.³⁸

Burleigh also toured with Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, an African and British composer, who called Burleigh “the best singer of [his] songs.”³⁹ In 1900, Burleigh was the first African American chosen as soloist at Temple Emanu-El, a New York synagogue. He sang spirituals on tour with Booker T. Washington from 1900 to 1915, and in 1908 and 1909, he sang for King Edward VII and other members of the British aristocracy. In 1919, he made a recording of himself singing “Go Down Moses,” which is his only confirmed recording.⁴⁰

³⁷ Creelman, “Real Value of Negro Melodies.”

³⁸ Wintle, “H. T. Burleigh.”; Cooper, “On Harry T. Burleigh, His Life and Legacies.”

³⁹ Cooper, “On Harry T. Burleigh, His Life and Legacies.”

⁴⁰ Wintle, “H. T. Burleigh.”; Cooper, “On Harry T. Burleigh, His Life and Legacies.”

Henry Krehbiel, one of the most influential New York music critics of the time and friend of Burleigh, wrote in the *New York Tribune*, “That which is most characteristic, most beautiful and most vital in our folk-song has come from the negro slaves of the South.”⁴¹ In 1898, Burleigh published his first volume of three songs under G. Schirmer. His first published arrangement of a spiritual was “Water in Water” in 1900 under G. Ricordi in New York.⁴² By 1911, he was working as an editor for G. Ricordi. His success as a composer was enhanced through the publication of several of his compositions, including “Ethiopia Saluting the Colors” (1915), a collection entitled “Jubilee Songs of the USA” (1916), and his arrangement of “Deep River” (1917)⁴³:

The widespread success of his setting of “Deep River” (1917) inspired the publication of nearly a dozen more spirituals the same year. The settings appeared in multiple versions upon publication, including vocal solos in a variety of keys and choral arrangements prepared by Burleigh and others for mixed chorus, men’s chorus, and women’s chorus.⁴⁴

By the mid-1910s, Burleigh’s songs were being performed by a lengthy international roster of opera and recital singers, meaning they were being sung by famous white recitalists.⁴⁵ The following two chapters will explore two spirituals that Burleigh helped popularize with his transcriptions and arrangements. Each chapter will feature two arrangements of the spiritual, one from a hymnal and one by Burleigh.

⁴¹ Horowitz, “Harry Burleigh’s ‘Deep River.’”

⁴² Cooper, “On Harry T. Burleigh, His Life and Legacies.”

⁴³ Wintle, “H. T. Burleigh.”

⁴⁴ Wintle, “H. T. Burleigh.”

⁴⁵ Snyder, “Preface.”; Horowitz, “Harry Burleigh’s ‘Deep River.’”

Chapter 2

Deep River

Deep River

Harry T. Burleigh first published “Deep River” for mixed chorus in 1913 in *Two Negro Spirituals*. His *Two Negro Spirituals*, scored for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass choir, established spirituals as more than the property of the African American tour groups that specialized in the repertoire. This publication freed the spiritual for performances by all modern day choruses.⁴⁶

“Deep River” is an African-American spiritual with surprisingly obscure “church militant” origins, due to its dotted rhythms and its repetitive extended refrain in its original publication.⁴⁷ According to Library of Congress music specialist and librarian Wayne D. Shirley, “‘Deep River’ is one of the best known of African American spirituals...It is perhaps the best-known and best-loved spiritual of all among the general public...”⁴⁸

The song was first printed in 1876 in *The Story of the Jubilee Singers: With Their Songs*, by J. B. T. Marsh,⁴⁹ with “the Jubilee Singers” referencing The Fisk Jubilee Singers. (see Appendix A) This arrangement of “Deep River,” shown in Figure 2.1, evokes less of a hymn-like quality because it is not arranged in the usual four-part harmonization that would be expected for a choral ensemble. It is set as an unaccompanied melody, a method used by transcriber and arranger Theo F. Seward for the songs that did not submit readily to Sunday School-book harmonization.⁵⁰ It is composed in a steady militant style, characterized by dotted rhythms that are common in Black music, implying a livelier tempo. It ambiguously moves between the major and relative minor keys and features fewer authentic cadential

⁴⁶ Shirley, “The Coming of ‘Deep River,’” 500, 504.

⁴⁷ Horowitz, “Harry Burleigh’s ‘Deep River.’”

⁴⁸ Shirley, “The Coming of ‘Deep River,’” 493.

⁴⁹ Diana Leagh Matthews, “Behind the Song: Deep River,” Diana Leagh Matthews, February 9, 2020, <https://dianaleaghmatthews.com/behind-the-song-deep-river/>.

⁵⁰ Shirley, “The Coming of ‘Deep River,’” 494.

moments. This version features three verses and an extended refrain that repeats the final phrase, “Lord, I want to cross over into campground,” three times.⁵¹ It is one of five spirituals in the 1881 edition of the Marsh anthology to feature dynamics, indicating an alternation between *forte* and *pianissimo* on the final phrase of the refrain. Shirley notes, “the obsessive repetition of a single short text to varying music within a narrow range, is extremely unusual..., suggest[ing] an African origin.”⁵² This is likely a correct assertion that Shirley makes. A common practice in African music that carried over into African-American culture is call-and-response. The alternation of dynamics within the repetition of “Lord, I want to cross over into campground” represents a call and response pattern with the *forte* voice being the leader and the *pianissimo* voice being the congregation of followers.

Call-and-response originated in Sub-Saharan African cultures, which used the musical form to denote democratic participation in public gatherings like religious rituals, civic gatherings, funerals, and weddings.

African slaves brought this tradition to the Americas, in the work songs heard all over plantations in the Deep South. It had a huge impact on the development of African-American music, from soul, gospel, and blues all the way to rhythm and blues, funk, and more contemporary examples like hip hop. Edwin Hawkins Singers’s gospel standard “Oh, Happy Day” (1968) is a great example of call-and-response being used to reach the listeners directly and lift their spirit.⁵³

⁵¹ “History of Hymns,” Discipleship Ministries.

⁵² Shirley, “The Coming of ‘Deep River,’” 494, 496; “History of Hymns,” Discipleship Ministries.

⁵³ “What Is Call and Response in Music?,” MasterClass, accessed February 28, 2026, <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/what-is-call-and-response-in-music>.

Deep _____ ri - ver, My home is o - ver Jor - dan, _____ Deep _____ ri - ver, Lord, I

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

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

1. Oh, don't you want to go to that Gos - pel-feast, That pro - mis'd land where all is peace? Lord, I
 2. I'll go in - to hea - ven, and _ take my seat, _____ Cast my crown at Je - sus' feet. Lord, I
 3. Of, when I get to heav'n, I'll walk all a - bout, There's nobody there for to turn me out. Lord, I

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

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

Figure 2.1: This arrangement was transcribed by Wayne D. Shirley in his journal article, “The Coming of ‘Deep River,’” in *American Music*, Vol. 15, No. 4. He notes that the first E-natural in the opening measure, a sixteenth note in the original Marsh anthology, has been corrected here to an eighth note.⁵⁴ The original from the Marsh anthology can be found in the Appendix (Appendix A).

“Deep River”

Refrain

Deep river,
 my home is over Jordan,
 Deep river,
 I want to cross over into campground

⁵⁴ Shirley, “The Coming of ‘Deep River,’” 495.

Verses

*Oh, don't you want to go to that Gospel-feast,
That promis'd land where all is peace?
Lord, I want to cross over into campground.*

*I'll go into heaven, and take my seat,
Cast my crown at Jesus' feet.
Lord, I want to cross over into campground.*

*Oh, when I get to heav'n, I walk all about,
There's nobody there for to turn me out.
Lord, I want to cross over into campground.*

Figure 2.2: This text is transcribed from the Discipleship Ministries webpage, "History of Hymns: 'Deep River,'" published on February 5, 2020.⁵⁵

Now that I have established the origins of "Deep River," it is important to discuss the meaning of its text, shown above in Figure 2.2. The text is of unknown origin, because it was passed down orally through generations of African American ancestry before it was ever transcribed. "[I]t has been suggested that the song was intended to offer advice to slaves who wanted to run away to freedom. Escaping through a river would allow the water to wash away their scent if they were being pursued by bloodhounds."⁵⁶ The song is classified as a "Song of Sorrow" due to its text that embodies anguish and pain. Its primary theme is deliverance – deliverance from bondage, from burdens, and from the toiling hardship of life on Earth.⁵⁷ According to Discipleship Ministries, "The River Jordan is a persistent theme in Genesis and Numbers, both as a geographic location and as a boundary beyond which

⁵⁵ "History of Hymns," Discipleship Ministries.

⁵⁶ "Moses Hogan," Weiner Elementary Original, accessed February 28, 2026, <http://www.weinerelementary.org/moses-hogan.html#:~:text=The%20song%20%22Deep%20River%22%20is%20considered%20one,who%20wanted%20to%20run%20away%20to%20freedom.>

⁵⁷ Hope V. Dornfeld, "Travelin' to the Promised Land: Symbolism of the Jordan River in African Spiritual, English Hymn, and American Folksong Selections," *Montview Journal of Research & Scholarship*: Vol. 8, Article 4, 2021, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70623/BHLV4157>.

deliverance was possible. For enslaved Africans, deliverance could be freedom from bondage in both this life and the next.”⁵⁸

Deep River’s reference to the Jordan River can be connected to two Old Testament passages: Deuteronomy 12:10 (“But you will cross the Jordan and settle in the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, and he will give you rest from all your enemies around you so that you will live in safety.”⁵⁹) and Joshua 3:17 (“And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.”⁶⁰).⁶¹ Deep River’s allusions to the Jordan River, with an analogy of the Israelites to enslaved African Americans, illustrates the desire of enslaved African Americans to “cross over” into a promised land of freedom. According to African American author, philosopher, minister, theologian, Christian mystic, educator, and civil rights leader Howard Thurman, “To camp while on a journey opened up the possibility of a going to a better place...A few nineteenth-century gospel songs refer to camping as a place of celebration, a place of release from regular duties and struggles.”⁶² Therefore, the verses suggest a prophetic hope for peace, freedom, and a relationship with Jesus.⁶³

[“Deep River”] is perhaps the most universal in insight, and certainly the most intellectual of all the spirituals. In a bold stroke it thinks of life in terms of a river. Of course, it must be added that to these early singers – slaves as they were – practically the river may have been for many the last and most formidable barrier to freedom. To slip over the river from one of the border states would mean a chance for freedom

⁵⁸ “History of Hymns,” Discipleship Ministries.

⁵⁹ “Bible Gateway Passage: Deuteronomy 12:10 - New International Version,” Bible Gateway, accessed March 4, 2026, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy+12%3A10&version=NIV>.

⁶⁰ “Bible Gateway Passage: Joshua 3:17 - King James Version,” Bible Gateway, accessed March 4, 2026, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Joshua+3%3A17&version=KJV>.

⁶¹ “History of Hymns,” Discipleship Ministries.; Howard Thurman, *Deep River and the Negro Spirituals Speak of Life and Death*, (Richmond, Indiana: United Friends Press, 1975), 70.

⁶² Thurman, *Deep River and the Negro Spirituals*.

⁶³ “History of Hymns,” Discipleship Ministries.

in the North – or, to cross the river into Canada would mean freedom in a new country, a foreign land. But let us reflect in a deeper meaning here. To think of life as being like a river is a full and creative analogy.⁶⁴

So, let us dig a little deeper. “Deep River” literally references the Jordan River with “home” and “campground” being analogies for heaven. However, “Deep River” figuratively references the sky. Heaven is beyond the sky, and the sky is vast or “deep” like the Jordan River. The sky’s blue color is a reflection of light from the river’s surface. The enslaved African Americans were traveling in search for freedom at nighttime, when the sky is a “deep” blue color like a nighttime river. And “cross over” figuratively implies dying. Therefore, the Jordan River is an analogy for the sky, such that the enslaved African Americans would have to physically cross rivers to reach freedom. Likewise, the spirits of the enslaved African Americans would have to cross the “Sky River” in order to reach heaven.

Hymnal Arrangement Performance Analysis

One of my goals in this document is to trace the transformation of different Negro Spirituals across performance contexts. After discussing the attributes found in the original Marsh publication of “Deep River” and providing an analysis of the text and its history, I would like to turn towards an arrangement from a hymnal. The arrangement that I will use to provide this performance analysis is from The Cyber Hymnal, number 1208.⁶⁵

It is first important to note that unlike the “Deep River” arrangement in the Marsh publication, congregational versions found in hymnals usually include only the shortened

⁶⁴ Dornfeld, "Travelin' to the Promised Land."

⁶⁵ “The Cyber Hymnal 1208. Deep River, My Home Is over Jordan,” Hymnary.org, accessed April 12, 2026, <https://hymnary.org/hymn/CYBER/1208>.

refrain and the first verse.⁶⁶ This proves true for The Cyber Hymnal's arrangement as well. Thus, this arrangement only features the following:

Refrain
*Deep river,
my home is over Jordan,
Deep river,
I want to cross over into campground.*

Verse
*Oh, don't you want to go to that Gospel-feast,
That promised land where all is peace?
Oh, don't you want to go to that promised land,
That land, where all is peace?*

Figure 2.3: *Deep River* text from *The Cyber Hymnal*, number 1208.

The omission of verses two and three changes the overall tone of the song. Verses two and three in Figure 2.2 discuss what will happen once the speaker crosses over into campground, providing a positive tone of hopeful longing. While “longing” can often imply a negative connotation, I add “hopeful” to it because as the text is traditionally presented in congregational hymnals, ending the song after only the first verse brings a tone of desire for something that one may not ever reach. This is the connotation of longing that we expect. This connotation is ultimately what places “Deep River” in the “Songs of Sorrow” category.⁶⁷

However, while this hymn arrangement's text suggests longing and desire in this “song of sorrow,” the tempo marking is set at quarter note equals 115, which is pretty brisk. This brisk tempo might better fit the original arrangement in the Marsh anthology, being most similar to how enslaved African Americans would have sung it, as these were work songs. The brisk tempo would also fit the overall hopeful connotation of the original text.

⁶⁶ “History of Hymns,” Discipleship Ministries.

⁶⁷ Dornfeld, “Travelin' to the Promised Land.”

However, the brisk tempo does not fit the emotion of the text as it is set in The Cyber Hymnal. Personally, I have never heard any singer or ensemble perform “Deep River” so briskly, outside of a basic piano arrangement, possibly. For this hymn arrangement, I suggest slowing the tempo down to quarter note equals between sixty-five and seventy-five. This will allow the singer to figuratively breathe into the tone of longing provided by verse one and literally breathe, with the text being set without breaths in the vocal line.

The singer should begin the hymn with a *mezzo-piano/mezzo-forte* dynamic that first helps establish the text, because communicating the text to your audience is most important in spirituals. The text painting in the first line is very important to the meaning of the song. When the singer sings, “my home is over Jordan,” there is an octave leap into “over.” On the surface, this is simply just a depiction of “over.” However, this idea also ties into my claim that the song harbors a tone of desire for something that one may never reach because the octave leap functions as an exaggeration for how far away “home” or freedom was for Black people during slavery.

As the singer gets into the verse (measure nine), there is a tonality shift to the relative minor (c minor). This shift and the fact that we leap up a sixth from a low E-flat at the end of the refrain to a C helps establish a new idea that provides context to the text already communicated. The leap also helps to naturally change the dynamic because the singer is in a different, often stronger, part of their range.

While having a slightly different overall tone than the Marsh arrangement, the hymn is still presented with *some* of the militant attributes I discussed earlier, characterized by dotted rhythms. However, here, we only get them in “I want to cross over into campground” and in measure seventeen, “Oh don’t you want to go to that...” Measure seventeen is a

reflection of the original spiritual in the Marsh anthology, such that this was how the verses were originally composed. This hymn approaches the verse with a lyrical quality that suggests a song meant to be sung for purposes other than work. This arrangement was not meant to be a work song, but a song that reflects on the hardships analogized within the text's history.

Finally, before moving back into the refrain, I suggest adding a dynamic shift to *pianissimo* and a *ritard* into measure nineteen on the text, "that land where all is peace." This will help paint the picture of "peace," the place for which we are longing. This dynamic shift also helps to seamlessly bring us back into the mood of the refrain.

Burleigh Arrangement Performance Analysis

Burleigh arranged the first solo voice-piano arrangement of "Deep River" in 1917, and it was published by G. Ricordi. According to Lynne Foote and Dr. Marti Slaten, the co-founders of the Harry T. Burleigh Society, "This arrangement cemented the concretization of spirituals as art songs, and placed Burleigh at the fore of a movement in which other composers, singers, worshipers, and listeners engaged with concert spirituals."⁶⁸ The song became very popular in recitals of the early twentieth century.⁶⁹ Sir Michael Tippett (1905-1998), a white English composer who rose to prominence during and immediately after World War II,⁷⁰ extended a bridge from Blackness to whiteness, such that he used "Deep

⁶⁸ Lynne Foote and Marti Slaten, "About Us," Harry T. Burleigh Society, accessed February 15, 2026, <https://burleighsociety.com/about-us>.

⁶⁹ Matthews, "Behind the Song."

⁷⁰ David Clarke, "Tippett, Sir Michael," Grove Music Online, 2001, Accessed 2 Jun. 2026, <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000028005>.

River” as one of the five spirituals included in his oratorio, *A Child of Our Time*, which was first performed in 1944.⁷¹

Burleigh arranged the song in the key of F Major, beginning with tonic chords that are strummed as if played by a harp. The harp is an instrument in the bible that is commonly used to praise God, which helps to depict an already established relationship between the singer and God, whom the singer is praying to reach. Burleigh opens the refrain with a *piano* dynamic. This dynamic reiterates the peace established in the opening *piano* strums in the accompaniment.

One difference between Burleigh’s arrangement and the hymn in The Cyber Hymnal is that Burleigh places a fermata over “Lord” in measures eight and sixteen. This fermata emphasizes the fact that the singer is having a direct conversation with God, reinforcing their aforementioned relationship. Another difference is that Burleigh arranged a repetition of the refrain in measures eleven through eighteen; however, it is harmonized differently with two secondary dominant seventh chords (Figure 2.5) instead of a predominant seventh chord into a minor six-seven chord (Figure 2.4) on “Lord, I want to cross...” This change briefly uses the minor sixth scale degree to make the repetition of the refrain more introspective and provides a deeper sense of pleading to God before the song goes into the verse.

⁷¹ Matthews, “Behind the Song.”



ii IV⁷ vi^{4/3} ii⁷ V⁷ vi^{6/5}-----

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Figure 2.4: *Measures 8-10.*⁷²



ii V⁷/ii V⁷/V ii^{6/5} V⁷ vi^{6/5} I

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Figure 2.5: *Measures 16-18.*⁷³

As stated in my analysis of the hymn, the beginning of a spiritual is more about communicating the text than singing; however, starting at measure nineteen, the singer really gets to start singing. Here, we get a composed dynamic shift from *piano* to *mezzoforte*, rather

⁷² H. T. Burleigh, *The Spirituals of Harry T. Burleigh: High Voice* (Miami, Fla: Warner Bros. Publications, 1990), 74.

⁷³ H. T. Burleigh, *The Spirituals of Harry T. Burleigh: High Voice* (Miami, Fla: Warner Bros. Publications, 1990), 75.

than the implied dynamic shift presented in the hymnal arrangement. In measure nineteen, the pitches on the words “you want to” are composed in a slightly different contour than what was presented in the hymnal. I have shown this below in Figures 2.6 & 2.7.

Burleigh stretches the vocalist higher into their range, into *passaggio*, which creates more tension and emotion related to the aforementioned tone of longing. The hymnal arrangement does not have the same effect; however, hymnal arrangements were composed to be accessible for amateur singers, while art songs and spirituals were intended to be performed by singers that have been or are being vocally trained.

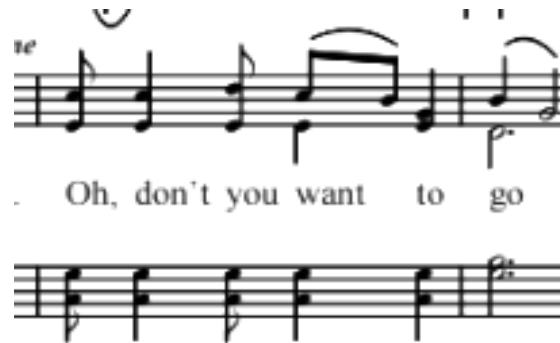


Figure 2.6: *The Cyber Hymnal - Measure 9.*⁷⁴



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Figure 2.7: *Burleigh - Measure 19.*⁷⁵

⁷⁴ “The Cyber Hymnal 1208. Deep River, My Home Is over Jordan,” Hymnary.org, accessed April 12, 2026, <https://hymnary.org/hymn/CYBER/1208>.

⁷⁵ H. T. Burleigh, *The Spirituals of Harry T. Burleigh: High Voice* (Miami, Fla: Warner Bros. Publications, 1990), 75.

The climax of Burleigh's arrangement that serves as the biggest deviation from the original Marsh arrangement and the hymnal arrangement comes in measures twenty-two to twenty-six (Figure 2.8). For the first time, Burleigh takes the singer above the staff, up to a high A on the word "promis'd" and a high G on the word "land." The ascent into the upper register, dynamically marked at *forte*, not only maintains the tone of longing but also depicts that what was promised, liberation and a relationship with God, is both far away and above everything else. Measures twenty-five through twenty-six brings the singer back to "peace," to be sung softly, from a moment of fervent desire for the final return of the refrain. The final refrain serves as the final, almost breathless, plea to God to be liberated.



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Figure 2.8: *Measures 22-26.*⁷⁶

World renowned, African American contralto, Marian Anderson and Oscar Seagle, a white American baritone, have both recorded versions of Burleigh's arrangement. Between the late 1910s to the 1930s, they both popularized Burleigh's spiritual arrangements.⁷⁷ Before

⁷⁶ H. T. Burleigh, *The Spirituals of Harry T. Burleigh: High Voice* (Miami, Fla: Warner Bros. Publications, 1990), 76.

⁷⁷ Thurman, *Singing like Germans*, 77; Jean Snyder, "Burleigh, Henry [Harry] T(hacker)," *Grove Music Online*, 16 Oct. 2013, Accessed 2 Jun. 2026,

I provide a performance analysis of their recordings, I would like to provide some additional background information, explaining the relevancy of their work..

Marian Anderson & Her Bridge

Classical contralto performing for diverse audiences

“If you’ve ever heard Marian Anderson sing “Deep River,” you’ve heard an immortal concert spiritual by Harry Burleigh.”⁷⁸

Marian Anderson (1897-1993) was an African American contralto, with a forty year career that spanned from 1925 to 1965. She performed songs in a wide range of genres, from opera to spirituals.⁷⁹ Marian Anderson was born in 1897 in South Philadelphia. She began singing at Union Baptist Church, where at age fourteen, the choirmaster moved her from the youth to the adult choir. She stunned the other choir members with her vocal beauty and her ability to sing any voice part based on the needs of the choirmaster.⁸⁰

Marian Anderson attended school at the South Philadelphia High School for Girls, where, due to her exceptional talent, her teacher “arranged for the famed Italian voice master, Giuseppe Boghetti, to hear her.” She sang “Deep River” and, according to an account by Giuseppe Boghetti, “made [him] cry.”⁸¹ In the early 1900s, Anderson applied to the all-white Philadelphia Music Academy (now the University of the Arts) but was turned away because she was African American. Many conservatories refused to admit her, but she quickly acquired influential fans who would aid her career.⁸²

<https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002248537>.

⁷⁸ Horowitz, “Harry Burleigh’s ‘Deep River.’”

⁷⁹ Max de Schauensee and Marti Newland, "Anderson, Marian," Grove Music Online, 25 Jul. 2013, Accessed 2 Jun. 2026,

<https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002240043>.

⁸⁰ “Marian Anderson: Musical Icon,” PBS, accessed February 16, 2026,

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/eleanor-anderson/>.

