




2021

SHINING A SPOTLIGHT ON FEMALE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMPOSER EVELYN SIMPSON-CURENTON

Iris E. Fordjour-Hankins

University of Kentucky, iris.fordjourhankins@gmail.com

Author ORCID Identifier:

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6911-9478>

Digital Object Identifier: <https://doi.org/10.13023/etd.2021.281>

[Right click to open a feedback form in a new tab to let us know how this document benefits you.](#)

Recommended Citation

Fordjour-Hankins, Iris E., "SHINING A SPOTLIGHT ON FEMALE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMPOSER EVELYN SIMPSON-CURENTON" (2021). *Theses and Dissertations--Music*. 190.

https://uknowledge.uky.edu/music_etds/190

This Doctoral Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Music at UKnowledge. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations--Music by an authorized administrator of UKnowledge. For more information, please contact UKnowledge@lsv.uky.edu.

STUDENT AGREEMENT:

I represent that my thesis or dissertation and abstract are my original work. Proper attribution has been given to all outside sources. I understand that I am solely responsible for obtaining any needed copyright permissions. I have obtained needed written permission statement(s) from the owner(s) of each third-party copyrighted matter to be included in my work, allowing electronic distribution (if such use is not permitted by the fair use doctrine) which will be submitted to UKnowledge as Additional File.

I hereby grant to The University of Kentucky and its agents the irrevocable, non-exclusive, and royalty-free license to archive and make accessible my work in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known. I agree that the document mentioned above may be made available immediately for worldwide access unless an embargo applies.

I retain all other ownership rights to the copyright of my work. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of my work. I understand that I am free to register the copyright to my work.

REVIEW, APPROVAL AND ACCEPTANCE

The document mentioned above has been reviewed and accepted by the student's advisor, on behalf of the advisory committee, and by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), on behalf of the program; we verify that this is the final, approved version of the student's thesis including all changes required by the advisory committee. The undersigned agree to abide by the statements above.

Iris E. Fordjour-Hankins, Student

Dr. Angelique Clay-Everett, Major Professor

Dr. Lance Brunner, Director of Graduate Studies

SHINING A SPOTLIGHT ON FEMALE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMPOSER
EVELYN SIMPSON-CURENTON

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS PROJECT

A Doctor of Musical Arts Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in the
College of Fine Arts
at the University of Kentucky

By

Iris Fordjour-Hankins
Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Angeliqye Clay-Everett, Professor of Music
Lexington, Kentucky

2021

Copyright © Iris Fordjour-Hankins 2021

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6911-9478>

ABSTRACT OF DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS PROJECT

SHINING A SPOTLIGHT ON FEMALE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMPOSER EVELYN SIMPSON-CURENTON

Those who are interested in learning more about Evelyn Simpson-Curenton (b. 1953) will find it challenging to find scholarly material on her life and music. She is best known for her arrangements of spirituals that were sang and recorded by Kathleen Battle and Jessye Norman (whose concert recording *Spirituals in Concert* was released in 1991). Simpson-Curenton is also known for her choral work, "Psalm 91," made famous by Oakwood University's Aeolians. Though she is self-published, her absence from compilations, volumes, and anthologies for solo voice and piano is regrettable. This dissertation provides well researched scholarly information about her musical life and contributions. It presents biographical information, a first-person interview, and a descriptive works catalogue for teachers, performers, and research scholars. By highlighting Simpson-Curenton's work and promoting it, we also actively reckon with the racist past and its exclusion of black voices. The goal of this work is to promote Simpson-Curenton's music for use by teachers, singers, and coaches. It also works to lift black voices, specifically black female artists, into the spotlight they so deserve.

KEYWORDS: Female Composers, Spirituals, Simpson-Curenton, Black Artists

Iris Fordjour-Hankins

May 28, 2021

SHINING A SPOTLIGHT ON FEMALE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMPOSER
EVELYN SIMPSON-CURENTON

By

Iris Fordjour-Hankins

Dr. Angelique Clay-Everett
Director of Doctor of Musical Arts Project

Dr. Lance Brunner
Director of Graduate Studies

May 28, 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” 1 Corinthians 12:9

When I began the pursuit of a doctoral degree in music, I had no idea that the journey would lead me through the most challenging times in my life. I learned, I pursued, I have gained, I have lost, yet I am grateful. Most importantly I have learned in this lesson that *God’s grace is sufficient for me*. I owe a great deal of gratitude to a number of people. But first I must acknowledge my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I must also remember my mother Gertis Elizabeth Fordjour and my only sister Anna Maria Fordjour Ahmed, and my mother-in-law Gwendolyn Hankins, all of whom I lost in death during this journey; I feel their love every day and I am looking forward to seeing them again in perfection at the day of the Lord’s appearing.

Now for those of my family who bring me daily joy I must acknowledge my husband, Ernest Hankins, III; daughter Iman Isabella; son EJ (Ernest Hankins, IV); my father, Isaac Fordjour (Janet); and my brothers Ike, Derrick, and Ricky. I must also acknowledge the love shown me by members of the Burns Seventh-Day Adventist Church family in Detroit, MI, including Vernester Beauchamp and Dr. Gerald Ian Fisher-Curley, and also the Lima Drive Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Lexington, KY. Also, I give thanks to those who taught me the art of singing: Dr. Angelique Clay-Everett, Dr. Everett McCorvey, Dorothy Duensing, Dina Soresi Winter, and Dr. Ginger Beasley. I am grateful for the following people who have invested their time, talents, and resources in me: the late Dr. Pearse Lyons of Alltech, Inc; the late Jeanette Pollard; Dr. Renee Collins, founder of Valley Conservatory and her faculty; Dr. Eurydice Osterman, Dr. Aimee Fincher, Dr. Lloyd Mallory; my students at Oakwood University and Valley Conservatory, and Dr. Leslie Malland, my wonderful editor. Lastly, I am most indebted to Evelyn Simpson-Curenton for allowing me to spend countless hours of time with her in preparing this document. May the beauty of her music be heard for generations to come.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....iii

Part One

Chapter One: Introduction and Background..... 1

Chapter Two: Composer Biography and Interview.....9

 2.1: Biographical Information.....9

 2.2: Interview with the Composer.....12

Chapter Three: Annotated Index with Performance Practices: A Descriptive Works

 Catalogue.....28

 3.1: Overview and Performance Practices.....28

 3.1.1: Overview.....28

 3.1.2: Concert Spirituals.....29

 3.1.3: Types of Spirituals.....32

 3.1.4: Consideration of Usage of Dialect.....34

 3.1.5: Hymn Arrangements.....41

 3.2: Catalogue and Song Index.....42

 3.2.1: The Purpose of this Catalogue.....42

 3.2.2: About these Arrangements.....43

 3.2.3: Voice Categories.....44

 3.2.4: Index of Songs.....46

 3.2.5: African American Music for the Classical Singer: Spirituals and
 Hymns.....47

3.2.6: Battle-Norman Arrangements for Voice and Piano: American Negro Spirituals.....	61
3.2.7: Forthcoming Publications: American Negro Spirituals and Hymns.....	75
3.2.8: Possible Publications.....	87
Chapter Four: Persevering Evelyn Simpson-Curenton’s Music.....	93
Part Two: Program Notes	
From <i>Spirituals to Art Songs by Black Composers</i> , May 17, 2015.....	110
From <i>Spirituals to Art Songs by Black Composers</i> , April 17, 2016.....	123
<i>A Chamber Recital</i> , May 3, 2021.....	138
<i>Lecture Recital: Shining a Spotlight on Female African American Composer Evelyn Simpson-Curenton</i> , May 19, 2021.....	147
Appendices.....	97
Appendix A: Score Corrections.....	97
Appendix B: First Person Interview Continuation.....	100
Appendix C: Further Publications.....	102
Appendix D: Listing of Music, Recordings, and Websites.....	104
Appendix E: Photos of the Composer.....	106
Bibliography.....	149
Vita.....	154

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

“The black musician has created an entirely new music-in a style peculiarly Afro-American-that today spreads its influence over the entire world. And ever since his arrival in the New World, he has enriched with his contributions the European-based musical traditions of the nation.”¹
-Eileen Southern

As I was considering dissertation topics, I developed the genesis of this project during a discussion with one of my instructors, Dr. Everett McCorvey. Generally, my interest was in lesser-researched African American musicians who are still living. Several names came to bare in the conversation and amongst them was Evelyn Simpson-Curenton. I remembered a family friend gifting me a 1991 video recording titled *Spirituals in Concert* on the Deutsche Grammophon label, which featured the operatic sopranos Kathleen Battle and Jessye Norman.² I recalled that Simpson-Curenton’s arrangements were my favorites on the program. Memories were further stirred as I recalled meeting Simpson-Curenton in June of 2013 at a concert held at Shiloh Baptist Church in which I performed on tour with the Father William T. Cunningham Memorial Choir of Detroit, Michigan.

After the concert, a member of the church introduced herself and gave me a compilation titled, *African American Music for the Classical Singer: Spirituals and Hymns*, by Evelyn Simpson-Curenton.³ I was surprised by the generous gift and upon opening it, I

¹ Southern, E. (1983). *The music of Black Americans: A history*, 2nd ed. Norton & Company, xv.

² Battle, K., & Norman, K. (1991). *Spirituals in concert*. [Video]. Deutsche Grammophon.

³ Simpson-Curenton, E. (2006). *African American music for the classical singer: Spirituals and Hymns* (Vol. 1). [Album]. E. C. Curenton.

recognized that the music was some of the arrangements I had heard in the Battle and Norman *Spirituals in Concert* program. After I asked if the composer was present, I was offered a chance to meet her. I quickly made friends with Evelyn Simpson-Curenton and the late, Jeanette Pollard (1951 – 2020).⁴ We three spoke at great length and exchanged phone numbers. They even gave me their autographs! In retrospect, this opened doors for further interactions that have prepared me to take on the task of writing this project.

Simpson-Curenton’s demographic snapshot renders her a prime candidate for this discussion. She is a multifaceted female African American musician leading the field of today’s arrangers and composers of choral music, spirituals, and original works. The famed American choral scholar, conductor, and organist Philip Brunelle (1943) says of Simpson-Curenton,

Her compositions are widely performed by acclaimed musicians and ensembles, including Kathleen Battle and Jessye Norman in their infamous 1990 concert at Carnegie Hall. Today, Curenton is based in Washington D.C. and served for many years as artistic director and music director of the Washington Performing Arts Society’s Men and Women of the Gospel and an associate of the Smithsonian Institution. As a talented vocalist, she skillfully writes sacred and secular choral music with the needs of singers in mind.⁵

The accolades as a composer extend far and wide as her work has influenced the landscape of choral music, gaining the attention of choral groups across the globe. Her arrangements for Kathleen Battle and Jessye Norman were perhaps the beginning of her notoriety.

⁴ Jeanette Pollard was an ordained minister in the Baptist church. In addition to the ministry, she was a nurse and a civil rights activist who spoke across the country in the fight against injustice perpetrated against black people. Pollard was the host of “Culture, Class and Consciousness” with WBGR Gospel Network, an internet platform.

⁵ Brunelle, P. (2020, August 27). *Evelyn Simpson Curenton: Musical Moments with Philip Brunelle*. VocalEssence. <https://www.vocalescence.org/musical-moments-with-philip-brunelle-june-18-2020-evelyn-simpson-curenton/>.