⁸¹ “Marian Anderson,” PBS.

⁸² O’Connor, “Deep River.”; “Marian Anderson,” PBS.

After winning a singing contest in 1925, prompting an appearance with the New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra at just seventeen years old, her teacher, Giuseppe Boghetti took her to train and perform in Europe. Ten years later, at twenty-seven years old, she made her European debut at the Paris Opera House. Also in 1935, following her European success, she returned back to America for a public debut at Carnegie Hall in New York, which ultimately led to her becoming the first African American to be invited to perform at the White House in 1936.⁸³

Even with such growing popularity, in 1939, the Daughters of the American Revolution refused to allow Marian Anderson to perform on Easter Sunday, April 9, 1939 in front of an integrated audience at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C. because of a white performers-only policy. At the time, Washington, D.C. was racially segregated, and Constitution Hall did not have the segregated public bathrooms then required by law for such events. In response, the Marian Anderson Citizens Committee (MACC) was formed, in which they planned and staged picket lines and mass protests and collected signatures on petitions. After much back and forth regarding a venue that would allow Marian Anderson to perform, President Franklin D. Roosevelt agreed that she would perform outside the Lincoln Memorial with no segregated areas. The Marian Anderson Concert was critically acclaimed. It was presented in front of an integrated audience of over 75,000 people, plus millions of radio listeners.⁸⁴ With events such as her 1939 Lincoln Memorial concert, she was an important figure in the African American community of artists that broke down barriers,

⁸³ "Marian Anderson," PBS.

⁸⁴ Craig Simpson, "DC's Old Jim Crow Rocked by 1939 Marian Anderson Concert," Washington Area Spark, March 15, 2016, <https://washingtonareaspark.com/2013/03/14/dcs-old-jim-crow-rocked-by-1939-marian-anderson-concert/>.

overcoming racial prejudice in the United States during racial segregation in the mid-twentieth century.⁸⁵

In 1955, Anderson became the first African American singer to perform at the Metropolitan Opera, casted as Ulrica in *Un ballo in maschera* by Giuseppe Verdi. She was also highly honored, having received honorary doctorates from Howard University, Temple University, and Smith College. She was also honored with awards such as the NAACP Spingarn Medal (1939), the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1963), and the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award (1991).⁸⁶

Oscar Seagle & His Bridge **Classical baritone performing Negro Spirituals**

Oscar Seagle, born on October 31, 1877 in Ooltewah, Tennessee, was a prominent baritone, musician, and music teacher in the early twentieth century. After receiving his music education in Paris, France, in 1915, he founded the Seagle Music Colony, a summer music school in New York, known today as the Seagle Festival. Still in Paris, 1917-1918, under Columbia Record's recording label, he became known for his American folk songs, many of which were associated with World War I. In May 1917, he gained notoriety for his recordings of Burleigh's African American spirituals. He introduced several of Burleigh's solo arrangements of Negro spirituals in a recital, initiating wide use of Burleigh's solo and choral arrangements for recital and concert use.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Thurman, *Singing like Germans*, 160.; Schauensee and Newland, "Anderson, Marian," Grove Music Online.

⁸⁶ Schauensee and Newland, "Anderson, Marian," Grove Music Online.

⁸⁷ Jean Snyder, "Burleigh, Henry [Harry] T(hacker)," Grove Music Online, 16 Oct. 2013, Accessed 2 Jun. 2026, <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002248537>.

Marian Anderson - Burleigh's "Deep River"⁸⁸

Marian Anderson recorded "Deep River" in December 1923 under the Victor recording label. In her recording, because she is a contralto, she presents it in the key of D Major instead of my analyzed key of F Major. She also utilizes an orchestral accompaniment rather than piano. Nonetheless, Anderson presents her beautifully warm, *chesty* instrument, an instrument that many people attribute to the sound of Negro Spirituals. She walks the line between slave song and Western Classical art song with the artistic liberties that she brings to Burleigh's arrangement. She does not perform the song exactly as it is composed on the page. I suppose it is important to address that the score she had could very well be different from the edition I have.

Anderson occasionally rolls her R's in words like "river", "Lord", and "over" which does not fit the diction of the American English language, nor does it fit the enslaved African American dialect. This choice is interesting because I have argued reasons to roll R's in American English songs, such as for the purpose of releasing the back of the tongue to gain freedom of tone in my higher register. However, Anderson's rolled R's do not serve this purpose. In fact, it seems a bit random and does not fit the context of the song.

In general, Ms. Anderson's performance choices are inconsistent throughout the recording. Sometimes she slides between pitches, like in measure six on the word "Jordan," utilizing the style traits from African American songs. When she sings this same line the second and third time, she utilizes more Western classical style traits, eliminating sliding between pitches. She is also inconsistent with whether she dots her rhythms. As mentioned earlier, the dotted rhythms are another stylistic trait taken from Black culture. Specifically,

⁸⁸ H. T. Burleigh, Rosario Bourdon, and Marian Anderson, *Deep River*, 1923, Audio, <https://www.loc.gov/item/jukebox-68748/>.

here, it contributes the “church militant” style presented in the original Marsh arrangement. However, sometimes Ms. Anderson turns the dotted rhythms into straight eighth notes, which leans more to the Western classical style.

Ms. Anderson’s utilization of rubato is one big stylistic choice that she does well, such as in measures twenty-three to twenty-six, “that promis’d land where all is peace” (Figure 2.8). This stretching of the pitches and elongation of the text adds an extra layer of emotion that beautifully lends itself to the tone of longing.

Oscar Seagle - Burleigh’s “Deep River”⁸⁹

Oscar Seagle recorded “Deep River” before Marian Anderson in December 1916 under Columbia Records. Like Marian Anderson, he utilizes an orchestral arrangement rather than a piano arrangement and also presents the song in D Major. Also like Marian Anderson, he rolls his R’s throughout the song, which sticks out to the trained ear of any scholar of American English music. As mentioned with Ms. Anderson, the rolled R’s are simply inauthentic not only to American English diction, but to the African American slave dialect as well.

Again, it is unclear what arrangement of “Deep River” either singer used at the time. However, in measures nineteen through twenty, Seagle deviates from the contour of the melody in today’s edition of Burleigh’s arrangement. Look back at Figure 2.7. While Seagle maintains the composed rhythm, his contour more closely resembles that of Figure 2.6 from the hymnal, with the exception of eighth note on “you” where he repeats the previous pitch instead of moving to the upper neighbor, C. His contour is as follows:

⁸⁹ H. T. Burleigh and Oscar Seagle, *Deep River*, 1916, Audio, <https://www.loc.gov/item/jukebox-655500/>.

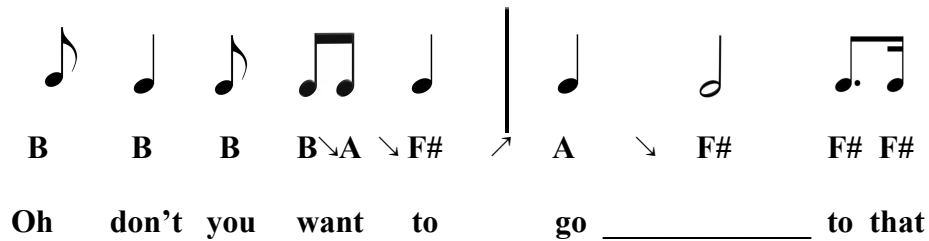


Figure 2.9: *Measures 19-20, as performed by Oscar Seagle.*

In measures twenty-two and twenty-five, he alters the rhythms. If you return to Figure 2.8 to the anacrusis of measure twenty-three, “that” is composed as a quarter note; however, Seagle shortens the pitch to an eighth note. In measure twenty-five, he changes the rhythm of “all is” from *quarter, half, quarter* to *quarter, quarter, half*. Textually, aurally, and emotionally, these alterations do not seem to serve any significant purposes. They read as mistakes rather than any type of rubato or conscious choice. Aside from Seagle’s deviations from the score, he presents an emotionally driven rendition of Burleigh’s “Deep River.” Next, I will move to a different Negro Spiritual, also arranged by Burleigh, “Balm in Gilead.”

The bridge from Blackness to whiteness has been slowly being built for quite some time. My comparison of Marian Anderson and Oscar Seagle is not to place one against the other; it is to show that both Black and white musicians have historically worked together toward the championship of the Negro spiritual.

Chapter 3

Balm in Gilead

Balm in Gilead

“Balm in Gilead” is a nineteenth century, African American spiritual with strong Hebrew Christian biblical ties. Like “Deep River,” these biblical ties also reference the area located around the Jordan River. Gilead is situated in modern-day Jordan. In “Deep River” when it speaks of crossing over the Jordan River into campground, the land of freedom that the enslaved African Americans are seeking is Gilead. Gilead is an area of ancient Palestine, east of the Jordan River, corresponding to modern northwestern Jordan. The region is bounded in the north by the Yarmūk River and in the southwest by what were known in ancient times as the “plains of Moab.” To the east there is no definite boundary. Sometimes “Gilead” is used in a more general sense for all the regions east of the Jordan River. In the bible, Gilead was the scene of the battle between Gideon and the Midianites and was also the home of the prophet Elijah.⁹⁰



Figure 3.1: *Gilead's geographical location.*⁹¹

⁹⁰ Britannica Editors, ed., “Gilead | Hebrew Bible, Jordan River, Transjordan | Britannica,” Britannica, accessed March 21, 2026, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Gilead-ancient-region-Palestine>.

⁹¹ Britannica Editors, ed., “Gilead”.

The "balm in Gilead" is a reference from the Old Testament; Gilead was the name of the mountainous region east of the Jordan River. This region was known for having skillful physicians and an ointment made from the gum of a tree particular to that area. The Balm of Gilead is interpreted as a spiritual medicine that is able to heal Israel and sinners in general. Many believed that this balm had miraculous powers to heal the body.⁹² While the "balm in Gilead" is an Old Testament reference, the text of this spiritual refers to the New Testament concept of salvation through Jesus Christ.

In the New Testament, God answers the suffering of His people by sending His own son to take our place. Jesus becomes our "balm in Gilead." It is Him we are called to turn to in our times of trial for healing and comfort. We sing this song with that assurance: no matter our hardships or supposed shortcomings, Jesus loves us enough to take our suffering upon Himself.⁹³

Different fragments of this spiritual have shown up in various other spirituals. These fragments are often referenced as "wandering verses;" they are quite common in the camp meeting and revival context, and were already a norm by 1800 in the African-American community. The text has various different forms. The traditional text is as follows:

"Balm in Gilead"

Refrain

*There is a balm in Gilead
To make the wounded whole;
There is a balm in Gilead
To heal the sin-sick soul.*

⁹² "There Is a Balm in Gilead," Hymnary.org, accessed March 21, 2026, https://hymnary.org/text/sometimes_i_feel_discouraged_spiritual#google_vignette.

⁹³ "There Is a Balm in Gilead," Hymnary.org.

Verse 1
*Sometimes I feel discouraged,
And think my work's in vain,
But then the Holy Spirit
Revives my soul again.*

Verse 2
*If you cannot sing like angels,
If you can't preach like Paul,
You can tell the love of Jesus,
And say He died for all.*

Figure 3.2: *Balm in Gilead traditional text.*⁹⁴

While this is the traditional text, this is not the text with which I am most familiar. The more familiar text utilizes a different first line of verse two and a third verse, found only in *some* hymnals. It reads as follows:

Refrain
*There is a balm in Gilead,
To make the wounded whole;
There is a balm in Gilead,
To heal the sin-sick soul.*

Verse 1
*Sometimes I feel discouraged,
And think my work's in vain,
But then the Holy Spirit
Revives my soul again.*

Verse 2
*If you cannot preach like Peter,
If you cannot pray like Paul,
You can tell the love of Jesus,
And say He died for all.*

⁹⁴ Betty Pulkingham, "Rejoice in the Lord 465. Sometimes I Feel Discouraged," Hymnary.org, accessed June 3, 2026, <https://hymnary.org/hymn/RITL1985/465>.

Verse 3
*Don't ever feel discouraged,
'Cause Jesus is your friend,
And if you lack for knowledge,
He'll not refuse to lend.*

Figure 3.3: *Balm in Gilead alternative text.*⁹⁵

While there are many biblical references of a “balm in Gilead” as mentioned earlier, this spiritual is based on Jeremiah 8:22: “*Is there no balm in Gilead/Is there no physician there?/ Why then is there no recovery/ For the health of the daughter of my people?*”⁹⁶ The song is an answer to the question in Jeremiah 8:22. Balm in Gilead’s refrain suggests that Jesus and his salvation (the balm) is only found in Gilead (freedom). Jesus’s salvation physically and spiritually heals wounded people and sinners. Moreover, as it pertains to the enslaved African Americans, this song suggests that their peace, freedom, and relationship with Jesus is found in Gilead, across the Jordan River, as explained in “Deep River.”

Verse one suggests that the Holy Spirit reminds the speaker that their abundance of hard work will bear positive results. The perspective of enslaved African Americans would be that the Holy Spirit gives them reassurance and strength to continue fighting for their physical and spiritual freedom. Verse two suggests that even if you do not have the spiritual power of those that study religion, be reassured that Jesus died to save us from our sins because He loves us. Many African Americans were uneducated, making it difficult for them to study religion. This verse suggests that as long as they have faith that Jesus died to free them, all shall be well on their long journeys to freedom. Verse three ties the first two verses

⁹⁵ “Worship and Rejoice #631. There Is a Balm in Gilead.” Hymnary.org, accessed June 3, 2026, <https://hymnary.org/media/fetch/104110>.

⁹⁶ “There Is a Balm in Gilead,” *The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology*, Canterbury Press, accessed March 21, 2026, <https://hymnology.hymnsam.co.uk/t/there-is-a-balm-in-gilead>; “Bible Gateway Passage: Jeremiah 8:22 - New King James Version,” Bible Gateway, accessed March 21, 2026, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah+8%3A22&version=NKJV>.

up nicely, suggesting that with Jesus's friendship and abundance of knowledge (verse two), the enslaved should never feel discouraged on their journeys (verse one).

Hymnal Arrangement Performance Analysis

After discussing and defining the text's origins and meaning, I would now like to turn towards an arrangement from a hymnal. The arrangement that I will use to provide this performance analysis is from the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* hymnal, number 614. The hymn, labeled a hymn of healing, utilizes the text mostly as it is presented in Figure 3.3, with two minor word changes that do not alter the text's meaning.

This arrangement is presented in F Major. Harmonically, the song is straightforward, utilizing four bar phrases and tonic and dominant prolongations that lead to standard half and perfect authentic cadences, as shown below in Figure 3.4. Within the verses, the only detour from this is the deceptive, evaded cadence at the ends of the verses that lead back into the refrain, shown in Figure 3.5.

$$\mathbf{F}: \mathbf{I} \rightarrow \rightarrow (\mathbf{i}^{4/2}) \rightarrow \mathbf{I} \rightarrow (\mathbf{V}^{4/3}) \rightarrow \mathbf{I} (\mathbf{V}^{4/2}) \mathbf{I} \rightarrow \rightarrow \rightarrow \rightarrow \rightarrow \rightarrow \rightarrow (\mathbf{IV}^{6/4}) \rightarrow \mathbf{I} \quad \mathbf{V}_{(\text{HC})}$$
$$\text{---}(\text{iii}^6)\text{---} \text{V}^7 \quad \text{I} \quad \text{V}^{4/3} \quad \text{I}(\text{ii}^{4/2}) \quad \text{I} \quad \text{IV}^6 \quad \text{I}^{6/4} \text{---}(\text{iii}^6) \text{V}^7 \quad \text{I}_{(\text{PAC})}$$

Figure 3.4: Measures 1-9.⁹⁷ Tonic prolongation is indicated by arrows (→). Dominant prolongation is indicated by underscores (___). The parenthesis indicates passing chords that embellish the prolonged harmonies.

$$\mathbf{F}: \mathbf{I} \rightarrow \rightarrow \rightarrow \rightarrow \rightarrow \rightarrow \rightarrow \rightarrow \rightarrow \rightarrow \rightarrow (\text{ii}^{4/2}) \mathbf{I} \rightarrow (\text{IV}^{6/4}) \rightarrow \mathbf{I} \rightarrow \rightarrow \rightarrow \mathbf{I}^6 \rightarrow \mathbf{I} \quad \mathbf{V}_{(\text{HC})}$$

⁹⁷ “Evangelical Lutheran Worship #614. There Is a Balm in Gilead,” Hymnary.org, accessed April 12, 2026, <https://hymnary.org/hymn/ELW2006/614>.

but then the Ho - ly Spir - it re - vives my soul a - gain.
 you can tell the love of Je - sus and say, "He died for all."
 and if you lack for knowl - edge, he'll ne'er re - fuse to lend.

(IV) I ----- ii^{4/2} V⁷/IV ii⁶ I^{6/4} ___ (iii⁶)_ V⁷ vi IV (DC/evasion)

Figure 3.5: Measures 10-17.⁹⁸ Tonic prolongation is indicated by arrows (→). Dominant prolongation is indicated by underscores (___). The parenthesis indicates passing chords that embellish the prolonged harmonies.

For purposes of performance, I suggest beginning the song at a *mezzopiano* dynamic because it better captures the healing quality of the song's text and it gives the singer room to grow throughout the strophes. I suggest this for each return to the refrain as well, with the exception of the final refrain, which should be sung at a *forte* dynamic. This will contrast each verse presentation, which should be sung at a *mezzo forte* dynamic. For the final refrain, shown in Figure 3.4, I suggest that the singer *ritards* into measure eight and *decrescendos* through the end, "to heal the sin-sick soul." Wholistically, the dynamics of the song should be as follows:

<u>Section</u>	<u>Dynamic Level</u>
Refrain	<i>mezzopiano</i>
Verse 1	<i>mezzoforte</i>
Refrain	<i>mezzopiano</i>
Verse 2	<i>mezzoforte</i>

⁹⁸ "Evangelical Lutheran Worship #614. There Is a Balm in Gilead," Hymnary.org.

Refrain	<i>mezzopiano</i>
Verse 3	<i>mezzoforte</i>
Refrain	<i>forte</i>

Figure 3.6: *Balm in Gilead* hymn dynamic performance guide.⁹⁹

Burleigh Arrangement Performance Analysis

Burleigh's arrangement features an altered second verse. His second verse implies more confidence in that African Americans have gained the education and ability to study religion. They can now educate others of their knowledge of Jesus's salvation, instead of having to be educated themselves. He omits verse three, but the change of text in verse two implies the meaning found in the original verse three. This is a much different outlook that may be due to the different time periods the songs were published. The original hymn text comes from the early to mid-nineteenth century, while Burleigh's text was interpreted and published around 1919.

Refrain

*There is a balm in Gilead,
To make the wounded whole;
There is a balm in Gilead,
To heal the sin-sick soul.*

Verse 1

*Sometimes I feel discouraged,
And think my work's in vain,
But then the Holy Spirit
Revives my soul again.*

⁹⁹ "Evangelical Lutheran Worship #614. There Is a Balm in Gilead," Hymnary.org.

Verse 2
*If you can preach like Peter,
 If you can pray like Paul,
 Go home and tell your neighbor
 “He died to save us all.”*

Figure 3.7: *Balm in Gilead* text from Burleigh’s arrangement.

For performance practice, the singer should first recognize that the anacrusis to measure five is still within the *ritard* as printed in the piano accompaniment in measure three and implied by the *a tempo* in measure five., shown below in Figure 3.8. Begin singing *mezzoforte* as indicated in the score.



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Figure 3.8: *Measures 1-6.*¹⁰⁰

After a chordal analysis, I notice Burleigh’s consistent use of tonic pedal tones throughout the song that maintain a sense of home. Home, being a place of peace and healing as suggested by the hymnal arrangement’s “Hymn of Healing” categorization. In measure 8, on the word “whole,” Burleigh does not cadence as the hymnal arrangement does in Figure 3.4. Instead, as shown in Figure 3.9, he utilizes a predominant chord progression that finally cadences in measure twelve on the word, “soul.” However, the cadence is inauthentic,

¹⁰⁰ H. T. Burleigh, *The Spirituals of Harry T. Burleigh: High Voice* (Miami, Fla: Warner Bros. Publications, 1990), 111.

whereas the same part in the hymnal arrangement has a stronger authentic cadence. The lack of a cadence on “whole” and the weaker cadence on “soul” create a feeling of uncertainty, such that the singer knows that there is a balm in Gilead with healing powers but lacks confidence that they can reach it, which is reassured by the verses. Moreover, this uncertainty is comforted by the healing power depicted by the aforementioned tonic pedals. This idea is strengthened in the final refrain, measures thirty-six through forty-six, when Burleigh composed tonic pedals in octaves that are reminiscent of church bells, or a call home. This time we receive a false ending in measure forty-four on the first “soul” that is reiterated to completion with a perfect authentic cadence in the final measure, as shown in Figure 3.10.

B^b: I ---- (IV^{6/4})I ii^{4/2} IV^{4/3} V⁷/IV ----- ii^{4/2} I_(IAC)

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Figure 3.9: Measures 7-12.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ H. T. Burleigh, *The Spirituals of Harry T. Burleigh: High Voice* (Miami, Fla: Warner Bros. Publications, 1990), 111.



B^b: ii^{4/2} IV^{4/3} V/IV -----

----- V⁷/IV ii^{4/2} I IV^{4/3} V⁷/IV ii⁷ iii vi ii V I_(PAC)

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Figure 3.10: Measures 40-46.¹⁰²

World renowned, African American baritone Paul Robeson has recorded a version of Burleigh's arrangement. Before I provide a performance analysis of his recording, I would like to provide some background information on who he is and why he is relevant here.

¹⁰² H. T. Burleigh, *The Spirituals of Harry T. Burleigh: High Voice* (Miami, Fla: Warner Bros. Publications, 1990), 114.

Paul Robeson & His Bridge

Education, Classical baritone performing for diverse audiences, & Political Affiliation

"As an artist I come to sing, but as a citizen, I will always speak for peace, and no one can silence me in this." - Paul Robeson¹⁰³

Paul Leroy Robeson was an actor, orator, athlete, lawyer, singer, author, scholar, activist and linguist. He was born April 9, 1898, in Princeton, NJ. He was the youngest of five children born to a runaway slave who became an educated minister, the Rev. William Drew Robeson, and a Quaker mother and schoolteacher from a family of abolitionists, Maria Louisa Bustill. Robeson's great-great-grandfather, Maria's great-grandfather, was a baker who supplied bread to Washington's army during the Revolutionary War and founded a mutual-aid society for African Americans.¹⁰⁴

Robeson was a very gifted student that attended Rutgers College in New Brunswick, New Jersey on an academic scholarship, becoming the university's third black student and its first black football player. He graduated valedictorian of his class in 1919 at a time when most African Americans were denied entrance to white colleges. His other scholarly accomplishments include being inducted into the Phi Beta Kappa Society and Rutgers' Cap and Skull Honor Society. He played five sports and won fifteen varsity letters in football, basketball, baseball and track. He was a two-time All-American in football who is in the College Football Hall of Fame. Robeson, who also spoke more than twenty languages fluently, honed his oratory skills as a member of the Intercollegiate Debating Association.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ "Paul Robeson," Columbia Celebrates Black History and Culture, accessed March 21, 2026, <https://blackhistory.news.columbia.edu/people/paul-robeson>.

¹⁰⁴ "Paul Leroy Robeson: Paul Robeson House & Museum," Paul Robeson House & Museum | Historic house in honor of Paul Leroy Robeson, January 23, 2018, <https://paulrobesonhouse.org/paul-robeson/>; Britannica Editors, ed, "Paul Robeson," Britannica, accessed March 21, 2026, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Paul-Robeson>; Rutgers University, "About Paul Robeson," About Paul Robeson | Paul Robeson at Rutgers, accessed March 21, 2026, <https://robeson100.rutgers.edu/about-paul-robeson>.