Simpson-Curenton's contributions to the project, which featured the two soloists, chorus, and orchestra, were highly praised in a 1995 review written by Doris Evans McGinty who proffered,

Of the eighteen spirituals that are listed, four are performed by the ensemble, three are duets for the sopranos, and the remainder are solos with varying accompaniment. . . For example, the rendition that I find most compelling is Jessye Norman's solo in Evelyn Simpson-Curenton's arrangement of 'Sinner, Please Don't Let This Harvest Pass.'... An intriguing feature of the recording is the pairing of spirituals related by subject or mood: 'I Believe I'll Go Back Home' with 'Lordy, Won't You Help Me' (arr. Charles Lloyd, Jr.); 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot' with 'Ride Up in the Chariot;' 'Over My Head' with 'Li'l David;' and 'Calvary' with 'They Crucified My Lord' (the latter are [3] arranged or adapted by Simpson-Curenton). Humor, an often ignored or unknown aspect of the spiritual, is introduced in the scena depicted in 'Scandalize My Name' (also a Simpson-Curenton arrangement), which is sung to piano accompaniment.⁶

Those arrangements of hers are now recognizable in the world of music, especially to those who are connoisseurs of spirituals. Though they are all works for solo voice, choir, and orchestra, many singers have inserted vignettes of Simpson-Curenton's arrangements from the 1991 *Spirituals in Concert* into solo voice and piano arrangements by other composers. Some have either made their own transcriptions or performed them "by ear." For the composer/arranger this is a complimentary gesture, but it is in essence pirating and illegal. With greater promotion of her publications, singers will know that they have access to her original scores. To this end and in answering the problem created by her absence from the published cannon of musical arrangements, Simpson-Curenton is currently in the process of penning the arrangements done for Kathleen Battle and Jessye Norman so that

⁶ McGinty, D. (1995). *American Music*, 13(2), 247-249. doi:10.2307/3052263.

they may indeed be performed as she intends by solo artists (the aforementioned are available for purchase and/or rental).

Presumptively, self-publication has kept Simpson Curenton's music for solo voice in the shadows. As a composer, she is noticeably absent from volumes and anthologies (some with dedicated themes and others without). Yet, most glaring is the absence of her songs in compilations (with the exception of one) thematically devoted to compositions written by African Americans for classical-trained singers. Few are aware of Simpson-Curenton's volume *African American Music for the Classical Singer: Spirituals and Hymns*.⁷ Her arrangements were recorded by soprano Janice Chandler-Eteme on the 2007 album entitled *Devotions*.⁸ Simpson-Curenton had direct influence on the project, serving as both coach and pianist. Due to the scarcity of scholarly writings about Simpson-Curenton's arrangements for voice and piano, this dissertation spotlights songs performed in the 1991 *Spirituals in Concert* program as well as the upcoming works planned for a second volume. I hope this dissertation will assist consumers of her music in selecting songs for use in studios, classrooms, and stages.

Built primarily on religious themes, the usefulness of Simpson-Curenton's multidimensional texts is limitless. Her list of compositions encompasses spirituals, hymns and two original art songs, all of which are appropriate for usage by classical singers in the studio, on concerts, in recitals, in churches, and at civic venues. It is important to note that the strategic performance of her music in civic venues is a timely choice especially for classical artists who today are looking for ways to express their ideologies about the social

⁷ Curenton, E. (2006). *African American Music for the Classical Singer: Spirituals and Hymns* (Vol. 1). E. C. Curenton.

⁸ Chandler Eteme, J. (2007). *Devotions* [Album]. Sligo.

climate. Evelyn Simpson-Curenton's voice through music is part of the African American push for justice and equality. Solo artists should know and hear this music that is dedicated to their specialties. As Alex Ross (Sept. 14, 2020) states:

Classical-music institutions have just begun to work through the racist past. Scores of opera houses, orchestras, chamber-music societies, and early-music ensembles have declared solidarity with Black Lives Matter, in sometimes awkward prose...Classical music can overcome the shadows of its past only if it commits itself more strongly to the present. Black composers of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have staged a much more radical confrontation with the white European inheritance.⁹

In response to Ross' article, Evelyn Simpson-Curenton's music should and must be used in this fight for equality. Black artists need tools in their arsenals if they are to continue push back against racism and to break down barriers that have impeded the voices of black composers and musicians in the past.

Evelyn Simpson-Curenton is a strong proponent for understanding history and the rights of all peoples. Lately, she is often commissioned to write music based on issues of social justice. In 2016 she scored a commissioned work titled "Voice of Freedom" in the style of an operetta. It follows the development of the spiritual, from Africa through the Middle Passage, the Reconstruction and the concert spiritual, the Black Panthers, President Barack Obama, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (the first female president of Liberia),¹⁰ other black

⁹ Ross, A. (2020). Black scholars confront white supremacy in classical music. *The New Yorker*, September 21, 2020 issue. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/09/21/black-scholars-confront-white-supremacy-in-classical-music>.

¹⁰ Peyton, N. (2020, March 6). *Africa's first elected female president to train 'wave' of women leaders*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-africa-women-politics-trfn/africas-first-elected-female-president-to-train-wave-of-women-leaders-idUSKBN20T01D>.

world leaders, Paul Robeson, and Sojourner truth. The performing forces include mezzo soprano, three choirs, flute, and combo (piano, bass, drums), and a talking drum.

On a broader scale, Simpson Curenton's social topics span a wide range of interests. She has written about Ida B. Wells, George Floyd, Biblical texts, global suffering, the groaning earth, the creatures of the earth, the sounds of cultural music including African, early American music, American Civil War music, and the optimism that God will save humanity. The composer's works also expound upon her interests in the music of the motherland, Africa, and the forceful bringing of Africans to American soil. Through her music she has traced the response of the earliest American Quakers who were the first abolitionists living in Germantown and Philadelphia.¹¹ Simpson-Curenton has made historical connections from the times of the Civil War, through the era of civil rights, and through the 1990's birth of the neo-soul genre. Her latest interest is in writing music based on the prayer spoken by Bernice King at John Lewis' Funeral in 2020. In essence, Simpson-Curenton has not ended her career. Instead, this is the day of her music. She is dedicated to the use of her musical gifts as a medium for social awareness and change. And so, with these points in mind, I finalized my decision to research, catalogue, and discuss the music of Evelyn Simpson-Curenton to help make right the wrongful exclusion of her work in classical singer repertory.