¹⁰⁵ Rutgers University. "About Paul Robeson."; "Paul Leroy Robeson," Paul Robeson House & Museum.

After graduating from Rutgers, he rejected a career as a professional athlete to attend law school at Columbia University in New York, where he earned his degree in 1923. He began working at a local law firm after graduation. While there, he faced blatant discrimination from the firm's stenographer, who refused to take dictation from him because he was black, which led to his departure. Consequently, due to the lack of opportunity for Black people in the legal profession and with the encouragement of his wife, journalist Eslanda Goode, who would become his manager, he left to turn fully to the stage.¹⁰⁶

Robeson was one of the preeminent figures of American theater in the early twentieth century. Robeson made his Broadway and London debuts in 1922. He joined the Provincetown Players, a prominent experimental theater group that included playwright Eugene O'Neill, and appeared in O'Neill's play about interracial marriage, *All God's Chillun Got Wings*, in 1924. Robeson won critical and popular acclaim for his stage and screen roles, such as *All God's Chillun Got Wings* (1924), *The Emperor Jones* (1925), and *Body and Soul* (1925). In the late 1920s, Robeson and his family moved to Europe, where he established both a singing and film career.¹⁰⁷

Robeson was one of the best-paid performers in the country. He had a superb bass-baritone singing voice. In 1925 he gave his first vocal recital of African American spirituals in Greenwich Village, New York City. Later, in London, he became world-famous as Joe in *Show Boat* (1928) with his incomparable performance of "Ol' Man River," an anthem of Black resistance, which became his signature song. Robeson's characterization of the title role in William Shakespeare's tragedy *Othello* (1930) in London won high praise, as did the Broadway production (1943), which set an all-time record run for a Shakespearean

¹⁰⁶ Britannica Editors, ed, "Paul Robeson.," "Paul Robeson," Columbia Celebrates Black History.

¹⁰⁷ Britannica Editors, ed, "Paul Robeson.," "Paul Robeson," Columbia Celebrates Black History.

play on Broadway, with 296 performances. Robeson was the first Black actor to play Othello on Broadway. As a concert singer, however, he earned his greatest fame performing a uniquely broad repertoire of spirituals, classical music, world folk songs and political songs that reflected the struggles of the marginalized and disenfranchised. He brought African American spirituals to people who did not see it as a serious musical form. In the 1940s, he sang spirituals at the Robin Hood Dell East outdoor arena, with a turnout at one concert of more than 7,500 people. He also sang with the Philadelphia Orchestra on several occasions.¹⁰⁸

Robeson was politically aware from a young age. At Rutgers he experienced racism both from his fellow teammates and those on opposing teams, whose refusal to play against a Black athlete resulted in Robeson being benched on one occasion. At his graduation he gave a valedictory speech in which he exhorted Black and white people to “clasp friendly hands” and recognize each other as “brethren.” Throughout his life, Robeson was a passionate advocate for legislation against lynching and racial segregation in the United States.¹⁰⁹

Robeson’s political affiliation caused the federal government to target him and his family, negatively affecting his later performance career. Described as an “outspoken Marxist” by historian and musicologist Kira Thurman, he was a tireless supporter of left-wing causes.¹¹⁰ After he first went to Russia in 1934, he found that he was treated better there than in the United States. “Here, I am not a Negro but a human being for the first time in my life,” he told reporters about his experience in Russia.¹¹¹ He spoke in support of workers and common people, both abroad and in the United States, and marched against

¹⁰⁸ Britannica Editors, ed, “Paul Robeson.”; “Paul Robeson,” Columbia Celebrates Black History.; “Paul Leroy Robeson,” Paul Robeson House & Museum.

¹⁰⁹ Britannica Editors, ed, “Paul Robeson.”

¹¹⁰ Thurman, *Singing like Germans*, 122.

¹¹¹ Thurman, *Singing like Germans*, 246.

discrimination. In 1937, he performed in London to benefit the antifascist Republican cause in the Spanish Civil War. During World War II (1939–45), Robeson rallied behind the Allied cause by selling war bonds and performing for American troops. Despite these efforts, he soon found himself a target of the anticommunist movement. His actions made him a social outcast in the eyes of many. The FBI put Robeson and his wife, Eslanda, under surveillance in 1941, which lasted until his death in 1976. Consequently, many of Robeson's concerts were canceled, record companies were no longer interested in recording his songs, and his income dropped from six figures to four. But, that did not stop Robeson's recognition as an international entertainer and social activist.¹¹²

In 1960, the people of East Germany brought Robeson to the German Democratic Republic to present him with a peace prize and an honorary doctorate from Humboldt University in East Berlin. The people of East Germany adored Robeson. According to Kira Thurman, Robeson was “a jovial, anticapitalist folk-singing giant who was unswervingly loyal to the [German Democratic Republic],” which “characterized the kind of African American musician that was acceptable to [*his*] East German audience.”¹¹³ East Germans pictured African Americans as oppressed laborers in America, so they viewed Robeson's work as a source of education for their citizens about the history of Marxism.¹¹⁴

Paul Robeson - Burleigh's “Balm in Gilead”

Paul Robeson recorded Burleigh's “Balm in Gilead” in a live performance at Carnegie Hall in 1958.¹¹⁵ Robeson's strong baritone voice presents the song in the B-flat

¹¹² Britannica Editors, ed, “Paul Robeson.”; “Paul Leroy Robeson,” Paul Robeson House & Museum.

¹¹³ Thurman, *Singing like Germans*, 242-243.

¹¹⁴ Thurman, *Singing like Germans*, 246.

¹¹⁵ “Paul Robeson - There Is A Balm in Gilead,” YouTube, March 21, 2012, https://youtu.be/okl2XbTM7xM?si=p2VrPKvu2-_2fBMw.

Major key that I have analyzed, but he sings it an octave lower than composed, beginning on D3 instead of D4. As I suggested in my performance analysis, he observes the written *ritard* in the piano on first “there is a balm” in measure four, with the *a tempo* in measure five.

Verse one enters at the anacrusis to measure thirteen with an *a tempo* marking; however, Robeson doubles the tempo through measure sixteen (“...in vain”). He settles into the original tempo by measure seventeen and maintains it through measure eighteen. Robeson then observes the written *ritard* in measure nineteen with more of a *molto ritard* into the refrain in measure twenty. Robeson’s approach brings more rubato to the song that is not indicated in the score. While I find this approach useful for the congregational hymn arrangement, having three full verses of text to get through plus refrains, I do not appreciate the rushed verbalization of text in this Burleigh arrangement. The text is what is most important here, and Robeson’s sprint through the text does not serve the text well, regarding emotional intent. Robeson repeats the same text inflection for the second verse and observes all other score markings.

As we move further into modern eras, we stop getting examples of historic singers recording Black solo music. This is not because it is not happening, but because we currently live in the era in which singers and scholars like myself are writing our history. Therefore, the following chapters will not feature performance analyses of specific singer recordings of Negro Spirituals.

Intermezzo

The Harlem Renaissance

Intermezzo

In the previous three chapters, as it pertains to the history surrounding Harry T. Burleigh, I have mentioned a few examples of someone making an effort to establish a bridge from Blackness to whiteness, such as:

- Burleigh's introduction of the African American oral music tradition to Antonín Dvořák.
- Dvořák's encouragement of Burleigh to transcribe the "negro melodies" for the preservation of American culture. Also, not yet mentioned, Dvořák wrote themes inspired by the songs introduced to him by Burleigh in his Symphony no. 9 in E minor ("From the New World").¹¹⁶
- Michael Tippett, a white English composer, used "Deep River" as one of the five spirituals included in his oratorio for *A Child of Our Time*, which was first performed in 1944.
- Marian Anderson performing Negro Spirituals for diverse audiences.
- Oscar Seagle performing and recording "Deep River," introducing other white music listeners to Black music.
- Paul Robeson's work as a Classical baritone performing for diverse audiences and his activism & political affiliation.

It is important to note that none of these bridges could or would have been built without the foundation of the original bridge of *Education*. All parties had to become educated in order to understand and perform the tasks that I now recognize as efforts that brought our Black and white communities together.

¹¹⁶ Wintle, "H. T. Burleigh."

[Burleigh] believed that artists, not politicians, would most effect progressive change. “They are the true physicians who heal the ills of mankind [...] They are the trailblazers. They find new worlds.”¹¹⁷

Although Burleigh’s songs are central to his work, his legacy goes well beyond them. He was a leader in Black New York’s cultural and political environment well before what is known as the Harlem Renaissance.¹¹⁸ He volunteered and fought in the Union Army and became a member of a newly formed Equal Rights League after the Civil War, working for full citizenship for African Americans and lobbying to “remove both race and gender barriers from all state elections.”¹¹⁹ Therefore, Burleigh’s work assisted in ushering in the art and scholarship of the Harlem Renaissance.

The Harlem Renaissance

The Harlem Renaissance is an era of African American cultural expression, centered in the Harlem section of Manhattan, New York City, from the end of World War I in 1919 to the mid-1930s. Harlem attracted nearly 175,000 African Americans, giving the neighborhood the largest concentration of black people in the world. One of the strongest expressions of African American culture was art, featuring literature, painting, sculpture, dance, and music, such as jazz, swing, and opera. This artistic movement was born to express realistic representations of what it meant to be Black in America,¹²⁰ apart from the white stereotypes that had influenced Black peoples’ relationship to their heritage and to each other.

In the early twentieth century, The Harlem Renaissance marked the emergence of New York City’s Harlem neighborhood as a Black cultural mecca, a center of social, artistic

¹¹⁷ Horowitz, “Harry Burleigh’s ‘Deep River.’”

¹¹⁸ Snyder, “Preface.”

¹¹⁹ Cooper, “On Harry T. Burleigh, His Life and Legacies.”

¹²⁰ “A New African American Identity,” National Museum of African American History and Culture.

and intellectual flourishing. The era is widely regarded as a golden age of African American culture, expressed through literature, music, theater and visual art. Prior to the Great Migration, in the 1880s, the northern Manhattan neighborhood of Harlem was originally developed as an upper-class white neighborhood, but rapid overbuilding led to empty buildings and desperate landlords seeking to fill them. Upon the Great Migration, in the early 1900s, a few middle-class Black families from another neighborhood known as Black Bohemia moved to Harlem, and other Black families followed. Some white residents initially fought to keep African Americans out of the area. But after failure to follow through, those white residents eventually fled. In 1915 and 1916, natural disasters in the south put Black workers and sharecroppers out of work. Additionally, during and after World War I, immigration to the United States fell, and northern recruiters headed south to entice Black workers to their companies. By 1920, some 300,000 African Americans from the South had moved north, and Harlem was one of the most popular destinations for these families.¹²¹

Conclusion

The social foundations of the Harlem Renaissance included: (1) the Great Migration of African Americans from rural to urban spaces and from South to North, (2) dramatically rising levels of literacy, (3) the creation of national organizations dedicated to pressing African American civil rights, uplifting the race, and opening socioeconomic opportunities, and (4) developing race pride, including pan-African sensibilities and programs.¹²² The

¹²¹ Isabel Wilkerson, "The Great Migration," *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*, accessed June 3, 2026, <http://warmth.isabelwilkerson.com/the-great-migration/>.

¹²² George Hutchinson, "Harlem Renaissance," *Britannica*, January 26, 2026, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Harlem-Renaissance-American-literature-and-art>.

Harlem Renaissance in some ways ushered in the Civil Rights Movement of the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Chapter 4:

Difficulty Loving Thy Enemy:

How African Americans Utilize Cultural Trauma to Establish Non-Black Awareness

(Mid-Twentieth Century)

Introduction

The legacy of the Civil Rights movement (1954-68) still persists today. This movement was a social campaign to abolish legalized racial segregation, discrimination, and disenfranchisement against African Americans in America. The African American collective identity is rooted in cultural trauma. In *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity*, sociologist Ron Eyerman, states that “as a cultural process, trauma is mediated through various forms of representation and linked to the reformation of collective identity and the reworking of collective memory.”¹²³ The trauma of slavery formed a collective identity amongst African American people. The collective memory that continues to ground the formation of a collective identity is established through African American history. Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Freedom Singers, and American composer Adolphus Hailstork each embody this cultural trauma and strived, or continue to strive, to bring awareness to the mistreatment of African American people from slavery, through the American Civil War and the Civil Rights Movements, to today’s remaining social injustices.

Dr. King, in his “Loving Your Enemies” sermon and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) Freedom Singers’ freedom songs presents cultural trauma on a platform easily accessible to their white counterparts. I will first discuss how King utilizes his intellectual connection to his white counterparts to bring awareness to the racial injustice that was occurring during the Civil Rights movement. I will also discuss how the SNCC Freedom Singers utilized their collegiate platform and connection with white folk singers to bring awareness of the struggles of Civil Rights workers through freedom songs.

¹²³ Ron Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1.

Likewise, today, Adolphus Hailstork (b. 1941) utilizes his mixed-race heritage and skillset as composer of classical art music, known historically as a white European art form, to bring awareness of the highly racial and political subjects on which he composes to non-Black consumers. My focus will be on Hailstork's *Songs of Love and Justice* (1992), which is a set of four songs set to excerpted texts from sermons delivered by Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. prior to his assassination in April 1968. By offering a musical analysis of this work, I will demonstrate how Hailstork stylistically crafts the cultural trauma presented through Dr. King's sermons with regard to text setting and harmony.

The Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement (1954-1968) is one of three civil rights movements that occurred consecutively beginning in 1865 after the American Civil War and the abolition of slavery. This period is called the Reconstruction Era. For African Americans, it granted emancipation and constitutional rights of citizenship in America. Although African Americans were legally granted these rights, they were increasingly deprived of their civil rights under Jim Crow laws. Consequently, African Americans were subjected to discrimination and constant violence from white supremacists in the South. This sparked the beginning of the first Civil Rights movement in 1865.

In the 1940s and 50s, African Americans were being displaced from places that were originally metropolitan areas for Black people due to slum clearance programs after 1947. This was occurring despite the general rise in socioeconomic status for African Americans in the years since the Civil War.¹²⁴ Large groups of African Americans began relocating away

¹²⁴ Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma*, 176.

from the South as families were making more money. “[Ninety] percent of blacks were in some form of paid employment.”¹²⁵ However, “black families [still] earned [fifty-four] percent of the median income of their white counterparts in 1950, and this increased to [fifty-seven] percent in 1952, only to drop back to fifty-two percent in 1958, returning to median post-war levels.”¹²⁶ These statistics help further explain the continued inflammation of cultural trauma for African Americans. While they seemed to be making strides at a normal American life with fair treatment, the American economy seemed to be working in opposition to their needs. Thus, even today, the socioeconomic status of Black people can never compete with the gentrification of their neighborhoods. Likewise, the American public school system was seeing shifts in demographics. “[B]etween 1940 and 1950, the number of blacks in higher education, primarily at ‘historically black colleges,’ increased dramatically from 23,000 to 113,735.”¹²⁷

By the Civil Rights Movement of 1954, the United States Supreme Court ruled laws unconstitutional that allowed racial segregation and discrimination. Court rulings in cases like *Brown v. Board of Education* banned segregation in public schools, and laws against interracial marriage were also banned. A series of laws like The Civil Rights Act of 1964, The Voting Rights Act of 1965, and The Fair Housing Act of 1968 were passed to ensure the elimination of discrimination against African American civil rights. The aforementioned court rulings and laws played a crucial role in the end of Jim Crow laws in 1965.

¹²⁵ Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma*, 175.

¹²⁶ Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma*, 175.

¹²⁷ Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma*, 175.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968) was an African American Christian minister and political philosopher. He is most known for his activism as one of the most prominent leaders of the Civil Rights Movement until his assassination in April 1968. Dr. King's main fighting strategy was one of non-violence. He fought to bring Black and white Americans together in brotherhood as an effort to cease racial violence, segregation, and discrimination in the South.

Dr. King was born on January 15, 1929 in Atlanta, Georgia to a family that was embedded in the church. He was originally named Michael King, Jr., after his father, who was born to sharecroppers. Michael King Sr. studied for his entrance into ministry at Morehouse College, an all-male historically Black college. In 1926, King Sr. married Alberta Williams, whose father, Adam Daniel Williams, was the Senior Pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in rural Georgia beginning in 1894. Shortly after marrying Alberta, King Sr. became Assistant Pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church. After Senior Pastor Williams died in the Spring of 1931, King Sr. assumed the vacant position. In August 1934, King Sr. visited Germany, where he visited sites associated with the Reformation leader Martin Luther.¹²⁸ Once he returned home to the states, he changed his name to Martin Luther King and his five-year-old son's name to Martin Luther King Jr.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ "Birth & Family," The King Center, accessed April 6, 2026, <https://web.archive.org/web/20130122161032/http://www.thekingcenter.org/birth-family>.; Catherine Caruso and Tim Ott, "Martin Luther King Jr.," ed. Biography.com Editors, Biography, January 30, 2026, <https://www.biography.com/activists/martin-luther-king-jr>.

¹²⁹ DeNeen L Brown, "The Story of How Michael King Jr. Became Martin Luther King Jr.," The Washington Post, December 31, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2019/01/15/story-how-michael-king-jr-became-martin-luther-king-jr/>.; Marshall Frady, *Martin Luther King, Jr.: A Life* (New York: Penguin Group, 2002), 12.

From a young age, Martin Luther King, Jr. either witnessed or experienced racial segregation and discrimination. The following accounts helped begin and shape his future career in activism.

Account 1

Martin Jr. became friends with a white boy whose father owned a business across the street from his home. In September 1935, when the boys were about six years old, they started school. King had to attend a school for black children, Yonge Street Elementary School, while his playmate went to a separate school for white children only. Soon afterwards, the parents of the white boy stopped allowing King to play with their son, stating to him, "we are white, and you are colored." When King relayed this to his parents, they talked with him about the history of slavery and racism in America, which King would later say made him "determined to hate every white person". His parents instructed him that it was his Christian duty to love everyone.¹³⁰

Account 2

Martin Jr. witnessed his father stand up against segregation and discrimination. Once, when stopped by a police officer who referred to Martin Sr. as "boy," Martin Sr. responded sharply that Martin Jr. was a boy but he was a man.¹³¹

Account 3

When Martin Jr's father took him into a shoe store in downtown Atlanta, the clerk told them they needed to sit in the back. Martin Sr. refused, asserting "We'll either buy shoes sitting here or we won't buy any shoes at all," before leaving the store with Martin Jr. He told Martin Jr. afterward, "I don't care how long I have to live with this system, I will never accept it."¹³²

¹³⁰ Stephen B Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound: A Life of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: HarperPerennial, 2014), 10.; Alan Pierce, *The Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Edina, Minnesota: Abdo Daughters, 2004), 14.; Ann S. Manheimer, *Martin Luther King Jr.: Dreaming of Equality* (Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books, 2004), 13-14; Alice Fleming, *Martin Luther King, Jr.: A Dream of Hope* (New York: Sterling, 2008), 4.

¹³¹ Frady, *Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 15.

¹³² Manheimer, *Martin Luther King Jr.*, 10.

Dr. King was highly influenced by his father's strength and resilience. In 1936, Martin Sr. led hundreds of African Americans in a civil rights march to the city hall in Atlanta to protest voting rights discrimination.¹³³ Dr. King later remarked that his father was "a real father" to him.¹³⁴

Many do not know that from a very young age Dr. King was a musician as well, which helped support his involvement in the church. He memorized hymns and Bible verses by the time he was five years old. Starting at six years old, he attended church events with his mother and sang hymns while she played piano. He later became a member of the junior choir in his church. He enjoyed opera and played the piano.¹³⁵

In 1942, at thirteen years old, Dr. King enrolled in Booker T. Washington High School, the only high school in the city for African-American students. There, after joining the school's debate team, he became known for his public-speaking ability. In school, Dr. King was most drawn to history and English, and chose English and sociology as his main subjects.¹³⁶ In 1944, at fifteen years old, Dr. King enrolled at Morehouse College after the college began accepting high school juniors who passed the entrance examination during World War II, when enrollment was low. In 1947, the summer before his last year at Morehouse, eighteen year old Dr. King chose to pursue ministry.¹³⁷

¹³³ Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound*, 8.

¹³⁴ Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound*, 12.

¹³⁵ Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound*, 9.

¹³⁶ Lillie Patterson, *Martin Luther King, Jr.: Man of Peace* (Champaign, Illinois: Garrard Publishing Company, 1969), 25.; Herb Boyd and Pablo Marcos, *Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Baronet Books, 1996), 23.; Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound*, 7, 15.; Manheimer, *Martin Luther King Jr.*, 16.; Fleming, *Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 8.

¹³⁷ "King at Morehouse," Morehouse College, accessed June 3, 2026, <https://morehouse.edu/academics/centers-and-institutes/martin-luther-king-jr-collection/king-at-morehouse>.

He had concluded that the church offered the most assuring way to answer "an inner urge to serve humanity," and he made peace with the Baptist Church, as he believed he would be a "rational" minister with sermons that were "a respectful force for ideas, even social protest."¹³⁸

In 1948, at nineteen years old, Dr. King graduated from Morehouse with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology.¹³⁹

Following graduation, Dr. King enrolled in Crozer Theological Seminary in Upland, Pennsylvania and also took several courses at the University of Pennsylvania. While attending Crozer, he was elected president of the student body. At the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. King took courses with William Fontaine, the university's first African-American professor. In 1951, Dr. King graduated with a Bachelor of Divinity from Crozer Theological Seminary. Meanwhile, he worked as an Assistant Minister at Boston's historic Twelfth Baptist Church, and at twenty-five years old, in 1954, Dr. King was named Pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. Simultaneously, he began his doctoral studies in Systematic Theology at Boston University, receiving his Doctor of Philosophy in June 1955.¹⁴⁰

“Loving Your Enemies”

On March 7, 1961 at the Detroit Council of Churches' Noon Lenten Services, Dr. King delivered his sermon, “Loving Your Enemies.” This sermon was given in the North to a predominantly white American demographic, bringing awareness of the racial violence that

¹³⁸ Frady, *Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 18.

¹³⁹ Paul Finkelman, *Encyclopedia of American Civil Liberties* (Oxfordshire, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2013), 889.

¹⁴⁰ Frady, *Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 20-22.; Lauren Hertzler, “Martin Luther King Jr.’s Time Studying at Penn,” Penn Today, April 4, 2018, <https://penntoday.upenn.edu/news/martin-luther-king-jrs-time-studying-penn>; Charles A. Radin, "Panel Confirms Plagiarism by King at BU," *The Boston Globe*, (October 11, 1991), 1.; Lewis V. Baldwin, *The Voice of Conscience: The Church in the Mind of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 42.; Linda K. Fuller, *National Days/National Ways: Historical, Political, and Religious Celebrations around the World* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 314.

was happening in the South. In the Christian calendar, Lent is a time of self-reflection leading up to the resurrection of Jesus Christ (ie. a time of change). While things were not perfect in the North, they were not as violent and unchanging as in the South. Bringing awareness to both white and Black Americans in the North helped to influence change in the South.

The sermon discusses what it means to love your enemies, how one should go about achieving said love, and why it is important to do so as it pertains to racial violence and segregation in the South. This sermon was eventually published in King's book, *Strength to Love*. The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute at Stanford University argues that, "as the first volume of sermons by an African American preacher widely available to a white audience, *Strength to Love* was a landmark work... This volume brought to the forefront King's identity as a compelling, well-educated, and compassionate preacher at a time when many [white people] knew him only as a civil rights leader."¹⁴¹ The King Research and Education Institute thus argues how important it was for white people to see Black people in a more positive, respected, and equal light by their standards in order for change to take place. Through his education and religious affiliation, Dr. King utilized his intellectual connection to his white counterparts to bring awareness to the racial injustice that was occurring during the Civil Rights Movement. However, in many ways this same education and religious affiliation has been used to establish and maintain racialized and cultural trauma in how it affects the African American psyche.