The following pages contain the presentation of my research on the solo voice and piano works of Simpson-Curenton. Chapter 2 contains both a brief biography and first-person interview in which she speaks of her musical career, conceptual ideas for her voice

¹¹ Quakers (Society of Friends): The Abolition of Slavery Project. (n.d.).
http://abolition.e2bn.org/people_21.html.

and piano works, performance practices, and the future of classical music in the African American community. Chapter 3 provides a discussion about style, performance practices, dialect, tempo, rhythm, and improvisation as preferred by the composer. And because musical symbols and words are limited in their ability to provide clarity about style and interpretation, Simpson-Curenton and I make recommendations for recordings for the purposes of listening and study. An annotated index comprises the remaining portion of Chapter 3. It details important information about songs arranged or written by the composer for solo voice and piano. Each piece has its own entry in the index containing these elements: title, language, poetry source and themes, genre, key, range, tessitura, tempo, difficulty level, and voice types. In addition, I provide the descriptive notes for performers written by Simpson-Curenton herself. These are followed by my comments on the work, publication information, instrumentation, arrangements by other composers, and suggested recordings related to each entry. Chapter 4 summarizes the main points of the previous chapters and suggests possible areas where future researchers may focus their efforts. The short five-sectioned appendices provide the reader with additional information, serving as a continuation of topics addressed in the main body of the paper. Appendix A contains corrections to scores that were mis transcribed in *African American Music for the Classical Singer: Spirituals and Hymns*.¹² Appendix B is a continuation the first-person interview with the composer. Appendix C gives a list of published and unpublished music with purchasing information and projected publication plans. In Appendix D, I provide a selected discography and websites where Evelyn Simpson-Curenton's music may be heard.

¹² Simpson-Curenton, E. (2006). *African American music for the classical singer: Spirituals and Hymns* (Vol. 1). E. C. Curenton.

Finally, Appendix E contains photos of the composer and people important to her life and musical journey.

CHAPTER TWO

COMPOSER BIOGRAPHY AND INTERVIEW

2.1 Biographical Information

In 1953 Evelyn Carol Simpson-Curenton was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania at Hahnemann University Hospital. Her father, Melvin Hinson Simpson, and mother, Evelyn Smith Simpson, raised a family of 11 children: Claudette, Joy, Patricia, Melvin, Gloria, Evelyn, Marietta, Joseph (their biological children), and Aaron, Kevin, and Jason, (their adopted children). The musical family valued education, classical musical training, and music performance. They formed a musical group in 1969 at Grace Baptist Church called “The Singing Simpsons of Philadelphia.” For 15 years the family sang throughout the United States for the United Methodist Church, the Full Gospel Businessmen, Kathrine Kuhlman, and the *Praise the Lord Show*, also known as the PTL Club, with Jim and Tammy Baker.

All of the children in the family took piano lessons and learned other instruments, including young Evelyn Simpson, a child prodigy who began playing piano at the age of two. Following the path of her elder siblings, her parents sought to provide her with formal lessons at the Germantown Settlement Music School. Finances were a concern for the large family, but fortunately Simpson-Curenton won a full scholarship to the Settlement school where she studied until the age of 13. At the age of 12, Simpson-Curenton started organ lessons with Alyce Bianco, the organist of Arch Street Methodist Church in downtown Philadelphia.

Looking in retrospect at her youthful years, Simpson-Curenton says she was a “somewhat lazy musician” with perfect pitch who was fascinated with music. She attributes this laziness to her ability to hear music and play it without seeing the printed score. Her ability to absorb musical sonorities was nurtured by her parents who regularly played recordings of classical music. As a toddler, Evelyn would request that her parents play recordings of her favorite nursery rhymes and Handel’s *Messiah*. When she was five years old, she listened to the work from cover to cover while recovering from the chicken pox. After formal training, she learned to read music and in 1969 at the age of 16, she accompanied her sister Joy in a performance of Mozart’s “Alleluia” from *Exsultate, jubilate*, K. 165 during a family concert.

Simpson-Curenton’s mother was a student of the classical voice. Though she was not accepted into his studio, she auditioned for Giuseppe Boghetti (1896-1941), the highly respected voice teacher of the famous contralto, Marian Anderson (1897-1993). The matriarch’s love of the singing voice became a passion for her daughters, Joy and Marietta, who studied voice at the collegiate level. Both women went on to become successful classical singers. Likewise, in 1972, after graduating from Germantown High School, Evelyn Simpson-Curenton attended Temple University, earning a Bachelor of Music (B.M.) in music education with a concentration in voice. The journey to obtaining her degree was not without its challenges. She initially enrolled as a composition major but gave it up after tackling an assignment that she disliked. In it, she was asked to write a song using only intervals of a third. With her disdain in tow, Evelyn changed her major to voice. As a voice major, she discovered that she did not like French diction and settled upon the pursuit of a degree in music education. The influence of her sister Joy, who herself had a

degree in music education, played a large role in Simpson-Curenton's ultimate academic choice. During her studies as a music education student, Evelyn was greatly influenced by the famed conductor, Robert Page (1927-2016). Page was a Robert Shaw (1927-1978) disciple and conducted his choral rehearsals similarly to Shaw; thus, he exposed the choir to many types of music. According to Simpson-Curenton, Page's strategic placement of the voices in the choir based on size, color, and skill helped expand her musical ear and affinity for music.