In "Loving Your Enemies," Dr. King proposes a number of steps that one must take in order to achieve equality and brotherhood in America:

¹⁴¹ Clayborne Carson, "Strength to Love," Stanford University: The Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute, accessed March 3, 2024, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/strength-love>.

[T]he first thing that the individual must do in order to love his enemy is to develop the capacity to forgive with a naturalness and ease. If one does not have the capacity to forgive, he doesn't have the capacity to love [...] Now, the only way to grapple with this conflict situation is that the mistreated person, the hurt person, the injured person, must develop the capacity to forgive, for it is only the individual who is injured or who is hurt that can forgive...And it is through this method that we are able to restore the moral balance of society or individual relationships, for in the final analysis, forgiveness means a willingness to go any length to restore a broken relationship.¹⁴²

As it pertains to trauma, it is difficult to forgive consistent attacks and hatred. How can you forgive someone who had every intention of harming you? If the purpose is to build a relationship, the effort must be made on both sides, which has proven to be the issue even today. For many years, Black people have been in charge of establishing a new relationship with white Americans after forgiveness. In the context of Christianity, Black people have had to lead the pack in loving thy neighbor when centuries of systemic racism, prejudice, and discrimination has consistently steered white people in an alternative direction.

The other thing that we must do in order to love the enemy neighbor is this: we must seek at all times to win his friendship and understanding rather than to defeat him or humiliate him. There may come a time when it will be possible for you to humiliate your worst enemy or even to defeat him, but in order to love the enemy you must not do it.¹⁴³

I disagree. African American Christians have utilized religion in order to distort the true reality they have and still do face. Black Christians have allowed religion to gaslight the Black experience in America. We often turn to our faith for guidance and comfort when we are being mistreated. We feel that we must make ourselves smaller in order to “win his friendship and understanding” when it should not have to be that way. The burden of

¹⁴² Clayborne Carson, “Loving Your Enemies, Sermon Delivered at the Detroit Council of Churches' Noon Lenten Services,” Stanford University: The Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute, accessed March 3, 2024, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/loving-your-enemies-sermon-delivered-detroit-council-churches-noon-lenten>.

¹⁴³ Carson, “Loving Your Enemies.”

establishing love amongst racial and cultural communities should not have to rest on the shoulders of the minority. This is the very thing that helps establish and maintain cultural trauma.

Freedom Songs

The SNCC Freedom Singers

During the 1960s, riots and protests arose in African American communities. These events silenced support from the white middle class but heightened support from private foundations. Since the peak of the Civil Rights Movement in the mid-1960s, African Americans had seen little improvement in legal and socioeconomic equality. This sparked the emergence of the Black Power Movement, which challenged Black leaders' attitude toward the adherence to non-violent activism. Black Power activists founded black-owned businesses, services, schools, and organizations, such as the Black Panther Party.

Musicologist Tammy L. Kernodle argues that “although the music of the black freedom movement is today identified as being just as significant as the period’s speeches and documentary histories for understanding the rhetoric and scope of the movement, music was not initially a major element of protest used by activists.”¹⁴⁴ The early 1960s saw the development of freedom songs. Freedom songs were adapted from spirituals and gospel songs. Consequently, music began to play a large role in African American protests for equality. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was a student-based group out of North Carolina that was part of the Albany movement of 1961, a movement to redefine the

¹⁴⁴ Tammy L. Kernodle, “I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free: Nina Simone and the Redefining of the Freedom Song of the 1960s,” *Journal of the Society for American Music* 2, no. 3 (July 18, 2008): 296.

public use of freedom songs. Kernodle describes how the Albany movement was in three parts:

First, [freedom songs] were used to bridge real or perceived cultural gaps between southern blacks and middle-class activists...Second, freedom songs conveyed key values and tactics of the movement in verses that progressed from freedom in its most abstract form (ie., calls for equality) to specific assertions about measures that would be used to achieve it (ie., Freedom Rides, sit-ins, wade-ins, going to jail). Finally, the performance of freedom songs became one of the ways in which grassroots leaders such as Fannie Lou Hamer emerged.¹⁴⁵

The rise of freedom songs was a catalyst for bringing awareness to the struggles of civil rights workers. In 1962, The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) Freedom Singers was organized “to capitalize on the national recognition garnered by the Albany movement.”¹⁴⁶ The group traveled to the North and performed for non-Black audiences to spread the news of the Civil Rights Movement. However, the press was distorting the meaning of the movement. To combat this, the group teamed up with famous white folk music singers, like Pete Seeger. “Songwriters such as Bob Dylan, Len Chandler, Phil Ochs, and others began to treat movement themes topically in their songs and devoted their music and services to further several campaigns.”¹⁴⁷ The SNCC Freedom Singers, along with the platforms of white folk singers, utilized freedom songs to bring awareness to non-Black people about the hardships that civil rights workers endured in the South.

Adolphus Hailstork

Dr. Adolphus Cunningham Hailstork III is a mixed American composer, pianist, conductor, and educator of African American, Native American and European descent.

¹⁴⁵ Kernodle, “I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free,” 297.

¹⁴⁶ Kernodle, “I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free,” 297.

¹⁴⁷ Kernodle, “I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free,” 298.

According to Hailstork scholar Angela Renee Blalock, Hailstork is one of the best-known African American composers of the latter half of the twentieth century. He has composed more than 250 works for chorus, solo voice, piano, organ, various chamber ensembles, band, orchestra, and opera, although his choral and solo vocal music are among his best-known works.¹⁴⁸

Hailstork's music has been described as postmodern and features several musical styles including African American folk idioms, such as the spiritual.¹⁴⁹ As a man of mixed race descent, his work blends musical ideas from the African, American, and European traditions,¹⁵⁰ incorporating elements from Western classical music and African American music styles, such as gospel, jazz, and blues. His body of work often references historical and modern-day events related to themes of black liberation, civil rights movements, and the African American experience. His choice to explore meaningful and sometimes disturbing events in American history serves as a call for listeners to engage with and contribute to building a more thoughtful and culturally rich society.¹⁵¹

Hailstork was born in Rochester, New York on April 17, 1941. He studied violin, piano, organ, and voice. As a young boy, he was introduced to the world of music as a chorister in the Episcopal church in the Choir of Men and Boys at the Albany Cathedral of all Saints. In 1959, he graduated from Albany High School, where he began his journey as a

¹⁴⁸ Angela Renee Blalock, "Adolphus Hailstork," New Muses Project, accessed April 4, 2026, https://newmusesproject.com/adolphus_hailstork/; "Adolphus Hailstork," ECS Publishing Group, accessed April 4, 2026, <https://www.ecspublishing.com/composers/h/adolphus-hailstork.html>; Otis Alexander, "Adolphus Cunningham Hailstork III (1941-)," Black Past, accessed April 4, 2026, <https://blackpast.org/african-american-history/adolphus-cunningham-hailstork-iii-1941/>.

¹⁴⁹ Blalock, "Adolphus Hailstork."

¹⁵⁰ Liz Player, "The Inside Story: Liz Player and Adolphus Hailstork: Chamber Works," Navona Records, November 27, 2024, <https://www.navonarecords.com/news/inside-story-liz-player-adolphus-hailstork-chamber-works/>.

¹⁵¹ Trinity Le, "Celebrating Black Music: Adolphus Hailstork," Classics for Kids, February 20, 2024, <https://www.classicsforkids.com/celebrating-black-music-adolphus-hailstork/>.

composer. He received his first Bachelor of Music in Composition at Howard University in Washington, DC in 1963. He then studied with Nadia Boulanger at the American Conservatory at Fontainebleau in France during the Summer of 1963. He returned to the states and studied composition at the Manhattan School of Music in New York, where he received his second Bachelor of Music in 1965 and his Master of Music in 1966. He joined the US Armed Forces in Germany from 1966 to 1968, after which he returned to the United States, pursued, and received his Doctor of Philosophy degree at Michigan State University in East Lansing in 1971. He also attended the Electronic Music Institution at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire the Summer of 1972 and the Seminar on Contemporary Music at the State University of New York at Buffalo the Summer of 1978.¹⁵²

As an educator, during his PhD, Hailstork earned a graduate assistantship at Michigan State University, East Lansing from 1969 to 1971. He continued his teaching career at Youngstown State University in Ohio 1971–1977 before joining the faculty at Norfolk State University in Virginia as Composer-in-Residence in 1977, where he remained until 2000. In 2000, he joined Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, where he obtained the titles of Eminent Scholar and Professor of Music. Today, he still works at Old Dominion University, holding the titles of Professor Emeritus of Music and Composer-in-Residence.¹⁵³

Adolphus Hailstork currently resides in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Among various commissions of his works in orchestral, choral, brass ensemble, and opera music, his honours include the Ernest Bloch award for choral composition (1971), First Prize from the Virginia

¹⁵² Doris Evans McGinty, “Hailstork, Adolphus (Cunningham),” Grove Music Online, accessed April 4, 2026, <https://doi-org.proxy.library.ucsb.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.42700>; Le, “Celebrating Black Music.”; Alexander, “Adolphus Cunningham Hailstork III (1941-).”; Helen Walker-Hill, “Adolphus Hailstork (1941),” Naxos, accessed April 4, 2026, https://www.naxos.com/Bio/Person/Adolphus_Hailstork/16359.

¹⁵³ McGinty, “Hailstork, Adolphus (Cunningham).”; Walker-Hill, “Adolphus Hailstork (1941).”; Alexander, “Adolphus Cunningham Hailstork III (1941-).”

College Band Directors (1977), Cultural Laureate of the Commonwealth of Virginia (1992), First Prize at the University of Delaware Festival of Contemporary Music (1995), and an Honorary Doctorate from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia (2001).¹⁵⁴

Analysis - “Difficulties” from *Songs of Love and Justice*, no. 2

In December 2022, the Minnesota Orchestra’s Communications and Development Writer, Michael Divino, conducted an interview with composer Adolphus Hailstork. When Divino asked what Hailstork hopes for listeners to take away from listening to his works that are based on pivotal, often violent events in American history, Hailstork responded:

Determination to make a better culture [...]We're such a violent kind of insane culture right now. When I grew up, I didn't think it was going to be this way. But I guess it has happened over the course of history and [with] other cultures...You know, music is comforting [for some] and [for] some [other] people it's awakening [...] So, there's a point to this musical utterance, and what is the point? And can it influence you to think about things?¹⁵⁵

It seems that, in general, Hailstork composes such works as *Songs of Love and Justice* to bring awareness to our American history. However, one could only stand to reason that as a man of mixed race, he has some deep connection to his African American heritage and the

¹⁵⁴ Le, “Celebrating Black Music.”; Alexander, “Adolphus Cunningham Hailstork III (1941-).”.; “Adolphus Hailstork,” African American Art Song Alliance, accessed June 3, 2026, <https://artsongalliance.org/composers/adolphus-hailstork/>; The College of William & Mary Libraries, “Honorary Degree Recipients,” Special Collections Research Center: Knowledgebase, accessed June 3, 2026, <https://scrc-kb.libraries.wm.edu/honorary-degree-recipients/>; Wayne State University, “Professor Kypros Markou Conducts Major Work by Distinguished African American Composer, Adolphus Hailstork,” College of Fine, Performing and Communication Arts, February 22, 2018, <https://cfpca.wayne.edu/news/professor-kypros-markou-conducts-major-work-by-distinguished-african-american-composer-adolphus-hailstork-47264/>; Susan Ritchie, “Hailstork, Adolphus (1941-),” Harvard Square Library, accessed June 3, 2026, <https://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/biographies/uu-composers-adolphus-hailstork/>; McGinty, “Hailstork, Adolphus (Cunningham).”

¹⁵⁵ “Music with Purpose: A Conversation with Dr. Adolphus Hailstork,” Minnesota Orchestral Association, accessed March 2, 2024, <https://www.minnesotaorchestra.org/stories/music-with-a-purpose/>.

cultural and generational trauma that comes with it. His personal description of his musical style suggests that his compositions borrow from both his African American and white heritages. As Art Song Augmented notes,

Hailstork has described his musical style as having a kind of “cultural hybridity,” since it borrows from both European and Black American traditions. Even as mid 20th-century compositional trends shifted toward extreme dissonance and atonality, Hailstork hewed closely to lyricism and tonality, all the while experimenting with different idioms [...] His musical style was shaped in part by his early experience as a boy chorister in an Episcopal church: “I came up in a high church, an Episcopal cathedral, traditional Anglican style. I was a boy soprano, did the whole nine yards... I was strongly influenced by my experience in the cathedral... The cadences, the melodic inflections, etc. in my music were very strongly influenced by that.”¹⁵⁶

Hailstork’s connection to both sides of his heritage makes his music accessible to Black and white people, which in this case are his target audiences.

“Difficulties,” the second song of *Songs of Love and Justice*, was set to an excerpted text from the aforementioned “Loving Your Enemies” sermon by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The text reads:

It is difficult to like some people.

Like is sentimental.

It is difficult to like someone bombing your home,

It is difficult to like somebody threat’ning your children!

It is so difficult,

so difficult to like some people,

difficult to like some people.

Like is sentimental.

¹⁵⁶ “Adolphus Hailstork,” Art Song Augmented, accessed March 3, 2024, <https://www.artsongaugmented.org/adolphus-hailstork>.

But Jesus says: “Love them”
But Jesus says: “Love, love them,”
For love is greater than like.¹⁵⁷

As mentioned earlier, this text was originally delivered during the Lenten season in 1961.

This text may have resonated with Hailstork for a number of reasons. It is a direct insight into the change for which Dr. King was fighting. Furthermore, Hailstork’s connection to this text and its religious application supports his connection to both sides of his mixed heritage. The Episcopal denomination and Anglican style are traditionally composed of white followers. Episcopalians observe Lent, while many traditionally Black denominations do not.

“Difficulties” begins with an orchestration that is reminiscent of the chaos that existed in the South during the Civil Rights Movement. This music is set like film music or music for an opera, in that it dramatizes the discomfiting message of the text. Hailstork utilizes atonality, an asymmetrical 5/8 meter, parallel octaves, and dissonant major and minor second intervals to depict the feeling of frustration and unrest as he introduces the proposed difficulty to love. This tension is heightened in measure eleven, right before the voice enters, with parallel octaves that are offset by a sixteenth of a beat.

Furthermore, Hailstork is specific in how he sets the text. Some of the lines are set in a declamatory, recitative-like style, while other portions are set lyrically. For example, following the tumultuous introduction, in measure fourteen, the orchestra rests as the vocal line begins. This places emphasis on the message that the voice is presenting. Not only does this force the listener to listen, but whenever the voice is sounding alongside the orchestration, the line is set an interval of a second against the accompaniment. This

¹⁵⁷ Emery Stephens, “Difficulties,” Song of America, accessed February 24, 2024, <https://songofamerica.net/song/difficulties/>.

dissonance forces the listener to feel the discomfort present in the cultural trauma of African American people in America. Hailstork's compositional choices appeal to the listeners' emotions in order to get their attention and gain their understanding.

In measures forty through forty-nine, there is a constant shift in meter, 5/8, to 6/8, to 2/4, back to 6/8, back to 5/8, and finally settling in 3/4 time. Measure 49 begins the "pastoral" section.¹⁵⁸ The 3/4 dance meter suggests that people should come together and love each other. Dance, and specifically the Waltz genre evoked here, requires a partner with whom one must be in synchronization. However, this is on a person-to-person level. As a whole, dance is a communal activity that has served as a way to bring communities of all kinds together for a common purpose. This same idea is presented in Dr. King's words, thus emphasized in Hailstork's setting.

With the exception of the new 3/4 time signature, the accompaniment in this section is composed similarly to the opening. Additionally, the bass line has stable octaves that give the section tonality as opposed to the original atonal octave progressions. The biggest shift is that the contour of the new section is presented in a sort of retrograde to the original, such that the original second-second-sixth-second-second intervals are now sixth-sixth-second-second-sixth intervals. This is a musical analogy to the change in action that Dr. King is seeking and that Hailstork is bringing to the forefront.

"But Jesus says: "Love them." [...] For love is greater than like." Here, still in measure forty-nine, the song settles in E-flat minor for the first iteration of "But Jesus says..." However, Hailstork is still utilizing the second intervals as he moves through different key

¹⁵⁸ Angela Renee Blalock, "An Analysis of Selected Art Songs for High Voice by Adolphus Hailstork, A Performer's Guide," (DMA diss., University of South Carolina, 2016), 10, https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?params=/context/etd/article/4421/&path_info=Blalock_sc_0202A_14482.pdf.

centers and their relative major/minor keys. By measure sixty-one, he has moved from E-flat minor to D Major (b minor) for the second iteration of “But Jesus says...” Dr. King did not repeat this line in his sermon. In fact, Dr. King does not repeat any text during his sermon. Hailstork’s choice to repeat this line emphasizes the importance of the message to the listener. But not only does he modulate the second iteration down a half step, he sets the text’s entrances on weak beats and briefly colors it in a major key before resolving to B minor, D Major’s relative minor. This calls more attention to the line and its meaning. The one measure of D major in measure sixty-one is the shimmer of hope that dwells in Dr. King’s words.

In E-flat minor, the only natural pitch is F. However, the song ends in F# Major. In this piece, the F is representative of the isolation that helps define African American cultural trauma. F# is representative of the hope for liberation from that isolation. It is indicative of the overall feeling of brotherhood that Dr. King often spoke about. Hailstork needed the F in E-flat minor to become an F# to finally be uplifted by love “for love is greater than like.” This augmented second, from E-flat to F#, shows love’s strength because not only is it an abnormal interval, but the pitch played an integral role in ending the song in a major key. When we get D Major in measure sixty-one, this is the first time we get a glimpse of F#. From that point forward, F# is pedaled across each harmonic shift. This hope for liberation and brotherhood is foreshadowed from measure sixty-one until we finally get F# Major at measure seventy-four as the vocal line is cadencing.

Hailstork’s compositional choices in this section of “Difficulties,” transform the meaning of this passage of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s original sermon. This portion of King’s sermon reads:

And I think this is what Jesus means when he says, “Love your enemies.” And I’m so happy he didn’t say, “Like your enemies,” because it’s kind of difficult to like some people. Like is sentimental; like is an affectionate sort of thing. And you can’t like anybody who’s bombing your home and threatening your children. It’s hard to like a senator who’s spending all of his time in Washington standing against all of the legislation that will make for better relationships and that will make for brotherhood. It’s difficult to like them. But Jesus says, “Love them,” and love is greater than like. Love is understanding, redemptive, creative goodwill for all men. And so Jesus was expressing something very creative when he said, “Love your enemies. Bless them that curse you. Pray for them that despitefully use you.”¹⁵⁹

Hailstork is specific in which words he chose to include in “Difficulties.” He excerpted words that could be a moment of connection for many people. The white people that serve as the target audience may not empathize with what it is like to have a senator that seems to be acting against what they and their minority group are fighting for. However, this line is specific to the history of the 1960s and not applicable in Hailstork’s 1990s setting. On the other hand, all people can empathize with the idea of someone bombing their home and threatening their children. It is indeed difficult to like those people.

Conclusion

And so put us in jail, and we will go in with humble smiles on our faces, still loving you. Bomb our homes and threaten our children, and we will still love you. Send your propaganda agents around the country and make it appear that we are not fit morally, culturally, and otherwise for integration. And we will still love you. Send your hooded perpetrators of violence into our communities at the midnight hours, and drag us out on some wayside road and beat us and leave us half dead, and we will still love you. But be assured that we will wear you down by our capacity to suffer.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Carson, “Loving Your Enemies.”

¹⁶⁰ Carson, “Loving Your Enemies.”

This quote by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is so powerful yet sad. This statement gives voice to the cultural trauma that African American people faced starting with enslaved ancestors. “We will weigh you down by our capacity to suffer” is spoken as an effort to uplift but is indicative of the hatred, racism, and discrimination Black people faced for hundreds of years.

And this is why I say that our struggle in the United States today is not merely a struggle to free the Negro, but it is a struggle to free our white brothers from their fears, from their prejudices, from their hate, and all of those attitudes that destroy and damage the soul.¹⁶¹

How can ending hate better the hater, thus bettering our American community? This is a question that unfortunately remains unanswered today. As a community, we can only continue to work to bridge the gap between Blackness and whiteness and have faith that the best will return tenfold. However, the great activism of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Freedom Singers, and Adolphus Hailstork has served, and still serves, the great purpose to highlight the cultural trauma long endured by the African American community.

¹⁶¹ Carson, “Loving Your Enemies.”

Recapitulation

The Civil Rights Movement

Recapitulation

In the previous chapter, as it pertains to the history surrounding the Civil Rights Movement and Adolphus Hailstork, I have argued more examples of someone, Black *and* white, making an effort to establish a bridge from Blackness to whiteness, such as:

- Martin Luther King, Jr.'s connection to Christianity and his activism as a public speaker, suggesting nonviolent solutions to bring Black and white people together during segregation.
- The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Freedom Singers' activism with their presentation of freedom songs to bring awareness of the Black experience to non-Black audiences.
- White Folk Music singers and songwriters Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, Len Chandler, and Phil Ochs's utilizations of freedom song themes in their music to highlight the hardships that civil rights workers endured in the South.
- Adolphus Hailstork's mixed Black and white race along with his connection to the predominantly white Episcopalian denomination of Christianity that has allowed him to more effectively place the Black experience on a platform (Western Classical Art Song) that is more accessible to non-Black audiences.

Again, it is important to note that none of these bridges could or would have been built without the foundation of the original bridge of *Education*. All parties had to become educated, be it music education or religion, in order to understand and perform the tasks that I continue to recognize as efforts that brought our Black and white communities together.

Chapter 5:

Still Building the Bridge...

(Late Twentieth Century to Early Twenty-first Century)

Moses Hogan

Moses Hogan (1957-2003) was an internationally known African American composer, arranger, conductor, pianist, and editor, best known for his solo and choral settings of African-American spirituals. His greatest influence was his African American Baptist church upbringing, particularly the unaccompanied spiritual arrangements to which he was introduced at a young age. As described by an LA Times critic, “as an arranger of spirituals, Hogan is by turns tricky, eloquent and unpredictable.” Until his very young death in 2003 at just forty-five years old, Moses Hogan was one of the most celebrated contemporary directors and arrangers of spirituals.¹⁶²

In his short life, Hogan created dozens of new original arrangements of classic spirituals, and formed several choirs that performed them with new vitality. He is considered one of the world’s greatest arrangers of spiritual music, is almost single-handedly responsible for the emergence of concert spirituals into the standard choral repertoire, and is credited with the popularization of professional choral spiritual singing. Over his lifetime, he published eighty-eight arrangements for voice. Various sources say eight of these arrangements were solo pieces; however, at least ten songs were solo arrangements (*Deep River Collection*). His arrangement of the spiritual, “Ezekial Saw de Wheel,” is perhaps his most celebrated work. Ezekial’s wheel is a symbol that resonated deeply with Africans that had been forced into slavery in America.¹⁶³

¹⁶² “Moses G. Hogan, 45; Arranged Spirituals, Led His Own Chorale,” Los Angeles Times, February 14, 2003, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2003-feb-14-me-passings14.1-story.html>; “Moses Hogan,” Weiner Elementary Original, accessed February 28, 2026, <http://www.weinerelementary.org/moses-hogan.html#:~:text=The%20song%20%22Deep%20River%22%20is%20considered%20one,who%20wanted%20to%20run%20away%20to%20freedom>; Anne Shelley, “Hogan, Moses (George),” Grove Music Online, February 6, 2012, <https://doi-org.proxy.library.ucsb.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2219164>; Cristina Stanescu, “Moses Hogan,” Song of America, March 27, 2024, <https://songofamerica.net/composer/hogan/>.