On June 23, 1979, Evelyn Simpson married the late Edward Emmanuel Curenton and to this union were born four children. The names listed here are in the order of their birth: Evelyn Nancy, Julietta Marie, Edward Emmanuel Jr., and Christopher Michael Andrew. After completing her degree in music education, which took her about six years due to her marriage and the births of their children, she opted not to pursue teaching as a full-time career. Disappointed by the racial disparities and inequities in public school education, she determined to teach only if it was a necessity. Fortunately, the Curenton family was able to support themselves on the income of Evelyn's husband and her income as a musician. Simpson-Curenton played for churches, concerts in both the classical and non-classical arenas, and was commissioned to arrange and compose music. The commissions and recognitions of her gift as a pianist and organist opened pathways that would lead her to write arrangements and original works for many distinguished musicians, including George Shirley, Jessye Norman, Kathleen Battle, Denice Graves, Angela Brown, Hubert Laws (flutist), the Harlem Boys Choir, and the conductor James Levine including the Chorus and Orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera. Her works have been performed by many city orchestras, including the National symphony and the U.S. Marine Band. Her

works have also been performed by Duke Ellington, Janice Chandler Eteme, and David Murray.

Currently Evelyn Simpson-Curenton resides in the Virginia area where she continues to compose and arrange. She is a highly sought-after performer as an organist, pianist, and singer. She often accompanies her daughter Julietta Marie who is a flutist and her sister Marietta, a mezzo. The trio concertizes and plays for various venues. As a clinician, Simpson-Curenton makes presentations about various musical topics, including composition, choral music, and church music. She has future plans to publish all of her works through mainstream companies, including those compositions to come.

2.2 Interview with the Composer

This portion of the chapter presents highlights from the first-person interview I conducted with Evelyn Simpson-Curenton via Zoom. The quaint conversation lasted well over three hours. What follows is an edited version of the interview. Additional snippets of the interview are in Appendix B.

Question 1: *Many creative people say that the inspiration for their musical compositions have come to them in many unique forms. Some say that their inspiration comes from a spiritual experience, via dreams, conversations, reading a book, a picture, etc. Some have reported unexplained flashes of brilliance in which they become a transmitter of the work given to them from a spiritual plane. Mozart composed in his head and Beethoven worked methodically to realize his music. How do ideas for your compositions and arrangements begin?*

Evelyn Simpson-Curenton (ECS): Well, um. . . I'd say, for instance, like my "Git on Board." I heard a composer's rendition that kind of gave me some ideas. Number one, I should say, most of the time, I will pray first and say ask God for inspiration....and, um... So that's where the idea usually stems from. (I was scared the first time I did something for the urban League and a writing for the National symphony. This was my first time writing for an orchestra.)

When I heard the Thomas Kerr rendition of "Git on Board," it helped me.¹³ Also, when I heard the train whistles in my neighborhood, that helped me. And sometimes sections of the piece would come to me; I would just be doing something in the house or wherever, or maybe sitting at my drawing board, and sections would come to me. So, I would try to jot things down. Sometimes things will come to me in little pieces. And then, sometimes whole sections will come to me. I found in my earlier writing that I was doing more things in pencil and paper. But when the computer came along, then I started kind of going through the computer. Well now I'm starting to go back to the pencil and paper because sometimes I have to figure out something and figure out, "Okay, how does this work?" I have a what you call a Disklavier piano and when sections or something will come to me, so I will go in there and play things that will come to me - inspiration - and just record it.¹⁴ So that's what I would say is that it comes to me [in] different ways, sometimes you know? Sometimes passages will play in my spirit, and I'll go to the piano and play it out, sometimes to sketch it out, you know ideas, sometimes as I'm writing what I have already transcribed and then another patch will come to me in my ear.

ECS: One time I was writing something for Organ, and this piece just kept playing and playing and playing, and it wouldn't leave me alone. I couldn't go to sleep. So, one night, as I kept hearing this thing, the buzz, I said all right, alright, all right, I'm going downstairs to write this. (Laughing) It will not leave me alone! So, I went down, and I stayed until I saw the sun coming up. It was just a two pager, but the whole thing came to me, and I knew I better write, or it was going to be gone.

ECS: I don't have many experiences like that, but that was very interesting. It was like "you gotta, you need to get up from here and write that right now."

Iris Fordjour-Hankins (IFH): So, have you used that piece for something?

ECS: Yeah, that's now in the African American heritage collection, I believe, by Dr. Mickey Terry. It is with Morning Star. He has several bodies of black composers' music for Organ.

¹³ Thomas Kerr (1915-1988) was an African American composer. His "Git on Board" arrangement can be found in Willis Patterson's Anthology on page 51. Patterson, W. C. (Ed.). (2002). *The new Negro spiritual collection*. C. Patterson.

¹⁴ "The Disklavier is fundamentally a traditional, acoustic piano with a built-in record-and-playback system." History of the Disklavier. (2021). Yamaha Disklavier. <https://www.disklavier.com/history-of-the-disklavier>.

IFH: What is it titled?

ESC: Um...What is the name of that? Oh, it's just... (thinking to self). I think it is, "I Want Jesus..." or "I Want Jesus to Walk with Me," or...I just remember it's a minor tune.

Question 2: *Talk about your experience composing when you have been commissioned. Is the process the same as that which happens when writing under inspiration? Do you start by praying and then wait for inspiration?*

ESC: I'll wait for inspiration, and I always like to know if there's a theme or something that they want the piece to be written about...I like working from themes. I like words, you know, from spirituals or whatever I'm writing because that also helps me to do some word painting.

IFH: So, so the idea for the melody is based on words or is it just, just I don't know it, the process of composition? Where does the material for the sound come from, you know? And I understand what you're saying you have to start with understanding the subject, the theme, the words, and then you decide it's going to be major or minor, you, or do you just sit at the piano and let your fingers start rolling, you know?

ESC: Well, that's what I'm saying, sometimes things will come to me different ways. I hear passages once, I know a theme, and melodies begin to start coming to me. Because I know with one of the pieces that I just recently did, it's called "Passages," because of George Floyd [and] all this has happened...and so of course that's all in my spirit and I kept thinking there's no way that I cannot have this in my music, and all this is going on around us right now, because it's all a part of me right now. And so, they, I think the people have said, we just want some beautiful music. "We know that you write beautiful melodies and things like that, we just want a beautiful celebration of music." Well, I felt that I would be celebrating through the music, you know, if what came to me as something beautiful but, in the midst of it, to also tell this story somehow of what people were going through, what we were seeing right now.