¹⁶³ Stanescu, “Moses Hogan.”; “Moses Hogan Biography,” Ogden Museum of Southern Art, April 15, 2020, <https://ogdenmuseum.org/moses-hogan/>; “Moses Hogan,” Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, accessed April 4,

Moses George Hogan was born in New Orleans, Louisiana on March 13, 1957. He lived with five siblings and his parents, who instilled in their children a passion for music. He did not study piano formally but was accompanying choirs at two churches by the time he was six years old. He was an accomplished pianist by the age of nine. His family church was the A.L. Davis New Zion Baptist Church in New Orleans. Hogan's father, from whom he received his same name, was a bass singer in the church choir while his uncle, Edwin B. Hogan, was the Minister of Music and organist. Hogan's mother, Gloria Hogan, was a nurse.¹⁶⁴

Hogan's Bridge:
Education, Publishing and Recording Success, &
Internationally acclaimed Choir Director

Hogan was musically educated from a young age, first enrolling in Xavier University Junior School of Music in New Orleans, Louisiana. In his sophomore year of high school, he was accepted to New Orleans Center for Creative Arts High School and was in its first graduating class of 1975. In 1977, he won first place in the twenty-eighth annual Kosciusko Foundation Chopin Competition in New York for piano. In pursuit of a career as a classical pianist, Hogan was awarded a full scholarship to the Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Ohio, where he studied piano and graduated in 1979 with a Bachelor of Music degree. Immediately after graduation, he began graduate studies at the Juilliard School of Music, which he did not complete, and later went to study classical music in Vienna. He later returned to the states to

2026, <https://www.aso.org/artists/detail/moses-hogan>.; Amistad Research Center, "Moses Hogan and His Music," Amistad Research Center, March 12, 2010, <https://amistadresearch.wordpress.com/2010/03/12/moses-hogan-and-his-music/>;

¹⁶⁴ Shelley, "Hogan, Moses (George).; Dave McNary, "Moses Hogan," Variety, April 17, 2003, <https://variety.com/2003/scene/people-news/moses-hogan-1117884784/>.; "Moses Hogan," Atlanta Symphony Orchestra.

attend Louisiana State University, where he was offered the opportunity to work for his doctorate, which he decided not to pursue.¹⁶⁵

In 1980, Hogan returned to New Orleans and almost exclusively turned his attention to choral music. He perceived a decrease in popularity of traditional spirituals, so he began composing new arrangements to revive the genre, the first being *Elijah Rock* in 1994. His spiritual arrangements, original compositions, and other works have been revered by audiences and praised by critics including Gramophone magazine. They have become staples in the repertoires of high school, college, church, community and professional choirs worldwide. His choral style, high musical standards, and unique repertoire have consistently elicited praise from critics worldwide. He has published five songbooks under Hal Leonard, exclusively.¹⁶⁶

He founded various ensembles such as the New World Ensemble in 1980, the Moses Hogan Chorale in 1993, and most notably, the Moses Hogan Singers in 1998. In total, nine albums were released under his choral direction and featured his arrangements.¹⁶⁷

The Moses Hogan Chorale was a forty-member ensemble founded to preserve and perform African American spirituals. The Chorale received international acclaim for its mesmerizing blend of voices, having toured across the United States and Europe. It was one of only two American choirs invited to sing at the 1996 World Choral Symposium in Sydney, Australia, and was the first African American choir to perform there. The Moses Hogan Chorale stopped touring in 1999. They were so loved and respected that the cities of Oakland, Richmond, Berkeley, San Mateo, East Palo Alto, Palo Alto and the City and

¹⁶⁵ McNary, "Moses Hogan."; "Moses Hogan," Atlanta Symphony Orchestra.

¹⁶⁶ McNary, "Moses Hogan."; Shelley, "Hogan, Moses (George)."; Stanesco, "Moses Hogan."

¹⁶⁷ Shelley, "Hogan, Moses (George)."

County of San Francisco have proclaimed November 20, 1999 to be “Negro Spirituals/Moses Hogan Chorale Day.”¹⁶⁸

The Moses Hogan Singers made their debut in 1998 in New York at Alice Tully Hall during the World Projects Corporation *New York Choral Festival*. The ensemble is a collaboration of musicians dedicated to the preservation, integrity and excellence of the multiple aspects of choral music, especially repertoire by Moses Hogan and other works by African American composers. The Moses Hogan Singers made their recording debut in 1998 on the EMI record label with acclaimed soprano Barbara Hendricks on the release entitled, *Give Me Jesus*, which features the arrangements of Moses Hogan. Some prestigious venues at which they performed include the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. and the Sydney Opera House in Sydney, Australia.¹⁶⁹

In September 2002, Hogan was hospitalized for a brain tumor-induced stroke and died five months later in New Orleans on February 11, 2003 at the age of forty-five.¹⁷⁰ Not long before his death, he received the Tribute to the Classical Arts Outstanding Contribution Award in recognition of his preeminence in keeping the spiritual tradition alive and vital in schools, churches and concert halls. When he died, Hogan was artist-in-residence at Dillard University and Loyola University, both in New Orleans.¹⁷¹

The following two chapters will explore two spirituals that Moses Hogan arranged as part of his 2000 songbook publication, *The Deep River Collection*, a collection of ten

¹⁶⁸ Stanescu, “Moses Hogan.”; “Moses G. Hogan,” Los Angeles Times.; “‘Negro Spirituals/Moses Hogan Chorale Day’ Proclaimed,” The Negro Spiritual, accessed April 4, 2026, <https://www.dogonvillage.com/negrospirital/one/pg6.htm>.

¹⁶⁹ “The Moses Hogan Singers,” Moses Hogan, accessed April 4, 2026, https://www.moshogan.com/moses_hogan_singers.htm; McNary, “Moses Hogan.”

¹⁷⁰ Shelley, “Hogan, Moses (George).”

¹⁷¹ McNary, “Moses Hogan.”

spirituals for solo voice and piano. Each chapter will feature two arrangements of the spiritual, one from a hymnal and one by Hogan.

Chapter 6

Give Me Jesus

Give Me Jesus

“Give Me Jesus” is an African American spiritual that draws upon both African and European American musical roots. There are quite a few different versions, textually and musically, but the original appears to have been transcribed in 1845 by Jacob Knapp, a Baptist minister in New York, for *Evangelical Harp*, a historical Christian songbook. However, the accompanying music melody matches the one found in *The Story of the Jubilee Singers: With Their Songs*, by J. B. T. Marsh (1876), like “Deep River” (Figure 6.1). The origins of this spiritual appear to be a mixture of the white hymn tradition and the creativity and existential experiences of enslaved Africans.¹⁷² This suggests that the original song or text was taught to the enslaved African American once they were brought to America. The consequential melody as we know it today was transmitted orally by enslaved African Americans and first transcribed by white American Christians.

The phrase ‘Give me Jesus’ is both the title of a historic African-American spiritual song and a profound prayer. It expresses a deep longing for a relationship with Jesus Christ above any worldly possessions, status, or comfort, signifying that He is the ultimate and only true treasure...This deep desire for a Savior is powerfully expressed in the worship anthem, ‘Give Me Jesus.’ More than just a song, it is a spiritual declaration, a heartfelt prayer, and a testament to the sufficiency of our Lord. This sacred hymn has echoed through generations, providing solace in suffering, strength in weakness, and an unshakeable focus on the One who truly matters.¹⁷³

¹⁷² Thomas L. Baynham and C. Michael Hawn, “History of Hymns: ‘Give Me Jesus,’” Discipleship Ministries, January 20, 2021, https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/history-of-hymns-give-me-jesus#:~:text=The%20spiritual%20%22Give%20Me%20Jesus%22%20has%20origins,including:%20*%20Bluegrass%20*%20Contemporary%20Christian%20genres.; Anthony Esolen, “Give Me Jesus,” Word & Song by Anthony Esolen, July 29, 2025, <https://anthonyesolen.substack.com/p/give-me-jesus/>.

¹⁷³ Kshamta Poorun, “‘Give Me Jesus’: The Meaning and Story behind the Powerful Worship Anthem,” Just Jesus Time, November 2, 2025, <https://justjesustime.com/give-me-jesus/>.

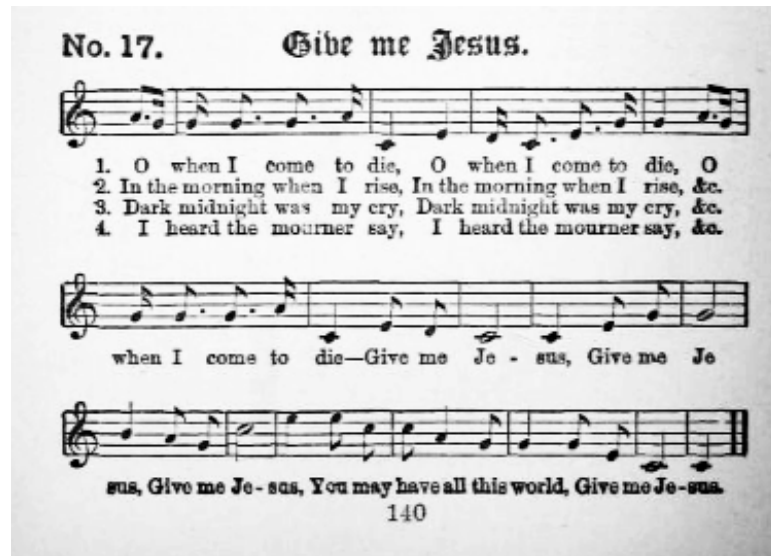


Figure 6.1: “Give Me Jesus” from *The Story of the Jubilee Singers: With Their Songs*, by J. B. T. Marsh (1880)¹⁷⁴

As pictured in Figure 6.1, Fisk Jubilee Singers historian J. B. T. Marsh records the following verses in his 1880 publication:

- Verse 1: O, when I come to die, Give me Jesus. [Refrain]
- Verse 2: In the morning when I rise, Give me Jesus. [Refrain]
- Verse 3: Dark midnight was my cry, Give me Jesus. [Refrain]
- Verse 4: I heard the mourner say, Give me Jesus. [Refrain]

Refrain: Give me Jesus. You may have all this world. Give me Jesus.

Figure 6.2: “Give Me Jesus” verses from *The Story of the Jubilee Singers: With Their Songs*, by J. B. T. Marsh (1880)¹⁷⁵

While this is the most original published text, numerous first stanzas appear over the decades with the refrain “Give me Jesus,”¹⁷⁶ although collections today universally begin with “In the

¹⁷⁴ J. B. T. Marsh, “The Story of the Jubilee Singers,” Smithsonian Libraries, 140, accessed February 15, 2026, <https://library.si.edu/digital-library/book/storyofjubilees00mars>.

¹⁷⁵ Marsh, “The Story of the Jubilee Singers.”

¹⁷⁶ Baynham and Hawn, “History of Hymns.”

morning when I rise” but continue with a variety of additional verses, listed below in Figure 6.3.

*Verse 1: In the morning when I rise, Give me Jesus. [Refrain]

Verse 2: I heard my mother say, Give me Jesus. [Refrain]

Verse 3: Oh, when I am alone, Give me Jesus. [Refrain]

*Verse 4: Dark midnight was my cry, Give me Jesus. [Refrain]

Verse 5: Just about the break of day, Give me Jesus. [Refrain]

*Verse 6: Oh, when I come to die, Give me Jesus. [Refrain]

Verse 7: And when I want to sing, Give me Jesus. [Refrain]

Refrain: Give me Jesus. You may have all this world. Give me Jesus.

Figure 6.3: All “Give Me Jesus” verses. This list includes the order with the most commonly used verses indicated by an asterisk (*).¹⁷⁷

“Give me Jesus” is often used during funerals and Lent.¹⁷⁸ It emerged from the rich oral tradition of enslaved African Americans, serving as a cry, a declaration, and a source of strength during unimaginable hardship. It was a powerful expression of their unwavering trust in Christ, whom they viewed as their ultimate hope and treasure. Thus, it captures the resilient spirit of the enslaved African Americans. The verses reveal a profound truth that for the enslaved, Jesus was a constant companion and their ultimate destination. While material possessions, freedom, and even life itself could be stripped away, the one thing that could never be taken was the hope found in Jesus.¹⁷⁹

Within the song’s most standard first verse, “In the morning when I rise,” the *morning* is utilized symbolically to represent “the time for going to heaven and for the resurrection.”¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Baynham and Hawn, “History of Hymns.”

¹⁷⁸ Baynham and Hawn, “History of Hymns.”

¹⁷⁹ Poorun, “Give Me Jesus.”

¹⁸⁰ Howard Washington Odum and Guy Benton Johnson, *The Negro and His Songs a Study of Typical Negro Songs in the South by Howard W. Odum and Guy B. Johnson* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1925).

The earliest post-Civil War collection, *Slave Songs of the United States* (1867), contains several slave songs on this *morning* theme. *Slave Songs of the United States* is an authoritative source consisting of songs collected and transcribed by northern abolitionists during the Civil War from African Americans who lived on plantations in the South Carolina sea islands. One of the northern abolitionists, Lucy Garrison, was a professional musician, and she led the cause in transcribing the 136 spirituals in the collection. Thus, like Antonín Dvořák in Chapter 1, Lucy Garrison created a bridge from Blackness to whiteness with her spiritual transcriptions. The editors of *Slave Songs of the United States* eliminated songs from the collection that they felt were inauthentic, being too similar to hymns found in white collections. Since that time, however, scholars have become aware of numerous spirituals that draw upon phrases from white hymns, subsequently being transformed by African American creativity.¹⁸¹

Marsh Arrangement vs Hymnal Arrangement Performance Analysis

After discussing and defining the text's origins and meaning, I would now like to turn towards an arrangement from a hymnal. The arrangement that I will use to provide this performance analysis is from the *Hymns of Promise* hymnal, number 133. The hymn, categorized under "Prayer and Devotion," utilizes the text labeled as the most commonly used lines in Figure 6.2. I have placed the relevant lines below:

Verse 1: In the morning when I rise, Give me Jesus. [Refrain]

Verse 2: Dark midnight was my cry, Give me Jesus. [Refrain]

Verse 3: Oh, when I come to die, Give me Jesus. [Refrain]

¹⁸¹ Baynham and Hawn, "History of Hymns."

Refrain: Give me Jesus. You may have all this world. Give me Jesus.

Figure 6.4: “Give Me Jesus” verses from *Hymns of Promise*, number 133.¹⁸²

First, comparing the hymnal arrangement to the Marsh arrangement, the hymnal verses are similar to the Marsh verses (Figure 6.2), except in a different order and with the omission of the fourth verse. The Marsh arrangement, compared to Figure 6.3, presents the verses in this order: verse three, verse one, and verse two. Beginning the song with “O when I come to die” does not initially provide an uplifting spirit of prayer and devotion. Chronologically, it seems more fitting, as the text is presented in *Hymns of Promise*, to start the song with waking up to start your day or journey and to end with death, such that it is everyone’s final step in life.

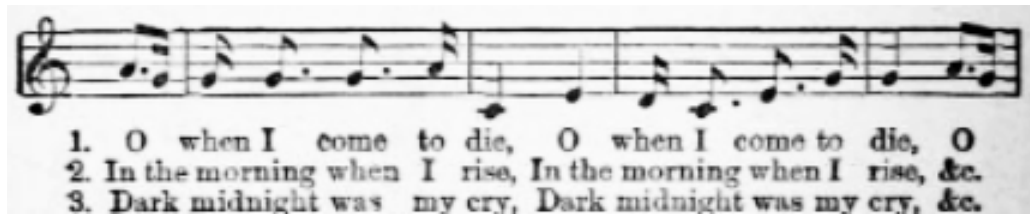
Both songs are presented in C Major. It is interesting that a song with such a foreboding text is presented in a major key; however, it fits the overall connotation of the song such that the enslaved’s reception of Jesus in return for their hardships is a reward worth celebrating. While Marsh’s arrangement appears to be composed without a meter, it is presented in a 2/4 time signature. The hymnal arrangement is presented in 4/4 but has the same metrical setting spread out over longer durations.

The Marsh setting utilizes rhythms that are much more indicative of the African American music tradition with an abundance of dotted rhythms. For comparison, I have placed the opening line of both arrangements below in Figure 6.5. The hymnal arrangement has a few dotted rhythms but features more straight quarter note rhythms in measures one and three. From personal experience singing different arrangements of “Give Me Jesus,” the

¹⁸² “Hymns of Promise Page 163: Hymn #133. Give Me Jesus,” Hymnary.org, accessed April 12, 2026, <https://hymnary.org/hymn/HOP2015/page/163>.

rhythms found in the hymnal are much more common than those presented in the Marsh arrangement. Although, this may be because the hymnal tradition has always made songs more singable for the amateur musicians. I argue that this simplification of rhythms is also largely due to the song's connection to European American culture.

Marsh Arrangement



Hymnal Arrangement

Unison

G C G Am Em Dm G C

1 In the morn - ing, when I rise, in the morn - ing, when I rise,
 2 Dark mid - night was my cry, dark mid - night was my cry,
 3 Oh, when I come to die, oh, when I come to die,

Figure 6.5: Opening line of “Give Me Jesus” from *The Story of the Jubilee Singers: With Their Songs*, by J. B. T. Marsh (1880)¹⁸³ and *Hymns of Promise*, number 133,¹⁸⁴ respectively.

With the song's repetition of text, I can appreciate the hymnal's setting of the text, utilizing different cadences at the end of each repetition. For example, the song cadences twice before we actually get the final definitive cadence, that so happens to be a plagal cadence, which was utilized almost exclusively in sacred music. The fact that we get strong plagal cadences in measure eight, the end of the verse, and in measure sixteen, the end of the refrain, aurally places the listener in the church. This strengthens the profundity of the

¹⁸³ Marsh, “The Story of the Jubilee Singers.”

¹⁸⁴ “Hymns of Promise.” Hymnary.org.

enslaved African Americans' connection to Jesus with this prayer. Also, for performance purposes, the singer should take note of the fact that there is no cadence after the third repetition of the text in measure six. Here we get a continuation of the musical phrase (a secondary dominant chord rather than a cadence), concluding that we finally get the full, complete thought of the text, as presented in Figure 6.3, from the anacrusis of measure five through measure eight. The singer should work to not anticipate a cadential moment here and continue spinning their air through the end of the entire phrase.

Unison

C: V⁶ I V⁶ vi_(DC) iii⁶ ii⁶ ii^{6/5} V⁷ I_(IAC)

V⁶ vi⁷ vi^{5/3} I^{6/4} (vi^{4/2}) V^{7/V} V⁷ I (IV^{6/4}) I_(PC)

Figure 6.6: Measures 1-8 of “Give Me Jesus” from Hymns of Promise.¹⁸⁵ The cadences are indicated in the roman numeral analysis by subscripted letters in parentheses.

DC = Deceptive Cadence; IAC = Imperfect Authentic Cadence; PC = Plagal Cadence.

Within the refrain, the anacrusis of measure nine through measure sixteen, there are repetitions of the text, “Give me Jesus.” However, instead of the cadential figures after each

¹⁸⁵ “Hymns of Promise.” Hymnary.org.

repetition, we are presented with a series of dominant seventh chords that lead to the aforementioned plagal cadence at the end in measure sixteen, as shown below in Figure 6.7. This absence of cadences after each repetition helps the singer build emotional tension as they ascend the octave from the low E natural in measure eight to the high E natural in measure twelve. Similar to measures five through eight, measures thirteen through sixteen have the same continuation function; thus, the singer should not only approach this line similarly, with their air spinning through the end of the entire phrase, but they should approach the entirety of the refrain this way. This suggests that even though the singer should observe the punctuation in measures nine through twelve with breaths, they should avoid dropping their chest in an effort to reset for each phrase. The singer should keep the chest lifted through these *button* breaths so the line maintains its direction through the singer's breath flow.

Refrain (Harmony)

Give me Je - sus. Give me Je - sus,

C: (I) V V⁷ vi V⁷ V⁷/IV



Figure 6.7: Measures 9-16 of “Give Me Jesus” from *Hymns of Promise*.¹⁸⁶ The cadences are indicated in the roman numeral analysis by subscripted letters in parentheses. PC = Plagal Cadence.

Hogan Arrangement Performance Analysis

Moses Hogan’s arrangement of “Give Me Jesus” from *The Deep River Collection* was composed in 2000. This anthology serves as Hogan’s “unique contribution to the deep river of the Negro spirituals.”¹⁸⁷ The anthology describes Hogan’s arrangements as a fusing of “harmonic sensibility honed by his years as a student and practitioner of classical piano literature, his love of the human voice, and his musical roots in the African-American Baptist church.”¹⁸⁸

The arrangement is presented in E-flat Major and common time. Hogan utilizes an abundance of ninth chords throughout the song, which by this time had become a norm of the African American music tradition. These ninth chords appear often in the Jazz and Blues music genres, which had and still has a heavy influence on contemporary Black art music. Thus, Hogan has taken the original foundation of the spiritual as a predecessor like Harry T.

¹⁸⁶ “Hymns of Promise.” Hymnary.org.

¹⁸⁷ Moses Hogan, *The Deep River Collection: Ten Spirituals Arranged for Solo Voice and Piano* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2000), 2.

¹⁸⁸ Hogan, *The Deep River Collection*, 2.

Burleigh may have presented it, and placed it on a higher pedestal in the form of Western Classical art song in an arrangement that is much more performative and emotionally driven than some earlier arrangements of the song. He allows the harmonies to drive the performance of the song.

Hogan presents the text as found below in Figure 6.8. This is the same text that was presented in *Hymns of Promise* in Figure 6.4, except Hogan employs use of the slave dialect to help drive the African American slave song tradition, making this arrangement more historically accurate as it pertains to diction. However, an interesting point to note is the change in rhythm for each new verse (Figure 6.9).

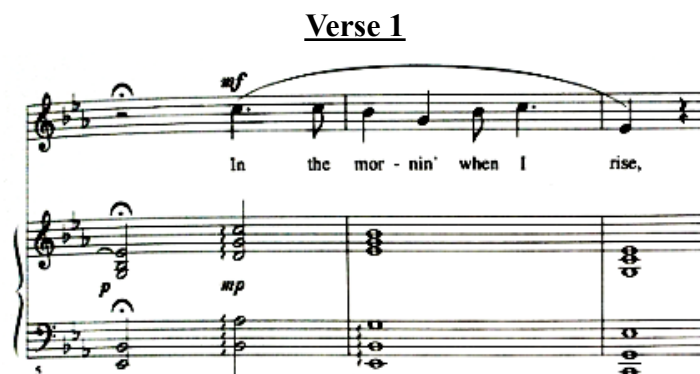
Verse 1: In the mornin' when I rise, Give me Jesus. [Refrain]

Verse 2: Dark midnight was my cry, Give me Jesus. [Refrain]

Verse 3: Oh, when I comes to die, Give me Jesus. [Refrain]

Refrain: Give me Jesus. You may have all this world. Give me Jesus.

Figure 6.8: “Give Me Jesus” verses from The Deep River Collection.¹⁸⁹



¹⁸⁹ Hogan, *The Deep River Collection*, 11-15.



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Figure 6.9: The opening lines of each verse in “Give Me Jesus” from The Deep River Collection.¹⁹⁰ Verse 1 is measures 5-7; Verse 2 is measures 26-28; Verse 3 is measures 47-49.

These changes in rhythm do not seem to serve any significance to the performance of the song; however, the harmonies, and aural space are also altered for each verse. Ultimately, the differentiation of aural space through the employment of the accompaniment provides true meaning to the verses. In verse one, the accompaniment is sparse with mostly whole note chords and some outlining of the melody. This sparsity allows the singer to present the text without any interference, as the text is most important here. The singer should simply relax and place the melody in spoken resonance just as if they are speaking the text over music in a declamatory fashion.

Verse two, however, begun with a *fermata*, is employed with much more piano accompaniment activity. I suggest that the singer approach this section, beginning at measure

¹⁹⁰ Hogan, *The Deep River Collection*, 11-15.

twenty-seven, with a *piu mosso* to provide contrast to the slower declamation of the initial verse. Verse three returns to a hymn-like style, similar to verse one but less sparse with the employment of half note chords. This is fitting of the text, “oh, when I comes to die,” such that the piano interlude (measures forty-two through forty-seven) before and its setting from measure forty-seven to measure fifty-one sounds like a funeral arrangement. Not to mention that the verse is also presented with a *piano* dynamic color.

Verse three also has some more interesting elements that really contribute to the emotion of the text. Hogan adds an additional word in his repetitions of “give me Jesus” on the final page of the song (measures fifty-seven and sixty-five). Instead of completely repeating the phrase, he composes “nobody but Jesus.” This emphasizes the idea that only the presence of Jesus could provide solace to the spirits of the enslaved African Americans through their hardships. But he does not say it just once; he says it twice with the second time (measure sixty-five) being a response to the melody in the piano in measures sixty-three through sixty-five. He follows this with the ultimate climax of the song in measure sixty-seven on the word, “oh.” This high G (or more often performed high B-flat) on a *fermata* is the final plea of the enslaved African American for his acquaintance with Jesus Christ.



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Figure 6.10: Measures 65-67.¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ Hogan, *The Deep River Collection*, 15.

Hogan's arrangement of "Give Me Jesus" is one of many different solo arrangements by African American composers. I have used this one to compare and show how the spiritual in its original hymn forms has been transformed. This foregrounds my later comparison to an arrangement by a white composer, further showing how both Black and white composers have worked to bridge Blackness and whiteness through song.

Next, to continue my study of the transformation of Negro Spirituals, I will move to a different song, also arranged by Moses Hogan from *The Deep River Collection*, "Were You There?". But first, like every other spiritual I have introduced, I must provide historical context to ground my analyses.

Chapter 7

Were You There?

Were You There?

“Were You There?” is an African American spiritual that emerged from the Black slave experience in the mid-1800s.¹⁹² On the surface, this spiritual prompts the listener and singer to imagine being at the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. However, for the enslaved African Americans, this was an analogy of the remembrance of their personal hardship alongside that of Jesus Christ. The cross on which Jesus was crucified is analogized to the trees on which enslaved African Americans were lynched. This analogy created a connection between Black slaves and Jesus Christ.

By the late 1800s, the spiritual had been introduced into congregations of all nationalities. Its first publication was in the “Recent Negro Melodies” section of *Old Plantation Songs* (1899) by William Eleazar Barton. In 1940, after being included in the Episcopal Hymnal, it became the first African American spiritual to be included in a major American hymnal. Today, it is one of the most prominent and well-known Negro spirituals of all time, having been included in almost every major hymnal since the 1980s.¹⁹³

“Were You There?” is mostly used during the Lenten season on Good Friday, when Jesus Christ was crucified. Passion Week does not allow us to arrive at the joy of the resurrection (Easter) without passing through the pain and tragedy of the crucifixion (Good

¹⁹² Jon Polk, “Were You There? - Lenten Hymns,” The Park Forum - Cultivating sustainable faith through Bible reading, reflection, and prayer., March 29, 2021, <https://theparkforum.org/843-acres/were-you-there-lenten-hymns/#:~:text=Reflection:%20Were%20You%20There?%20%E2%80%94,them%20he%20was%20also%20human>.

¹⁹³ Diana Leigh Matthews, “Behind the Song: Were You There {when They Crucified My Lord},” Diana Leigh Matthews, March 18, 2018, <https://dianaleighmatthews.com/were-you-there/>; David Bjorlin, “History of Hymns: ‘Were You There,’” Discipleship Ministries, March 16, 2016, <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-were-you-there>; “Were You There?,” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, January 1, 2025, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/sacred-music-gospel-study-resource-pilot/1206-were-you-there?lang=eng>.

Friday).¹⁹⁴ “Were You There?” can be found in many forms.¹⁹⁵ In its first *Old Plantation Songs* (1899) publication, there were four verses included:

Verse 1: Were you there when they crucified my Lord? [Refrain]

Verse 2: Were you there when they nailed him to the cross? [Refrain]

Verse 3: Were you there when they pierced him in the side? [Refrain]

Verse 4: Were you there when the sun refused to shine? [Refrain]

Refrain: Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. [insert repeated Verse]

Figure 7.1: “Were You There?” from *Old Plantation Songs* (1899).¹⁹⁶

The *United Methodist Hymnal*, along with many other songbooks, includes a fifth verse, “Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?”¹⁹⁷ However, the text can be changed quite freely to fit the needs of a church service. The standard verses read as found below in Figure 7.2. However, other commonly used verses include “Were you there when they pierced him in the side?” and “Were you there when the sun refused to shine?”¹⁹⁸ These additional verses are the final two verses as they were presented in *Old Plantation Songs*.

Verse 1: Were you there when they crucified my Lord? [Refrain]

Verse 2: Were you there when they nailed him to the tree? [Refrain]

Verse 3: Were you there when they laid him in the tomb? [Refrain]

Verse 4: Were you there when He rose up from the grave? **OR** Were you there when God raised him from the tomb? [Refrain]

Refrain: Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. [insert repeated Verse]

Figure 7.2: “Were You There” commonly used text.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁴ Polk, “Were You There?.”

¹⁹⁵ “Were You There,” *The Canterbury Dictionary*.

¹⁹⁶ Bjorlin, “History of Hymns.”

¹⁹⁷ Bjorlin, “History of Hymns.”

¹⁹⁸ “Baptist Hymnal,” Hymnary.org.

¹⁹⁹ “Baptist Hymnal,” Hymnary.org.

It may be important to note that the final verse is generally only used when sung on Easter for Christ's resurrection. The final verse conveys joy, awe, and hope at the thought of Jesus's resurrection.²⁰⁰ For the enslaved African American, Jesus's resurrection was indicative of their liberation from their hardships. Sometimes for Easter, the final refrain is changed from "Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble..." to "...sometimes I feel like shouting glory! Glory, glory!"²⁰¹ This helps the singers celebrate not only Christ's resurrection but their liberation. This song spoke to all people around the world who faced oppressions of every kind.²⁰²

The series of questions that serve as the song's verses is not meant to be taken literally. The questions are meant to function as a form of anamnesis, a memorial prayer of remembrance that recalls the past events of a worshiping community that are formative for their identity and self-understanding in their tradition of faith.²⁰³ The prayers of anamnesis in various eucharistic prayers emphasize the relevance of events of the Passion of Jesus Christ and His resurrection.²⁰⁴

For African Americans, [remembering] the cross allowed them to claim the Christ who knew their suffering and stood in solidarity with their oppression...[B]lack Christians believed that just knowing that Jesus went through an experience of suffering in a manner similar to theirs gave them faith that God was with them, even in suffering on lynching trees, just as God was present with Jesus in suffering on the cross. The spiritual thus [remembered] the suffering of Christ to the suffering of the African-American community, with its inherent promise of God's presence and resurrection power.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁰ "Were You There?" The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

²⁰¹ "Baptist Hymnal," Hymnary.org.

²⁰² Bjorlin, "History of Hymns."

²⁰³ Bjorlin, "History of Hymns."

²⁰⁴ "Anamnesis," The Episcopal Church, accessed March 23, 2026, <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/glossary/anamnesis/#:~:text=Anamnesis%20is%20a%20memorial%20prayer%20that%20recalls,are%20formative%20to%20their%20identity%20and%20self%2Dunderstanding.>

²⁰⁵ Bjorlin, "History of Hymns."

Ultimately, “Were You There?” asks us to reconcile our present with the past. It calls us to measure what impact the events of the past have had on our lives in the present.²⁰⁶ “To understand the gift of salvation, each sinner must realize that he or she is a slave to the world: only then does seeing Christ on the cross make the impact all the more real.”²⁰⁷ This song serves as a reminder that Easter is for everyone regardless of the color of our skin, our nationality, our economic status, our background, age or social standing.²⁰⁸ This spiritual, like “Give Me Jesus” in the previous chapter, has historical connections to both Black and white cultures; thus, as they stand alone, both “Were You There?” and “Give Me Jesus” are bridges from Blackness to whiteness by way of the church. This idea is further supported such that every spiritual that I have discussed thus far can be sung during the Lenten season.

The Work Brothers (Hymnal) Arrangement Performance Analysis

As I have done in previous chapters, I would now like to turn towards an arrangement from a hymnal. The arrangement that I will use to provide this performance analysis is from the *Baptist Hymnal 2008*, number 254. The hymn is categorized under “His Blood, Cross, Suffering.” It utilizes the text as it is presented in Figure 7.2, with the first option for the final fourth verse (“...when He rose up from the grave?”). The music was adapted by John Wesley Work, Jr. (1873-1925) and Frederick Jerome Work (1880-1942).

John W. Work, Jr. was an African American conductor, writer, composer, and tenor. He was the first African American collector of folk songs and spirituals. He attended Fisk University (home of the Fisk Jubilee Singers) and Harvard University. While at Fisk University, he sang in the Mozart Society, which sparked his interest in Negro Spirituals. In

²⁰⁶ Polk, “Were You There?”

²⁰⁷ Ace Collins, *Stories behind the Traditions and Songs of Easter* (Nashville, Tennessee: Zondervan, 2007).

²⁰⁸ Matthews, “Behind the Song.”

1898, after receiving his Master's degree from Fisk University, Work Jr. began working at Fisk University as a Latin and history instructor. In 1899, he organized singing groups at Fisk and became the director of the Fisk Jubilee Singers. Alongside his wife, Agnes Haynes, and brother, Frederick, Work Jr. began collecting slave songs and spirituals. They were published as *New Jubilee Songs as Sung by the Fisk Jubilee Singers* (1901) and *New Jubilee Songs and Folk Songs of the American Negro* (1907). He also established the music publishing company, Work Brothers and Hart. He remained at Fisk University until his forced resignation in 1923 due to the university's negative feelings toward Black folk music. Work Jr. then served as president of Roger Williams University in Nashville, until his death on September 7, 1925.²⁰⁹

Frederick J. Work was an African American composer, teacher, and scholar. He is known for publishing the aforementioned Negro spiritual collections with his brother, John Work, Jr. He, too, worked at Fisk University, worked with the Fisk Jubilee Singers, and taught at Roger Williams University.²¹⁰

Like most hymns, this arrangement is presented in strophic form. It is in the key of E-flat Major. The opening measure of each verse, "Were you there when..." is harmonically presented with a prolongation of tonic that begins in a closed position and expands upward as if the singer is reaching up to heaven as one would in prayer to touch or open themselves up to God. It is interesting that there is such a strong authentic cadence in measure three, which

²⁰⁹ "John Wesley Work, Jr.," *The Hymns and Carols of Christmas*, accessed April 24, 2026, https://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/Hymns_and_Carols/Biographies/john_wesley_work.htm.; William Burres Garcia and Willie Strong, "Work, John W(esley) (i)," *Grove Music Online*, 2001, Accessed 4 Jun. 2026, <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-90000381556>.

²¹⁰ William Burres Garcia and Willie Strong. "Work, Frederick J(erome)." *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 4 Jun. 2026. <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-90000381557>.

concludes the presentation of the opening statement of each verse. The only indication of any continuation is the tie over into measure four, leading into the anacrusis of the repetition of the phrase. This setting supports the idea that spirituals are more about the text than the music. Once the first iteration of the text is strongly stated in measures one through three, it is then embellished and continued in its repetition, displayed below in Figure 7.3.

1. Were you there when they cru - ci - fied my Lord? Were you
 2. Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree? Were you
 3. Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb? Were you
 *4. Were you there when He rose up from the grave? Were you

E^b: I –tonic prolongation– V vi iii⁶ V⁷ I_(PAC) –tonic prolongation–

there when they cru - ci - fied my Lord?
 there when they nailed Him to the tree? Oh!
 there when they laid Him in the tomb?
 there when He rose up from the grave?

iii V⁷ I V vi V I V_(HC) I V^{4/3} I IV iii⁶ V^{4/2} I^{6-6/5}

| *dominant prolongation* |

Figure 7.3: “Were You There” from Baptist Hymnal 2008, number 254. Measures 1-9.²¹¹
 PAC = Perfect Authentic Cadence; HC = Half Cadence.

²¹¹ “Baptist Hymnal 2008 #254. Were You There.” Hymnary.org, accessed April 12, 2026, <https://hymnary.org/hymn/BH2008/254>.

The repetition of the opening phrase is presented over a harmonies that suggest a dominant prolongation into a weaker half cadence. Following this half cadence, the Work brothers compose a sighing or outcrying figure in measures eight through nine, on the word, “Oh!” The singer should approach this as an outpouring of the emotion felt about the hardships that Jesus, the enslaved African Americans, and they, themselves, have endured. Following this figure, the text goes into how experiencing these hardships sometimes causes the singer to “tremble.” The three iterations of the word, “tremble,” should be treated differently, such that they each have a different meaning, thus, the difference in their harmonies, displayed in Figure 7.4. Each “tremble” gets lower in the melody voice, creating a more closed chord position. This descent is representative of the fear and anguish felt by experiencing their and Jesus’s hardships. This leads into the strong, reminiscent resolve of the final iteration of the verse’s question.

Some-times it caus-es me to trem-ble, trem-ble, trem-ble.

Were you there when they cru-ci-fied my Lord?
 Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?
 Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?
 Were you there when He rose up from the grave?

(segue)

$E^b: vii^{04/3} I \text{ ---- } V/vi \text{ --- } vi \text{ ----}^{4/2} ii^6 IV \text{ ----- } I^6 IV V_{(HC)}$

$IV^6-5/3 I^{6/4} vi^{4/2} iii^6 V^7 vi iii^6 V^7 I_{(PAC)}$

Figure 7.4: “Were You There” from Baptist Hymnal 2008, number 254. Measures 10-18.²¹²
 PAC = Perfect Authentic Cadence; HC = Half Cadence.

²¹² “Baptist Hymnal 2008,” Hymnary.org.

Hogan Arrangement Performance Analysis

Moses Hogan's "Were You There?," like "Give Me Jesus," comes from his *The Deep River Collection* (2000), which was briefly introduced in Chapter 6. Hogan took the foundation of the Negro spiritual that his predecessors like Harry T. Burleigh or Hall Johnson helped establish and elevated it with modern chord structures that originated in Jazz and Blues, while still maintaining the aural sound of the church.

The Deep River Collection presents "Were You There?" with only two verses. This is interesting because this song has been arranged with many different verses that can be altered depending on the event. Also, as stated before, it has become standard that at least four verses are presented, at least in a hymnal, printed in Figure 7.2. However, Hogan only includes the first and third verses as they were presented in the Work Brothers' arrangement. I have placed the relevant verses below.

Verse 1: Were you there when they crucified my Lord? [Refrain]

Verse 2: Were you there when they laid him in the tomb? [Refrain]

Refrain: Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. [insert repeated Verse]

Figure 7.5: "Were You There" from *The Deep River Collection* text.²¹³

We know that the fourth verse is commonly omitted as it can only be used for Easter rather than Good Friday. But, is there a reason that Hogan chose to omit the second verse that is commonly used, "Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?" I argue that this line is the most reminiscent of the enslaved African American experience, so omitting it may have made it more accessible or relatable for more diverse audiences. Maybe this is another example of Hogan's bridge from Blackness and whiteness.

²¹³ Moses Hogan, *The Deep River Collection: Ten Spirituals Arranged for Solo Voice and Piano* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2000), 33-35.

Comparing Hogan's arrangement in Figure 7.6 to the Work Brothers' hymnal arrangement in Figure 7.3, while the two arrangements have similarities, Hogan utilizes different style techniques that assist in elevating the emotion within the singer's delivery of the text. There is an abundant usage of ninths and elevenths within the chords, which is a normal practice in contemporary Black music like Jazz and Blues. We also get many more minor chords and tonicizations of the church's plagal IV chord within the progressions, some prolonged longer than others. These chords along with the aforementioned jazz/blues related harmonies help induce emotion like music therapy, as many people describe music for themselves, especially in the church. The tone colors produced by the chord structures help ground the singer and their audience in the sorrow surrounding Jesus's crucifixion and their own hardships.

Hogan's arrangement is for high voice in the key of F Major. Hogan opens the arrangement with a simple outline of an open tonic chord. While simply stated, the immediate leap up to F5 (or F4 for a tenor) creates a reverent aural space such that we are looking toward a higher being. The open chord, while it helps set the tone, especially with its fermata usage, it leaves a big question mark of what the listener is actually about to experience. What key are we actually in? F Major or f minor? This is not really established until the voice enters in measure five.

Like the Work Brothers, Hogan cadences just after the delivery of the opening line; however, instead of a perfect authentic cadence, Hogan utilizes a plagal cadence. Theoretically, this plagal cadence is not as strong of a cadence as a perfect authentic cadence, but aurally this cadence places the listener in the nineteenth century church, when spirituals were being published. I can appreciate the usage of a plagal cadence here more than a perfect

authentic cadence because it feels less final, so the listener expects a continuation. The second iteration of the text cadences with a half cadence, similarly to the Work Brothers arrangement.

Figure 7.6: “Were You There?” from The Deep River Collection.²¹⁴ Measures 1-12. The circles indicate usage of ninth and eleventh chord tones. PC = Plagal Cadence; HC = Half Cadence.

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Figure 7.6: “Were You There?” from The Deep River Collection.²¹⁴ Measures 1-12. The circles indicate usage of ninth and eleventh chord tones. PC = Plagal Cadence; HC = Half Cadence.

²¹⁴ Moses Hogan, *The Deep River Collection: Ten Spirituals Arranged for Solo Voice and Piano* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2000), 33.

Hogan's usage of suspended harmony in measures thirteen through fourteen on "Oh" creates a sense of longing that must be present in the singer's delivery of the text. As mentioned earlier, the IV chord is important in church repertoire, made popular in the nineteenth century but also popular in twentieth century popular music. I argue that within this arrangement, the IV chord is representative of the singer's connection to Jesus. The singer is crying out to Jesus as the vocal line ascends from C to F. Note that this is the same figure that Hogan composed at the very beginning that created the reverent aural space we are now in. However, the suspended IV chord harmony from measure thirteen to fourteen also functions as a vocal sigh that elongates the outcry as the vocal line descends from F through D and finally back to C. This also places a passing chord on the strong beat, creating the discomfort representative of the pain Jesus (we) felt and the singer's anguish while "remembering" the image of His (our) pain. This figure is different in the hymnal arrangement. In Figure 7.3, the passing tone happens on an eighth note right before the next measure, placing the following chord on the downbeat of the measure with more stability. This stability lacks emotional presence, so Hogan's arrangement better captures the true connotation of the text.

Oh, some-times it caus-es me to trem-ble,

F: V⁷/IV IV — 6/4 V/IV V⁷/IV vi⁶ ii^{6/5}

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Figure 7.7: Measures 13-17.²¹⁵

²¹⁵ Moses Hogan, *The Deep River Collection: Ten Spirituals Arranged for Solo Voice and Piano* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2000), 33.

The second verse is indicated with a marking that reads, “with movement,” in measure twenty-five. This suggests that the initial verse was much more of a statement that grounds the listener in the tone of the song by way of text and harmony. Now, the performers can have more flexibility in their performance choices. This movement is also represented in the piano interlude that leads into the second verse beginning at measure twenty-two, where the first verse cadences. The accompaniment has many more moving eighth notes in the bass that ascend and descend, helping outline the musical phrases. This is while the treble line employs ascending quarter note chords that aid in elevating the singer’s spirit as they begin to reminisce about Jesus being buried in the tomb. However, while the style of the accompaniment has changed in verse two, the harmonies are similar; thus, the vocal approach should remain consistent with that of verse one.

Getting into measure thirty-four, shown in Figure 7.8, we are at the same part of verse two as I have discussed above in Figure 7.7. However, here Hogan placed tenutos over the “Oh” crying figure. These tenutos add more weight and broadness to the cry; not weight in the vocal tone, but weight in the emotion that feeds the vocal tone. Even moving into the following measure thirty-six, the “sometimes” also has tenuto markings that were not present in measure fifteen. In reference to the “with movement” style indication of the second verse, the tenuto markings help to briefly delay the movement, which connotes the emotional connection to the text.

Another difference in verse two is we now get fermatas on the second syllable of each “tremble.” These fermatas give the performer space to emote and breathe deeply into the anguish of the memories. Each pause should feel heavier and heavier as the vocal line descends to the final low C. The final fermata should be followed by a breath that prepares

the singer for the climax of the song. In measures forty-three through forty-four, instead of the expected cadence that we received in verse one (measure twenty-two), which is delayed until measure forty-seven, Hogan composed a final cry out to Jesus for the singer...

Oh, some - times it caus - es me to

35 36 37

F: V⁷/IV IV M⁴/3 V/IV V⁷/IV

trem - ble, trem - ble, trem - ble. Were you there when they

38 39 40 41

IV ^bIV⁷ ii⁴/2 I⁶ ii^{ø6}/5 iii⁶/5 vi⁴/2

cru - ci - fied my Lord? Were you there when they

42 43 44 45

ii⁷ V⁷/vi vi V⁷/V ii^{ø6}/5 V⁶/IV vi⁴/2

46

ii⁷ V⁷ I_(PAC) V IV V^{4/3} — 7 I_(IAC) -----

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Figure 7.8: Measures 34-49.²¹⁶

PAC = Perfect Authentic Cadence; IAC = Imperfect Authentic Cadence.

On the word, “Lord,” the singer outlines the ascending pitches of a deceptive subdominant vi chord, though approached by its secondary dominant, so it does not really serve its deceptive cadential function. Nonetheless, this vocal line ascends to a high A, the only time Hogan composed above the staff. This suggests that this is the most crucial, thus, the final moment of prayer to Jesus for the singer’s consolation. Here, the singer can employ different stylistic choices that show off their voice in an emotionally vulnerable and expressive way, such as a tone shift to *sotto voce* on the ascent to the high note. The high A is followed by a *portamento* down a third to the tonic F before finally concluding the piece as would have been expected prior, similarly to verse one.

There are so many African American songs in the Western classical music canon that remain unstudied or just unpopularized. So far, I have only discussed four different arrangements of spirituals by two African American composers. This is not even scratching the surface of everything that is at our disposal. While there are many publications out that

²¹⁶ Moses Hogan, *The Deep River Collection: Ten Spirituals Arranged for Solo Voice and Piano* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2000), 35.

are not in the public domain, this should not prevent music lovers and scholars from researching and performing these masterpieces, Black art songs included.

Recapitulation

Moses Hogan & The Deep River Collection

Recapitulation

In Chapters 5, 6, and 7, I have provided more examples of people, Black *and* white, using their works to take steps toward establishing a bridge from Blackness to whiteness. Moses Hogan's *The Deep River Collection* and the history surrounding the spirituals in it illustrate several examples of bridging practices:

- Moses Hogan's publishing and recording success *and* his international success as an acclaimed Choir Director performing Negro spirituals and Black art music for diverse audiences.
- Lucy Garrison's leadership in transcribing 136 spirituals in *Slave Songs of the United States* (1867).
- Moses Hogan's "Give Me Jesus" and "Were You There?" from *The Deep River Collection* (2000) having historical connections to Black and white cultures.
- The publishing success of John Wesley Work, Jr. and Frederick Jerome Work (the Work Brothers) presenting Negro spirituals to diverse audiences through the Fisk Jubilee Singers.

Once again, I want to emphasize that none of these bridges could or would have been built without the foundation of the original bridge of *Education*. Education is everyone's gateway to success in all forms. The form that I argue mostly is success in making our voices heard in times of oppression. While it is unfortunate, people of power from all cultural backgrounds that can assist our oppression have more empathetic ears when we at least sound like we know what we are talking about. Our education opens the doors to many more opportunities that can change our lives for the better.