IFH: Oh, my goodness, yes.

ESC: So, what came to me first was the scriptures talking about how justice rolls down like, down like water.

ESC: And so that passage came to me, and instead of it coming off like judgment, there are different connotations or different interpretations of that scripture, so I, instead of

saying judgment, I think I used the New International version that calls it (judgement) justice because I feel that's what we need. Justice.

IFH: Absolutely.

ESC: So, I use the word justice, rather than judgment.

IFH: Yes, "Let justice roll down like water." Amos 5:24.

ESC: Yeah, and so I use some things from the Bible. . . I didn't use the whole thing, but things that I thought were germane to bringing peace to the situation that's going on around us.

Question 3: *How would you describe the piano accompaniments in your compositions for solo voice and piano? I hear a great deal of delicacy in your sound and a highly pianistic approach.*

ESC: I've heard people say, your title, your touch is kind of light. And I think that I'm really digging into the keys.

IFH: It's, a very solid sound. I wouldn't describe it as light. I describe it as delicate. You know, you can only do so much with what God gave you in terms of weight, but I think also it's the way you write. It's very florid.

ESC: Well, I guess it depends on what's going on, because a lot of times I guess after playing for my sister Joy for so many years, I had to be so sensitive to so many nuances that she would do until sometimes I overcompensate by playing lighter as I listened to her. And I think Joy would tell me this and my sister Mary would to, that just because it says piano, you can't play piano in all rooms because I was making them have to sing too light. It [is] something that I've had to kind of battle with, you know, in doing classical literature. I learned not to play so light while trying to give the real dynamic. The hall might not be able to handle a piano dynamic. It makes the soloist have to sing and work that much harder to sing piano. So, a piano marking might really be more of a mezzo piano or a mezzo forte. So that's why sometimes, I you know, I get told that you're playing so light. (Both Laugh)

IFH: And perhaps it spills into your writing a little bit too.

ESC: Maybe so, but the other thing that has affected me, I think, as a writer, is that I used to play for a dance class. I noticed the difference in my writing after I started playing for the dance class because dancers use what they call a lot of breath in their movement. I

began to use a lot of, a lot of rippling passages, arpeggiation, scale-like passages, and melismas . . . you know, those types of things. I guess it is impressionistic type music that has this suspended-type sound with lots of peddling. So that gives this floating effect. So, I've noticed that that has really affected my piano playing a lot...I had no idea that dancers would affect me like that. I still hear it in my music when I'm writing. I hear that breath; I hear that effect of what dancers do and how they use the music.

IFH: That's beautiful. So, when you say breath, you mean B-R-E-A-D-T-H or B-R-E-A-T-H?

ESC: Almost like the breath of the singer. But it's in the body, so they do these gliding motions, where the hands are going up slowly, the head is falling slowly, and the hand is following. It's these things, and as they're doing all that, I would play these passages that would go with all of that. And so, when I hear singers and if they're singing something I'm writing for them or either just accompanying and improvising, I tend to use that same feeling if I feel that in what the singer is singing.

IFH: I'm just, it's so funny how life, life's experiences come together, and it all shows up in the way we express ourselves as artists.

ESC: Another person, I would say who has affected me with female playing is Sylvia Olden Lee because she, to me, played more like a man; I mean 'cuz, I mean she's just a thin lady, I mean, but the sound she would get out of the piano, I was like, oh, my goodness, especially when her booming bass lines.¹⁵ I said, "we are the orchestra, you know behind the singer." And so, depending on what that song requires, it might be a bombastic, you know, interludes and things like that, but so it just really depends, you know, on the piece. But that feminine touch is definitely, yeah okay so I guess you could say there's like a feminine type of touch to it.

ESC: When I think about my sister Joy, she was kind of what they said at first, they said that she was a dramatic soprano, then I heard something about a spinto. Because it was a big, big voice, and I think my mother always regretted that she had her to study too soon. She sang with the Youth Orchestra Academy of Music, which is a huge Concert Hall in Philadelphia. She was singing against [a] nice sized orchestra in his huge hall. My mom was saying, "no, she shouldn't have been doing things like that at her age." You know, and they feel that that it kind of did things to her voice that...

IFH: Because she was pushing?

ESC: Yeah, she you know she didn't have quite the technique, you know at that age, plus you don't have the, what's the word, you don't really have the projection skill at that age.

¹⁵ Sylvia Olden Lee (1917- 2004) was a significant African American coach of opera and spirituals. Newland, M. (2013, July 25). Lee, Sylvia Olden. *Grove Music Online*. Retrieved 25 Apr. 2021, from <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/0-mo-9781561592630-e-1002242092>.

And she was in high school, you know, and the teachers had heard her doing all these big aria type pieces, things that folks should have been doing, you know, later in life. She had a big mature voice, but, but pushing it too soon, it caused her problems later in her career when she would audition, I think for the MET. I don't know if you had heard of the Naumburg competition.¹⁶

IFH: Yes. The Naumburg?

ESC: Yeah, she was one of the winners for that. It was pretty fantastic.

Question 4: *You have said that many of your arrangements came from your collaboration*

with your sister, the late Joy Simpson. How did these arrangements come about?

What impact did her untimely death in 1986 have on you as a musician?

ESC: Oh well, the thing about it, my sister, I guess, we had traveled. We had done so many things together, ever since I was a little girl. She was the head of our family singing group you know, but you, she was such a mentor to me in so many different ways. The children's choir, I think that was one of her first jobs. I remember traveling with her there, and so, whatever she was learning she taught to us because I was one of the kids in the children's choir.

But we were also attending Grace Church. I think I learned more from her musically about decorum and things like that there. You know, she even had little voice lessons or warm-ups that she would do with us; we were only like in elementary school. We had warm-ups and things and she just taught us, you know, about how to stand correctly as a singer and all of the things that she was learning.