Chapter 8:

Sustaining the Bridge

The Transformation of the Negro Spiritual

Introduction

The transformation of the Negro Spiritual from the oral tradition to hymnal to individual contemporary song arrangements features deep, colorful harmonies, and sometimes traditionally Black vocal techniques like sliding, scooping, bending the pitch, and the utilization of the slave dialect. It takes a great amount of skill to compose a recognizable but unique arrangement of a spiritual that has been cemented in the liturgical and Western classical music canon for over one hundred years. In the previous chapters, I discussed what various Black composers and singers connect with to create the emotion behind the harmonic and performance choices they present: slavery, segregation, discrimination, cultural trauma, hate (ie. the Black experience). Although, we cannot forget all the white voices that I have mentioned that have had a hand in learning and sharing their own knowledge and connection to the Black experience: Antonín Dvořák, Michael Tippett, Oscar Seagle, Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, Len Chandler, Phil Ochs, and Lucy Garrison. However, in light of bridging Blackness and whiteness, I have questioned: Must the composer of spirituals be African American to feel and convey the strong emotions and trauma that stems from our Black American ancestors? In my research for new spirituals and composers, I came across a collection of ten spirituals for high voice, *Concert Hall Spirituals* by Dr. Victor Labenske (b. 1963).

This work is important because Labenske's spiritual arrangements live as a bridge that connects Blackness and whiteness, such that he is a white composer that arranged traditionally Black spirituals. I argue that his arrangements serve as a great introduction of spirituals to non-Black singers that may not be familiar with Negro Spirituals but have a foundation in Western classical vocal technique. His composition style aurally places these songs on a concert hall stage before audiences that may never hear the songs otherwise. His

arrangements take on more of an art song identity, such that many of them are aurally and emotionally very performative in nature. After analyzing some of his spirituals, I find that he utilizes an abundance of ninth and eleventh chords, which mimics the style of Black music. He also utilizes many cluster chords. All these features seem to fit into the music theater style as well. Ultimately, Labenske is introducing Negro spirituals to non-Black audiences by blending them into traditionally white song genres.

Dr. Victor Labenske

Dr. Victor Labenske (b. 1963) is a living white American composer and arranger of Polish, German, and English descent. He is currently Professor of Music at Point Loma Nazarene University (PLNU) in San Diego, California, where he teaches courses in piano, music history, and music composition. He earned his undergraduate degree from PLNU, his master's degree in piano performance from the University of Missouri-Kansas City, Conservatory of Music, and his Doctor of Musical Arts in piano performance at the University of Southern California.²¹⁷ His compositional output of over 700 published compositions and arrangements includes sacred piano collections, educational piano music, and also music for violin and piano, voice and piano, and handbells.²¹⁸ I had the pleasure of conducting an interview with Dr. Labenske via email in which I received answers to various questions about his heritage, his inspiration to begin arranging spirituals, and his compositional. I will share the interview below.

²¹⁷ "Biography: Victor Labenske: Labenske Music Services," victorlabenske, accessed February 21, 2026, <https://www.labenske.com/biography>.

²¹⁸ "Victor Labenske, D.M.A.," Point Loma Nazarene University, accessed February 21, 2026, <https://www.pointloma.edu/faculty/victor-labenske-dma>.

Email Interview

(March 2, 2026 – March 10, 2026)

I'm so excited to hear the details of your research. I love the diversity and unification you seem to be striving for in the bridge between Blackness and whiteness, and I am humbled and honored to be considered an advocate in this way...praise God!

– Dr. Victor Labenske

What inspired you to start arranging spirituals?

My wife, soprano Judith Spaité Labenske, was preparing a recital with a set of spirituals using the Burleigh arrangements. As a pianist, I longed for a more developed accompaniment with more contemporary harmonies. I had been influenced also by the *Art Songs of the Hymnal* collections published by Ron Harris music. After the initial inspiration of writing for my wife in this recital, I decided I would like to complete a collection of spirituals for voice and piano to submit for publication.

What composers did you listen to when studying spirituals? What did you enjoy or observe about their writing styles?

I respected the work of Burleigh with his large compilation and found his book, *The Spirituals of Harry T. Burleigh*, to be a great resource. I also did library research, reading books on spirituals to explore possibilities for my title list. I also enjoyed hearing the Moses Hogan Chorale as they sang on our PLNU Cultural Events series one year. I found Hogan's arrangements to be full of creative arranging techniques, one of which was the use of rich harmonies. In college, our men's choir sang a number of Dawson spiritual settings as well and these impacted me with their lively rhythms and messages that I did not then fully understand (e.g. "Climbing Up the Mountain Children" AND "Ain't a That Good News"). I'm not sure whose [arrangement] we sang, but another meaningful spiritual our choir sang was "We Shall Walk through the Valley in Peace."

As you prepared to compose *Concert Hall Spirituals*, did you do any extensive research on Black music? What did you discover that you found significant that aided your arrangements?

I did the library research on spirituals and [created the] sounds in my head from hearing Jessye Norman and Kathleen Battle on their spiritual video. I loved listening to gospel singers and had started trying to learn the style (without any formal study). Later on, my vocal colleague Derrick Pennix taught me about music in the Black church and also sang at least one of these spirituals after I had first written

them. I think my writing of these spirituals was more intuitive rather than academic (notwithstanding some of the developmental and quotation techniques). I had at that point only had a few jazz lessons and am still not a jazz musician, but I enjoy writing in a jazz style though I don't improvise jazz well.

Did you have a history of performing Negro Spirituals? What can you say about those experiences?

My wife did, so I accompanied her, first with Burleigh [arrangements] and then with my own. I always found a depth of meaning in the melodies and lyrics. And later I came to understand the multilayered meanings of the spirituals speaking of heavenly freedom but also coded freedom from slavery...powerful! I have also arranged a number of spirituals for piano solo, ["Amen" and "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen," for example].

What is your ethnic background/heritage? How do you think your background influenced your arrangements?

My ethnic ancestry is Polish, German, UK mainly. Even though I am only 1/16 Polish, I have the last name and resonate strongly with music of Chopin, especially since my great-grandfather had to flee Poland as an exile after 1831 because he resisted the Russian takeover (oh my how history repeats itself); The Chopin *Fantasy in F Minor* quotes a song that the exiles sang as they left their homeland; I can imagine my ancestor singing this song and this gives me a visceral familial connection to this Chopin work. So perhaps my love for Chopin shows up somehow in my writing.

Figure 8.1: Email Interview between the author and Dr. Victor Labenske.

I was recently asked, “With so many spiritual arrangements by Black composers, why would you ever choose to program spirituals by a white composer?” Well, this is the basis of my whole argument about different ways to bridge Blackness and whiteness, through song and through religion. Firstly, *everything* is not considered cultural appropriation. Today’s modern cancel culture has ruined many opportunities to bring our very divided societies together. However, if an accused appropriator is educated about the culture that they may be being accused of appropriating, then the music, in this case, may be better received.

From the interview, it is clear that Labenske did his fair share of research and performance practice before and after his initial step into the Black spiritual genre. When white composers choose to create music that is traditionally Black, I find this acceptable as long as that composer has done their research to understand what the texts represent, to understand the music style and harmonies, and have developed the technique enough to present a work that is historically accurate. I have the same response for white musicians of *any* traditionally Black genre. Why? Because this is the same work that Black (or any non-white) people studying European art music is required to do in music school. African American spirituals and art songs have been accepted as a Western classical art form for over one hundred years, yet the music is not treated with the same respect in Western classical music schools. The music education of Black art genres, like Jazz, is slowly finding its way into music education curricula, but Black songs are behind the curve. When we come across a white composer like Labenske, who has arranged Black music while giving it the full respect it deserves through research and performance practice, this is an obvious step in a positive direction. His arrangements have a greater ability of reaching white music consumers that may have never heard, sung, or taught the repertoire otherwise. I argue that Labenske's arrangements in *Concert Hall Spirituals* serve as a strong introduction of Negro Spirituals to non-Black audiences. His arrangements take the foundation of the Negro Spiritual and place it on an art song-like platform, thus, making them more accessible as an introduction to Black songs for non-Black audiences and singers. The following chapter will explore Labenske's arrangements of "Deep River", "Balm in Gilead", "Give Me Jesus", and "Were You There?" from *Concert Hall Spirituals*.

Chapter 9:
Concert Hall Spirituals
Performance Analyses

Performance Analyses

Concert Hall Spirituals is a collection of spirituals in which Labenske composed ten arrangements of eleven spirituals (one arrangement is a medley of two spirituals). I seek to uncover, with adequate research and music education, whether the cultural and emotional trauma of the Black American can effectively be conveyed by a non-Black composer through the use of harmony and style. I will take Labenske's arrangements of "Deep River", "Balm in Gilead", "Give Me Jesus", and "Were You There?" and compare them to the Burleigh, Hogan, and hymnal arrangements from the previous chapters.

Labenske's compositional style features many ninth chords. While the ninth chord is to be expected in Black genres like gospel, jazz, and blues, Labenske employs them in a way that transforms the spiritual into art song and/or musical theater. His abundant use of jazz chords (ninths, elevenths, and thirteenth) brings a brightness and lightness to the song that presents it in a more performative fashion, while maintaining the integrity of the original spiritual. However, as mentioned in earlier chapters, the presentation of a spiritual is all about the text and its meaning. In Black arrangements, the usage of jazz/blues chords often create darker harmonies, representative of the emotion surrounding the Black experience. This "emotion" is what I reference as cultural trauma. Since Labenske's arrangements are more performative, do they still present the same cultural trauma as arrangements of the same spirituals by an African American arranger? I would say no, but not because of the lack of ability to do so. Labenske's arrangements were meant to be presented for a different purpose, thus the title of this book of arrangements, *Concert Hall Spirituals*. These spirituals were meant for a different audience and meant to be presented in a concert hall (art song/Western

Classical) setting. As previously stated, Labenske maintains the integrity of the spiritual in its original form, at least in its initial, verse one, presentation.

“Deep River” from *Concert Hall Spirituals*

[Note:] I have provided a full explanation of the meaning of the text and analyses of three other arrangements of “Deep River” in Chapter 2.

Refrain

*Deep river,
my home is over Jordan,
Deep river,
I want to cross over into campground.*

Interlude

*Hmm [*Humming*]*

Second Refrain

*Deep river,
my home is over Jordan,
Deep river, Lord,
I want to cross over into campground.*

Verse

*Oh, don't you want to go to that Gospel feast,
That promised land where all is peace?*

Second Interlude

*Hmm [*Humming*]*

Third Refrain

*Deep river,
my home is over Jordan,
Deep river, Lord,
I want to go home, over into campground.*

Figure 9.1: “Deep River” from *Concert Hall Spirituals text*.²¹⁹

This arrangement of “Deep River” has made “Deep River” one of my favorite spirituals to sing by any composer. The song does not require any type of vocal acrobatics,

²¹⁹ Victor Labenske, *Concert Hall Spirituals: Settings for Piano and Voice* (United States: Woodland Music Press, 1999), 9-13.

just a deep connection to the text and a desire to have a relationship with a higher being, to be liberated from life's hardships. The vocal line is soothing to the body such that the refrains always bring the singer back home to the cozy warmth of the easily spoken chest voice.

During my interview with Labenske, I asked:

Is there anything special that you would like to share about “Deep River?”

“Deep River” quotes two textually related American tunes, “Shall We Gather at the River” in the introduction, and “I Am Bound for the Promised Land” (“On Jordan’s Stormy Banks”). The accompaniment depicts a flowing river.

Figure 9.2: *Email Interview between the author and Dr. Victor Labenske.*

Similar to the Burleigh arrangement, Labenske presents the song in F Major. However, an immediate difference in Labenske’s arrangement from Burleigh’s arrangement is the motion throughout the piano accompaniment. Burleigh’s accompaniment began with a simple harp-like strumming of tonic, while Labenske employed arpeggiated figures that he said “depicts a flowing river.” This flowing river imagery sets a mental scene for the singer and listener and represents Labenske’s “long[ing] for a more developed accompaniment with more contemporary harmonies.”

There is something to be said about the songs Labenske chose to quote and their connection to “Deep River.” Simply, “Shall We Gather at the River” and “I Am Bound for the Promised Land” (“On Jordan’s Stormy Banks”) are hymns that utilize the similar references of a river, the Jordan River, and the promised land. The flowing river accompaniment is composed beneath a quotation of “Shall We Gather at the River,”

originally titled “Beautiful River,” by Robert Lowry. Labenske takes the original melody of “Shall We Gather at the River” and expands it to double its original duration.

Labenske Arrangement



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Lowry Hymnal Arrangement



Figure 9.3: Evidence of the quote Labenske used in “Deep River”²²⁰ (measures 1-4) from Robert Lowry’s “Shall We Gather at the River”²²¹ (measures 1-2).

Labenske’s utilization of quotation techniques shows his educational connection to a variety of traditionally American music. He also quotes “I Am Bound for the Promised Land” (“On Jordan’s Stormy Banks”) in the two humming interludes, which help to comfort me when I perform this piece. Humming is a traditional singing technique that is utilized in the Black church when there are absolutely no words that can further express an emotion. Moreover, humming serves as a soothing vocalise for the singer.

²²⁰ Labenske, *Concert Hall Spirituals*, 9.

²²¹ “Baptist Hymnal 1991 #518. Shall We Gather at the River,” Hymnary.org, accessed April 12, 2026, <https://hymnary.org/media/fetch/146899>.

Labenske First Interlude



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Hymnal Arrangement

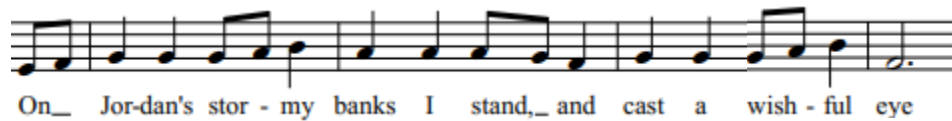


Figure 9.4: Evidence of the quote Labenske used in “Deep River”²²² (measures 18-21) from “On Jordan’s Stormy Banks”²²³ (measures 1-4).

The second interlude (Figure 9.6) is placed after the climax of the song, the verse, “Oh, don’t you want to go to that Gospel feast, That promised land where all is peace?” (Figure 9.5). Within this climax, the vocal line rises to a high A on “promised land,” representative of the singer’s longing for liberation. The climax subsides by the end of measure thirty-seven, indicated by a *poco ritard* and decrescendo above “is peace.” This moment is accompanied by a deceptive cadence that is presented in its major form rather than the more expected minor form. I suppose the moment would not be very peaceful with a *minor* six harmony, so Labenske was clever in his compositional choice here. The “peace” of this moment is grounded further with the inclusion of the second humming interlude.

²²² Labenske, *Concert Hall Spirituals*, 10.

²²³ “The United Methodist Hymnal #724. On Jordan’s Stormy Banks I Stand,” Hymnary.org, accessed April 26, 2026, <https://hymnary.org/media/fetch/139995>.

30 *mf* With motion

O don't you want to go to that

With motion

mp

F: V/IV vii° I_(IAC) vi iii⁷ vi iii⁷ V I vi I⁶

33

gos pel feast, That prom ised

molto cresc.

IV^{M7} ii⁷ IV^{M6/5} vii°^{6/5} I^{6/5}_(IAC) iii⁷ vi^{4/3} V⁷/IV

36 *poco rit.* *p*

land where all is peace?

f *poco rit.* *sub. pp*

ii^{4/3} V/IV IV^{M7} V^{6/5} VI_(DC)

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Figure 9.5: Climax (Measures 30-38).²²⁴
 IAC = Imperfect Authentic Cadence; DC = Deceptive Cadence

²²⁴ Labenske, *Concert Hall Spirituals*, 11.

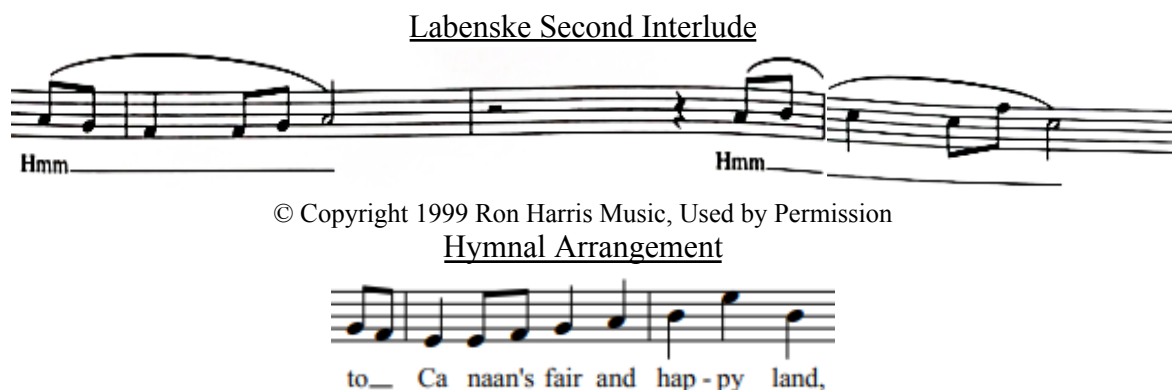


Figure 9.6: Evidence of the quote Labenske used in “Deep River”²²⁵ (measures 42-45) from “On Jordan’s Stormy Banks”²²⁶ (measures 4-6).

It is important to note that Labenske does not employ the use of the traditionally Black dotted rhythms that gave “Deep River” its original militant character, as discussed in Chapter 2. The Marsh, hymnal, and Burleigh arrangements employ this technique. Does the absence of the dotted rhythms take away from the meaning and emotion of the text? I say no. Supporting my argument that Labenske’s arrangements were meant for a different audience, employing the dotted rhythms here does not fit the serene aesthetic that Labenske brings to this spiritual. The dotted rhythms would be out of place in this setting against the flowing river accompaniment figures.

<u>Marsh Arrangement</u>	<u>Hymnal Arrangement</u>
<u>Burleigh Arrangement</u>	<u>Labenske Arrangement</u>
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Figure 9.7: Dotted rhythms in Marsh, hymnal, Burleigh, and Labenske arrangements.

²²⁵ Labenske, *Concert Hall Spirituals*, 12.

²²⁶ “The United Methodist Hymnal #724,” Hymnary.org.

In Burleigh's arrangement of the initial refrain, I noted his usage of a fermata over the word, "Lord," and how it emphasizes the singer's relationship with God. It is interesting that Labenske omits "Lord" from the first refrain but includes it for the second iteration in measure twenty-seven with the fermata. This heightens the urgency of the prayer, such that the inclusion of "Lord" now depicts a direct relationship between the singer and God. The being that the singer is praying to is more specific. The third refrain (Figure 9.8) also features "Lord" in measure fifty-two but over a four beat duration that leads into the tag, "I want to go home." This tag is not an original part of the spiritual text but instead an addition by Labenske. This is a special moment in the song that stresses "home" as the ultimate destination. "Home" is generally a place of peace, warmth, and joy, all of which cannot be reached until we have figuratively endured the troubled waters of the deep river.

If the singer has performed the song as written up to this point, this is where I suggest a few liberties to help drive the piece home. Beginning at measure fifty-three, Labenske composes a *ritard* into the first "I want to go home." He repeats this phrase three times, which I argue is indicative of the Holy Trinity. Each repetition increases in dynamic and intensity. For that reason, I suggest a slight *accelerando* through these repetitions to help intensify the pleading to God to reach the promised land to meet him. Labenske then composed another *ritard* coming out of the final "I want to go home" in an effort to complete the phrase "...over into campground." Again, indicative of a prayer to the Holy Trinity, Labenske repeats "campground" three times. The first and final "campground" is in the lower F octave, depicting reality in the literal "home." The second "campground" is in the high F octave, which depicts the singer's final cry out to God to reach the figurative "home" with Him.

51 *mp* Deep - riv - er, Lord, *rit.* *p* 1

54 *a tempo* want to go home, *mf* I want to go home, *mf* *p a tempo* 8^{va}

57 I want to go home, *rit.* *p* o - ver in - to *mp* *rit.*

60 *a tempo* *mp* camp - ground, *f* camp - ground, *mf* *p a tempo*

63 *poco rit.* *p* *rit.* in - to camp - ground. *mf poco rit. e dim.* *p rit.* *pp* 8^{va}

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Figure 9.8: Measures 51-65.²²⁷

²²⁷ Labenske, *Concert Hall Spirituals*, 12-13.

“Balm in Gilead” from Concert Hall Spirituals

[Note:] I have provided a full explanation of the meaning of the text and analyses of two other arrangements of “Balm in Gilead” in Chapter 3.

Refrain

*There is a balm in Gilead
To make the wounded whole;
There is a balm in Gilead
To heal the sin-sick soul.*

Verse 1

*Sometimes I feel discouraged,
And think my work’s in vain,
But then the Holy Spirit
Revives my soul again.*

Verse 2

*If you can preach like Peter,
If you can pray like Paul,
Go home and tell your neighbor
“He died to save us all.”*

Figure 9.9: “Balm in Gilead” from Concert Hall Spirituals text.²²⁸

This arrangement of Labenske’s “Balm in Gilead” is presented in B-flat Major, similar to Burleigh’s arrangement, discussed in Chapter 3. The tessitura of this piece dwells in pre-passaggio for a high voice. For this reason, it is important for the singer to employ crisp diction out in the front of the mouth in an effort to not allow the tone to fall backwards into the mouth.

The introduction begins with an inverted version of the opening melody. This inversion can be found all throughout the song. I know from my interview with Labenske that this “upside down motive,” as he put it, was utilized intentionally. It is interesting that this motive is always placed beneath the words “balm” and “soul.” I argue that this inverted melody is the comfort that the “balm in Gilead” brings during times of hardship. I’m not

²²⁸ Victor Labenske, *Concert Hall Spirituals: Settings for Piano and Voice* (United States: Woodland Music Press, 1999), 40-43.

really sure what it is about this inversion, but this and Labenske's use of cluster chords over a tonic pedal bring a very sweet quality to my ears every time I hear the motive in the song. It just makes me want to smile.

Poco rubato (♩ = 100)

With conviction *mp*

There... is a

p

With pedal

B^b: I (V + vi = ii⁷) I (V + vi = ii⁷)

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Figure 9.10: “Balm in Gilead” from *Concert Hall Spirituals*. Measures 1-4.²²⁹
The equation above shows two chords (*V* in the bass + *vi* in the treble) creating a *ii*⁷ jazz chord with the 9th (*D*) and the 11th (*F*).

I can appreciate Labenske's level of harmonic intention through how he structures the different sections of the song, at least between the first refrain and verse one. As shown above in Figure 9.10, I placed the cluster chords in parenthesis because they are essentially part of a prolongation of tonic, which is a technique utilized by Burleigh at the beginning as well (Figure 9.11). As mentioned in Chapter 3, this prolonged tonic harmonization creates a sense of home, the same home depicted in “Deep River.” So, in Labenske's arrangement, the aforementioned inverted melody that brings me comfort is home, a place of peace and

²²⁹ Victor Labenske, *Concert Hall Spirituals: Settings for Piano and Voice* (United States: Woodland Music Press, 1999), 40.

healing as suggested by the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* hymnal arrangement's "Hymn of Healing" categorization.

B^b: I ----- V/iv ii^{4/2} I -----

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Figure 9.11: “Balm in Gilead” by Burleigh. Measures 1-6.²³⁰

In this same vein, when verse one is introduced, Labenske prolongs the dominant. This technique is reminiscent of music of the previous music eras, where movements or sections are presented in specific forms in related keys. Below in Figure 9.12, Labenske slows the movement in the piano so the text is presented without obstruction. However, he consistently pedals F major, the dominant chord, throughout his underlying chord changes.