Pretty much everything that she did, like say, for instance, when she started at High Street Church of God's as music minister, I became the organist you know, over a period of time. And of course, we worked very closely there. As the organist and, of course, you know, I would help with teaching of parts and things like that. I just learned so much; and that by that time, I think she was in college. It was a temple, so I was learning so much from her again, you know, about that type of thing.

And then we began to do recitals and things together traveling, for I think about another 10 to 15 years together. Going to classical concerts, you know, various halls and venues, states, and whatnot, we did things for churches. Her program was always varied because it

¹⁶¹⁶ The Naumburg International Vocal Competition is open to singers of every nationality between the ages of 20 and 35. The concert is dedicated to the performance of concert repertoire. For more information, visit <https://www.naumburg.org/home>.

was classical. There would be spirituals and hymns a lot of times in our repertoire. And so, that's where we came up with a lot of these arrangements, like you know, "In the Garden" and "Great is Thy Faithfulness" and whatnot. We eventually had a television ministry, where I worked as her assistant director with that and arranger.

We were like Frick and Frack. We weren't just sisters. And . . . when we traveled on her classical tours, that was always a funny experience because she liked to be quiet and I would be talking, and she'd say, "I can't be doing all this talking right now." (Both Laugh) . . . So many experiences with my sister Joy. I really learned a lot about the various genres [and] how to play. Even though I always had studied voice, I mean I've studied voice and studied piano, she really helped me to understand the various eras of classical music. And when something should not have pedaling and things like that, and she would fuss at me. She would tell me, "You cannot use pedaling on this section" or whatever . . . I would get cross with her, but the music that we would create sometimes even though we'd be "yanging at each other," I call it, would just be so beautiful because I had a sense of where she was going. Her breaths and phrasing and whatnot, and we had a lot of times of creating on the spot, you know, if it was a hymn that you know, we hadn't taken a lot of time with. It was just such a wonderful collaboration going on there, and not just being sisters.

When she passed, oh my gosh, it was like, because I can say almost over 15 years of a singing together as a family, all the things that we had done since I was a little girl, it was like somebody pulled Adam's rib out of Adam, you know with Adam and Eve. It was like something was pulled out of me . . . I really grieved for a long time

I felt like I could never play the songs that she would sing, you know. I didn't even try to play the songs that she sang. . . I still loved her. That was my sister, you know. Even with all the craziness that we'd go through on those tours. (Laughs) That was a real interesting transition of . . . very painful and very interesting journey of her, losing her.

IFH: So now, when you hear other people singing the arrangements that you and she did together, how does it, how does it impact you?

ESC: Well, I see it, to me now as a great legacy, to hear the songs sung by others. I've said well, here's the legacy going forward. Somebody else is keeping the music alive. And so, as much of that repertoire that I can pin as quickly as I can, I, that's something that I hope to do to keep her voice alive in the world.

IFH: That's so beautiful. Thank you for being willing to talk about that.

Question 5: *Since Joy was a soprano, would you think the arrangements of songs in your volume African American Music for the Classical Singer: Spirituals and Hymns could be performed by male voices? Are there any plans to set your arrangements*

in other keys, perhaps a volume for medium and low voice?

ESC: Not a problem. I don't have a problem with men doing any of these things. Roderick Dixon asked me this and I guess, I never really thought much about it. I'm working [on] making them available in different keys.

IFH: There are people who can transpose at the piano into different keys.

ESC: If there are people who can do it, I say more power to them. I do it on some of the things that I, that I know of [in] my own repertoire really well, you know. There are a couple that I have changed keys for, but I just have to put them in a book. Marietta asked for, "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" in [a] lower [the] key and I did that for her.

Question 6: Many composers have specific performance ideas about their music. Are there any performance practices that performers of your music for voice and piano should adhere to? Does the genre matter? Is it permissible for performers to employ improvisation in your arrangements?

IFH: For further clarity with this question, let me ask this: Since you've taken the time to notate your arrangements, when [someone] improvise[s] in them, how do you feel about that?

ESC: Well, the only problem that I have with it, is that it kind of sometimes it takes away, especially if it's too much to the left. I think sometimes it, um, just kind of takes it out of context. For instance, there was a young lady who was doing my "Oh Glory." I was playing for her and had to coach her. I told her I really like people to try to stay as close to what I have written and if they want to do any embellishment, there should be very little gospel sounds. I said, "that's not quite what should be done with a spiritual." When things go too far, I call these type of stylizations "Stevie Wonder embellishments." Those should be more refined, and not to say a Stevie Wonder embellishment is not refined, I'm just saying that's from another genre. I just feel it takes away from the dignity of the classical approach to add improvisational things. Like, you notice the things Kathleen Battle did in the Carnegie Hall Concert with some of my pieces and whatnot. Because Sylvie Lee was the coach with some of those things, they stayed in a more classical approach to an embellishment. So, it just doesn't go to another genre. *[There are arrangements that approach spirituals with a gospely style.]* I think highly of Damien Snead, who has this Gospel type of approach to

the spirituals.¹⁷ I know that Mr. Brownlee has done some of those and there's a lot of Gospel flavor to it.¹⁸

You know, I just think that does something different, even in the way the person approaches the piano accompaniments. . . sometimes pianists would take it too far, you know, and try to add things that are just not in the classical vein. I said, "I think I pretty much do a lot of crossing of genres enough in the way I've done 'Get on Board' to let you know, Okay, this goes a little bit more, what do you call it? Foot stomping!" As you know, in sections of it, and then it takes you – boom! - back into the classical.

IFH: Looking at your arrangements I wonder who on earth wants to add to this?

ESC: Some accompanists want to take stuff like this further than what I haven't intended. When that starts happening, then people start adding a little more, a little more, a little more, and it's no longer what I've written.