B^b: I ii⁷ iii⁷ vi⁷

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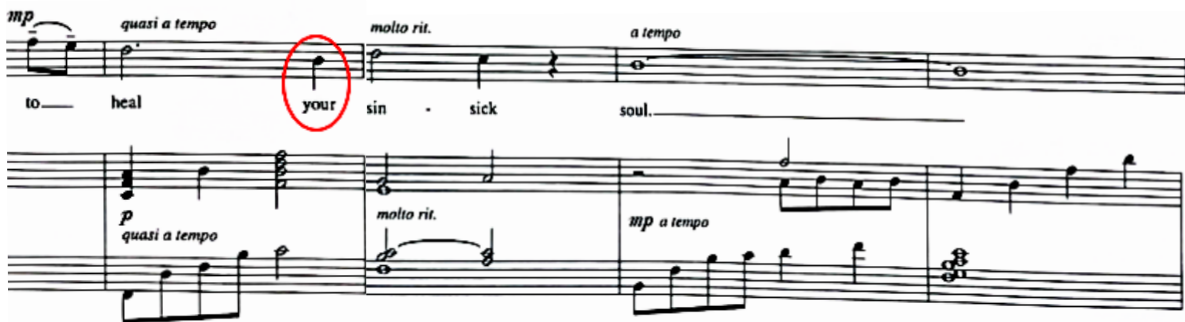
Figure 9.12: “Balm in Gilead” from Concert Hall Spirituals. Measures 14-16.²³¹
The circles indicate the prolonged dominant (FAC) within the chord changes.

²³⁰ H. T. Burleigh, *The Spirituals of Harry T. Burleigh: High Voice* (Miami, Fla: Warner Bros. Publications, 1990), 111.

²³¹ Victor Labenske, *Concert Hall Spirituals: Settings for Piano and Voice* (United States: Woodland Music Press, 1999), 41.

Moving forward into verse two, Labenske remains consistent with the compositional nature of the spiritual, adding more movement in the piano and quicker harmonic progressions after the first verse has been stated. His variations in harmonic language between verses makes the spiritual more interesting, thus supporting my initial argument that his arrangements are more performative and art song-like. He still effectively delivers the message of the spiritual seemingly with a much lighter connotation than the other arrangements.

Finally, in the final refrain, Labenske adds a tag that makes the song much more personal or specific within this lighter context with the alteration on just one word. He repeats “to heal the sin-sick soul” but changes “the” to “your”: “to heal *your* sin-sick soul.” He doubles the original rhythm, placing “your” on an offbeat after the chord has been sounded. This offbeat placement emphasizes the change in text so that it really stands out to the listener that the “balm,” Jesus and his salvation, will indeed heal *you*, specifically.



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Figure 9.13: “Balm in Gilead” from Concert Hall Spirituals. Measures 50-53.²³²

²³² Victor Labenske, *Concert Hall Spirituals: Settings for Piano and Voice* (United States: Woodland Music Press, 1999), 43.

“Give Me Jesus” from Concert Hall Spirituals

[Note:] I have provided a full explanation of the meaning of the text and analyses of three other arrangements of “Give Me Jesus” in Chapter 6.

I would first like to address the almost identical melodic contour between Labenske’s arrangement and the original Marsh arrangement (Figure 6.5), although presented in different keys. There is only a two pitch difference in the phrase, “You may have all this world,” on the words, “...all this...” This subtle difference does not alter the meaning or harmonies in any way. Labenske maintained the integrity of the spiritual in its original form while Moses Hogan took artistic liberties with the rhythms and contour, as discussed in Chapter 6. Also in Chapter 6 (Figure 6.3), I supplied all of the possible verses (seven verses) and the refrain of the hymn. In that figure, I indicated with an asterisk the most commonly used verses. Like Moses Hogan, whose arrangement was published one year *after* Labenske (1999) in 2000, Labenske arranged the song in E-flat major and employed only three verses in his arrangement. However, based on Figure 6.3, they are presented as verse three (an uncommon verse), verse six (a common final verse), and verse four (an interesting verse to conclude). For ease of understanding, I have placed the relevant verses below.

Verse 1: Oh, when I am alone, Give me Jesus. [Refrain]

Verse 2: Oh, when I come to die, Give me Jesus. [Refrain]

Verse 3: Dark midnight was my cry, Give me Jesus. [Refrain]

Refrain: Give me Jesus. You may have all this world. Give me Jesus.

Figure 9.14: “Give Me Jesus” from Concert Hall Spirituals verses.²³³

While analyzing this arrangement, I questioned why the order of the verses is switched and altered. What does it mean? How does this change the meaning of the spiritual?

²³³ Victor Labenske, *Concert Hall Spirituals: Settings for Piano and Voice* (United States: Woodland Music Press, 1999), 18-21.

Or does it change its meaning at all? The altered verses do not change the meaning of the song because Labenske still utilized verses that were originally part of the song. The difference in the verses used and their order was simply just an opportunity for Labenske to get creative and compose his own unique arrangement. In our interview, he told me that his composition of the first verse was “intention[al] word painting.” Beginning the song with “Oh, when I am alone” allowed him to arrange the verse *a capella*, creating a very intimate call to worship.

Simply
mp

O when I am a - lone, O when I am a - lone, O when I am a - lone, give me Je - sus. Give me

mf

Je - sus, give me Je - sus, You may

mf

have all this world, give me Je - sus. O

dim.

mp

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Figure 9.15: “Give Me Jesus” from Concert Hall Spirituals verse one. Measures 1-16.²³⁴

²³⁴ Victor Labenske, *Concert Hall Spirituals: Settings for Piano and Voice* (United States: Woodland Music Press, 1999), 18.

The way the *a capella* vocal line just melts into the accompanied refrain sells the piece for me. This is as if the refrain’s accompaniment personifies Jesus’s presence like a warm hug after being “alone.”

The second and third verses build from each other, “leaning into minor tonality to express, ‘When I come to die’ [and] ‘Dark midnight...,’” according to Labenske. Both verses are structured around the relative c minor key but they are inverted in how he presents them harmonically. In c minor, verse two (Figure 9.16) begins on a subdominant major seventh chord (VI^{M7}) and alternate mostly with tonic seventh chords (i⁷ and i^{4/2}). However, Labenske cleverly pivots back into E-flat major for the refrain. Verse three (Figure 9.17) begins oppositely from verse two with tonic seventh chords (i⁷) alternating with subdominant major seventh chords (VI^{M7}). He pivots into the relative major refrain as he did before with different harmonies.

17

when I come to die, O when I come to die, O

c: VI^{M7} (i⁷) i^{4/2} VI^{M7} III

21

when I come to die, give me Je - sus. Give me

VI^{M7} i^{4/2} 7 III|E^b: I iii⁶

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Figure 9.16: “Give Me Jesus” from Concert Hall Spirituals verse two. Measures 17-24.²³⁵
The pivot back into E-flat is indicated by the double hiatus (||).

²³⁵ Victor Labenske, *Concert Hall Spirituals: Settings for Piano and Voice* (United States: Woodland Music Press, 1999), 19.

33 With motion
mid-night was my cry, dark mid-night was my cry, Dark—

37
c: i⁷ ----- VI^{M7} III VI

mid-night was my cry, give me Je - sus. Give me

i⁷ ----- VI^{M7} i^{4/2} ----- 7 || E^b: vi⁷

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Figure 9.17: “Give Me Jesus” from *Concert Hall Spirituals* verse three. Measures 33-40.²³⁶
The pivot back into E-flat is indicated by the double hiatus (||).

Following this final verse, the refrain is marked with a *piano* dynamic color, accompanied by whole note chords. This makes this moment much more reverent and intimate like the very beginning, especially with the consistent use of the church plagal cadence at the end of each refrain. The vocal line is exposed such that the singer is now overwhelmed with grief and their pleading has become breathless. The refrain is then repeated with a *mezzoforte* dynamic as this is the singer’s final plea to receive Jesus’s comfort. In fact, this iteration of “Give Me Jesus” is the first time Labenske did not compose

²³⁶ Victor Labenske, *Concert Hall Spirituals: Settings for Piano and Voice* (United States: Woodland Music Press, 1999), 20.

an embellishment up to the high notes. This signifies the importance and urgency of this final plea.

Refrain 1



Refrain 2



Refrain 3



Refrain 4



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Figure 9.18: “Give Me Jesus” *refrain variations*.²³⁷

During this final plea, in measure fifty-two, when the singer sings the final high G, Labenske composes a c melodic minor (with a flat second) glissando-type figure that is followed by a response to the singer’s final call in “You may have all this world.” This response is an embellished version of “You may have all this world.” This is Jesus finally answering the singer’s plea. The singer then repeats the phrase but finishes with the final “Give Me Jesus” that cadences with the expected plagal cadence with the IV chord embellished with a

²³⁷ Victor Labenske, *Concert Hall Spirituals: Settings for Piano and Voice* (United States: Woodland Music Press, 1999), 18-21.

dominant pedal over a dominant figure that strengthens the cadence into an imperfect authentic cadence, conveying a more reassuring resolution for the singer.

E^b: IV ----- I (PC/IAC) -----

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Figure 9.19: “Give Me Jesus” from *Concert Hall Spirituals* verse three. Measures 52-62.²³⁸
 The circles indicate the dominant pedal and dominant cadential figure.
 PC = Plagal Cadence; IAC = Imperfect Authentic Cadence.

²³⁸ Victor Labenske, *Concert Hall Spirituals: Settings for Piano and Voice* (United States: Woodland Music Press, 1999), 21.

“Were You There?” from Concert Hall Spirituals

[Note:] I have provided a full explanation of the meaning of the text and analyses of two other arrangements of “Were You There?” in Chapter 7.

Of all the Labenske arrangements I have written about and performed so far (I have performed and studied eight of the ten arrangements), “Were You There?” has to be the most *different* from its original hymn settings. However, “different” does not negate the fact that this arrangement more accurately captures the connotation of the text and its emotional depth through its harmonic setting. First, below I have provided the text that Labenske chose to set.

Verse 1: Were you there when they crucified my Lord? *[Refrain]*

Verse 2: Were you there when they laid him in the tomb? *[Refrain]*

Verse 3: Were you there when He rose up from the grave? *[Refrain]*

Refrain: Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. *[insert repeated Verse]*

Figure 9.20: “Were You There?” from Concert Hall Spirituals *text*.²³⁹

Labenske, like Moses Hogan, omitted the second verse (“...when they nailed him to the tree?”), which seems to be common practice in my experience. However, dissimilar to Hogan, he chooses to set the final verse, commonly only included for Easter.

In my interview with Labenske, he made note of his “crucifixion motive” that can be seen utilized in accompaniment throughout verse one. The high pitch placement and jazz harmonic function of the “crucifixion motive” is representative of what calls the singer to remember the crucifixion. The high placement of this jazz harmony establishes an ethereal presence that sets the tone of the entire song.

²³⁹ Victor Labenske, *Concert Hall Spirituals: Settings for Piano and Voice* (United States: Woodland Music Press, 1999), 27-31.



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Figure 9.21: “Were You There?” from Concert Hall Spirituals. Measures 1-2.²⁴⁰
 The circle indicates the “crucifixion motive,” and the square indicates the A-flat entrance that establishes the *f* minor tonality.

Due to one’s familiarity with this well-known spiritual, we would expect the song, like the other arrangements discussed in Chapter 7, to be in a major key. If we recall Hogan’s arrangement (Figure 7.6), he delays the true tonality of the song with an open tonic chord, omitting the third. We finally get the full tonic chord when the voice enters in measure five. Labenske utilizes a similar idea, beginning the song with an open F chord, omitting the third only until beat three of the first measure. On beat three, he composed an A-flat in the top voice of the bass line, establishing an unusual F minor tonality for this song. While unusual, this minor tonality establishes emotions of fear, shock, and uncertainty with the text of the first verse, “Were you there when they crucified my Lord?” I view verse one as gossip between members of the church congregation. The entire congregation is remembering and discussing Jesus’s crucifixion and their hardships in life. The original major key (as presented by the Work Brothers and Hogan) provided a sense of hope that the crucifixion was

²⁴⁰ Victor Labenske, *Concert Hall Spirituals: Settings for Piano and Voice* (United States: Woodland Music Press, 1999), 27.

ultimately a positive consolation. Labenske's minor tonality brings uncertainty as though the singer is now physically in that moment and has no idea of what Jesus's crucifixion means for them yet.

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Figure 9.22: “Were You There?” from Concert Hall Spirituals. Measures 1-12.²⁴¹
The circles indicate the “crucifixion motive,” and the square indicates the A-flat entrance that establishes the f minor tonality.

²⁴¹ Victor Labenske, *Concert Hall Spirituals: Settings for Piano and Voice* (United States: Woodland Music Press, 1999), 27.

Labenske



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Hogan



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Figure 9.23: “Were You There?” from Concert Hall Spirituals. Measures 13-14.²⁴² (left)
 “Were You There?” from The Deep River Collection by Moses Hogan. Measures 13-14.²⁴³
 (right)

When comparing Labenske’s arrangement to Hogan’s arrangement, the melody of their measure thirteen appears identical, but as previously established, Labenske’s arrangement is in F minor instead of F Major. I mentioned in Chapter 7 that “Oh” creates a sense of longing that must be present in the singer’s delivery of the text. The singer is crying out to Jesus as the vocal line ascends from C to F. While this still remains true in Labenske’s arrangement, the now D-flat passing tone creates a lamenting quality in the vocal line each time Labenske composes a D-flat descent to C on the words “O!” (measure fourteen), “sometimes” (measure fifteen), and the final “tremble” (measure nineteen). This lamenting figure adds to the emotions of fear, shock, and uncertainty in the first verse.

In our interview, Labenske claimed that “the second verse tenderly sets the scene of Jesus in the tomb.” I would argue that this is only a tender setting because we are finally in the major key that someone familiar with the song would have expected at the beginning. For

²⁴² Victor Labenske, *Concert Hall Spirituals: Settings for Piano and Voice* (United States: Woodland Music Press, 1999), 28.

²⁴³ Moses Hogan, *The Deep River Collection: Ten Spirituals Arranged for Solo Voice and Piano* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2000), 33.

someone who is not familiar with the original song, this modulation to the relative A-flat Major still creates a sorrowful emotion with Labenske's abundant use of minor and jazz chord harmonies. The major key modulation does, however, supply an addition of hope to the sorrow of Jesus being laid in the tomb. It is as if now the singer knows enough about how Jesus's story ends in order to feel optimistic about the outcome of the hardships they are facing or have faced.

25 *mf* Were you there when they laid Him in the

mf

f: i — 6 — VI^{M7} VII || A^b: V I ii^{6/5}

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Figure 9.24: “Were You There?” from *Concert Hall Spirituals*. Measures 25-28.²⁴⁴
The circles indicate ninth scale degrees, and the squares indicate 11th scale degrees within jazz chord harmonies.

Referring back to Hogan's arrangement, in Chapter 7, I argued that the song's use of the IV chord is representative of the singer's connection to Jesus due to Hogan's tonicization of IV and his use of plagal cadences. While Labenske does not use this technique in the opening minor verse, he does tonicize the IV chord a lot in the subsequent major verses. For example, in verse two after each “tremble,” Labenske composed delayed harmonic

²⁴⁴ Victor Labenske, *Concert Hall Spirituals: Settings for Piano and Voice* (United States: Woodland Music Press, 1999), 28.

“questions” that are answered by IV chord harmonies/tonicizations. This represents Jesus’s response to the singer’s call as the song heads into the final verse of triumph.

37 *più f*
Some - times it caus - es me to trem - ble, trem - ble,
più f
A^b: vi⁷ ----- 4/2 ----- IV^{M7} V/IV -----
41 *mf*
trem - ble! Were you there when they
mf
IV^{M7} ----- I -----

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Figure 9.25: “Were You There?” from Concert Hall Spirituals. Measures 37-43.²⁴⁵
The squares indicate figures of Jesus responding to the singer’s call.

In verse three, which Labenske marks to be sung “triumphantly, with motion,” I similarly supplied the emotions of rejoice, triumph, and hope. Likewise, Labenske said, “the final verse triumphantly depicts the resurrection of Christ.” While this is apparent with the half step modulation to A Major in measure forty-six and the high octave placed chords each time the singer sings “grave” in measure forty-nine, I expected more ascending motion in the

²⁴⁵ Victor Labenske, *Concert Hall Spirituals: Settings for Piano and Voice* (United States: Woodland Music Press, 1999), 29.

accompaniment to depict Jesus's *risen* motion. However, when the singer sings "O!" for the last time, the accompaniment has more movement as if the story is moving toward a newfound time of peace.

30

44

laid Him in the tomb?

Triumphantly, with motion

f

Were you

Triumphantly, with motion

47

there when He rose up from the grave?

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Figure 9.26: "Were You There?" from *Concert Hall Spirituals*. Measures 44-49.²⁴⁶

Finally, as the singer sings "trembles" for the last times in measures fifty-nine through sixty one, I argue that the performers should begin a *ritard* on beat three of measure fifty-nine, each "tremble" broadening into an *a tempo* on beat three of measure sixty-one. As the song reaches its climax at the end, the singer should perform the composed *ritard* in

²⁴⁶ Victor Labenske, *Concert Hall Spirituals: Settings for Piano and Voice* (United States: Woodland Music Press, 1999), 30.

measure sixty-four to allow time for the singer to prepare for the octave leap to high A on the final “grave.”

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Figure 9.27: “Were You There?” from *Concert Hall Spirituals*. Measures 59-67.²⁴⁷
The downward arrows indicate the start of a ritard. The horizontal arrow indicates the *a tempo*.

²⁴⁷ Victor Labenske, *Concert Hall Spirituals: Settings for Piano and Voice* (United States: Woodland Music Press, 1999), 31.

While this is a fantastic and emotionally driven arrangement of the song, I believe Labenske could have taken this one step further in the final verse. In Chapter 7, I noted that sometimes for Easter the final refrain is changed from “Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble...” to “...sometimes I feel like shouting glory! Glory, glory!,” helping the singer celebrate Christ’s resurrection and their liberation from their hardships. With the strength that Labenske brought to the accompaniment of verse three, this text change would have taken the piece to another level!

There has been a significant transformation of the Negro spiritual from oral tradition to solo arrangements by both Black and white composers. While the composers utilize the same texts, their arrangements have different effects due to their harmonic contexts. Labenske takes the foundation of the Negro spiritual, employs traditional Black music styles, and presents them on a concert hall platform that may be more easily consumed by non-Black audiences. His work is an example of how music scholars and performers can bridge Blackness and whiteness through song.

Conclusion

Conclusion

While this document provides a wealth of historical information alongside many theoretical and literary analyses, ultimately, my hope is for this document to serve two distinct purposes:

- 1) To serve as a source of knowledge that encourages both Black and non-Black music teachers and singers to assign and perform the Black song repertoire with more confidence and less fear.
- 2) To impress upon everyone (Black, white, and other) the importance of education when it comes to bridging our communities.

I argue that my people of color must not only be educated about our own histories, but we also must be educated in general to attain credibility for our voices to be heard in our communities. The prominent Black figures mentioned in this document all have one huge asset in common that puts their voices on a larger platform for change: *Education*. Our education only strengthens our arguments with factual information, appealing to logic, rather than having to rely solely on appealing to emotions.

~ **AND** ~

I argue that my white friends must be educated in the lived experiences of the minorities in our communities. You can only truly find empathy once you have taken the time to listen and be educated about the adversities that minorities have endured and still endure today.

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Appendix

Appendix A

Original Marsh Arrangement (1880)

No. 77. Deep River.

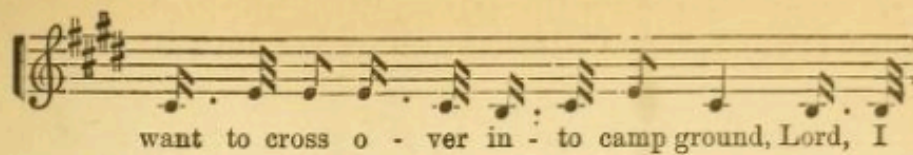
The image shows a musical score for the hymn 'Deep River'. It consists of three staves of music in treble clef, with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The melody is written on the first staff, and the lyrics are written below it. The second staff continues the melody with a dynamic marking of 'f' (forte). The third staff continues the melody with a dynamic marking of 'pp' (pianissimo). The lyrics are: 'Deep . . ri - ver, My home is o - ver Jor - dan, Deep ri - ver, Lord, I want to cross o - ver in - to camp ground, Lord, I'. The number '196' is printed at the bottom of the page.

Deep . . ri - ver, My home is o - ver Jor - dan,

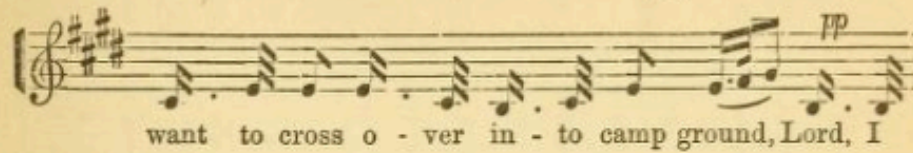
Deep ri - ver, Lord, I

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

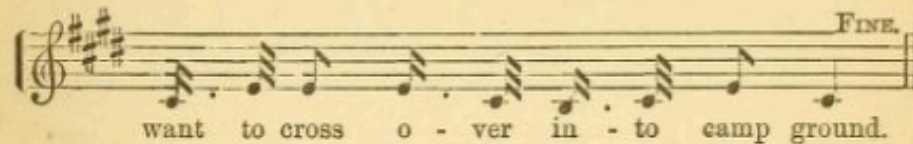
196



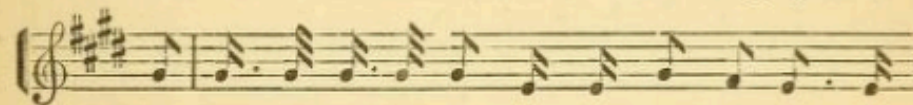
want to cross o - ver in - to camp ground, Lord, I



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



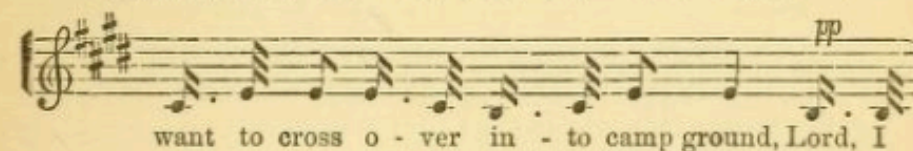
want to cross o - ver in - to camp ground.



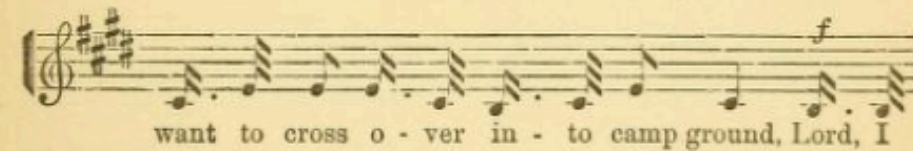
1. Oh, don't you want to go to that Gos - pel-feast, That
2. I'll go in - to hea - ven, and take my seat,
3. Oh, when I get to heav'n, I'll walk all a - bout, There's



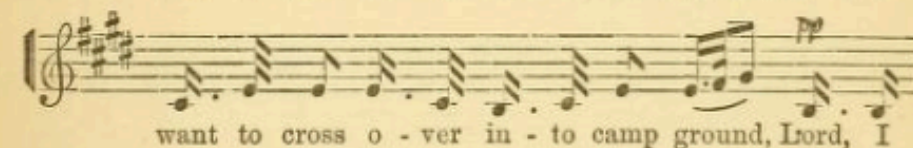
1. pro - mis'd land where all is peace? Lord, I
2. Cast my crown at Je - sus' feet. Lord, I
3. nobody there for to turn me out. Lord, I



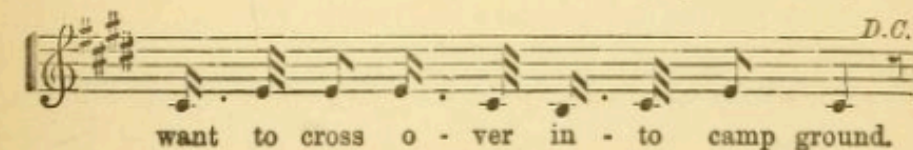
want to cross o - ver in - to camp ground, Lord, I



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



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



want to cross o - ver in - to camp ground.