Question 7: *You have worked with some of the most prestigious musicians the opera and concert stages have ever seen, namely George Shirley, Jessye Norman, Kathleen Battle, Denyce Graves, Angela Brown, James Levine, Hubert Laws, and John Blake. How did these experiences shape you as a composer and musician?*

ESC: I would say that what I learned the most from George Shirley who was a Prince of a man, and still is. But generally, I think just seeing their decorum, how they handle their public impressed me. But particularly George. I was so impressed with him, because I think he was one of the first MET opera stars that I actually met in person, and he was so down to earth and so genuine, but so poised. I remember not just I was so enthralled with who he was and his accomplishments but how nice he was and that he asked. And I remember the things, inflections, and things that he added to the piece made me realize that OK, I can look at these spirituals a little different. They might not necessarily have to be all sung.

You know just a little, 'cuz he added like in "Git on Board," some speech. Sometimes he'd say "Git on Board" instead of singing it. I love that and I tell people about that when they're performing it. You know, because of the fact that it's repeated a lot, you know, and he added, just added that on his own and I loved it. I appreciated his, you know, wanting to bring a flavor to the spiritual.

¹⁷ Damien Sneed is a multi-faceted musician. His list of skills includes composer, arranger, organist, pianist, conductor, and educator. For more information visit, <https://www.damiensneed.com/>.

¹⁸ Brownlee, L., & Sneed, D. (2013). *Spiritual sketches*. LeChateau Earl Records.

And meeting Jesse Norman, Kathleen . . . you know they're both different personas, but it just let me know that the seriousness of the way people take their art. You know, I think that's what I started gleaning from working with people like this. I said, "wow they really take this thing so seriously." You know my sister, we take our art seriously, but they opened up like a whole other arena of the people that follow them and, what's the word, to even strive even more for more excellence, like a different plateau.

My friend John Blake, it was in a jazz arena, see he's a jazz violinist, but a beautiful spirit and he introduced me to the jazz world. And they distinct very differently. It's very [much] like a brotherhood among them. If you make a mistake, nobody knows you made a mistake, because they keep creating and improvising, you know. He helped me to be ready for somebody like David Murry who I met in later years. They think differently than classical musicians, you know. They're very methodical about what they do, but it's just not that same kind of stress.

I think about what Wynton Marsalis said. He said, you know, "the thing about you musicians, especially classical musicians," he said, "you know you are too uptight." (Both Laugh) And then he says, "you say you make a mistake, and just fall, everybody falls to pieces, you know. In jazz, we make a mistake, nobody knows, we keep going." You know, and it's true. And I think that's the thing that always got me. It's like you just never want to make a mistake, you know but, but I think I appreciated that about John and like I said with David Murry, you know, you strive for excellence.

But I enjoyed the soulfulness that, like I said, that George Shirley brings to what he does, Denyce Graves, all of them add their soulfulness to all that they do. And I think that's the beauty of what I learned it, also for my sister Joy and my sister Marietta, it's that you can bring that soulful culture to what it is that you do. That blackness is still there. And I think that is what Angela Brown, hearing her do the "Aida," you know she brings soulfulness to the "Aida." You know, and I think, out of all of them, that's what I would sense. Don't forget your roots, let that spiritual passion come through what you do.

IFH: And James Levine being able to work with some of the most difficult personalities and yeah and make music.¹⁹

ESC: And you know what [I] learned from him was his approach. Because what I did. . . because I didn't know if I would ever have a chance to actually sit down to a piano with him. . . I created some rehearsal tapes for him specifically. I was scared because I said, I was singing my little pieces, I said, "oh Lord, I hope my voice doesn't crack." (Both Laugh)²⁰ So, I prepared some rehearsal tapes so he could hear my tempi and a sense of where I wanted pieces to go. And so, there was a piece that I was playing, and they handed me, I think it was a keyboard score, and I was playing Organ, and it had all these bars out, and I couldn't figure out where I was. I was waiting out 50 bars or so and then [there] was another

¹⁹ James Levine (1943-2021) was the main conductor at the Metropolitan opera. His four-decade long post there began in 1971. For more information, visit <https://www.metopera.org/user-information/memorial/james-levine/>.

²⁰ *speaking of preparing for the 1991 Spirituals in Concert recital with Battle and Norman*

little part for me to play and there were another 20 bars out. Then he came up to me at the organ on a break, you know from the orchestra rehearsal with the choir and, and he said, said “you kind of missed that cue.” And I said, “yeah I’m trying to read from an Organ score.” He said, “you’re a composer. I don’t know why they would give you a score like this,” and he hollered at the librarian, “get her an orchestral score!”

And that man, he went, “Yes, yes maestro!” (Both Laughing) He gets me a bound copy really quick and brings it over. And I thought, “Oh, he is like the wrath of God in here.” And then he leaned over, and he said, “thank you so much for those rehearsal tapes that you sent me.” He said, “that really helped me to understand what you what you wanted.” Then another composer came up to Levine at the music stand. I think it was something was going on, he did not like that. He was leaning trying to tell Levine something and I saw him do something like this with his hand (Flicks Hand) saying “Get away. Don’t come up to my stand, I didn’t give you permission to get up here.” And I said, “Oooh won’t try that one.” (Both Laugh)

I just thought that was so kind of him to come and say that, and say, “I appreciate those tapes you sent me. That really did help me to take your tempi and to know what you wanted from the singers, that was very, very helpful, thank you.” He didn’t have to tell me anything.

Question 8: *There have been many people who have heard your music being performed who desired to perform your songs themselves. Posted on YouTube are several of these recordings. It appears that the performers are transcribing your arrangements themselves. How does this impact you? Is it a question of integrity? Is it a good reflection upon the original work you have done with your arrangements? Do you believe it to be imperative to make the publication of your works available to those who have interest? Do you believe performers should first seek to find arrangements rather than transcribing them?*

ESC: Well, that’s a multi, multi answer question. (Chuckles) The number one thing that impacts me- the one problem that I find is with “Scandalized my Name” when it was done for the Carnegie Hall presentation. This is a little backdrop on that. I did a version that was written, but Sylvia Lee came out and played a version that was arranged by Sylvia Lee. My arrangement is the one that is referred to on the jacket. But the one you see on the television is the one that Sylvie Lee did. And so, what happens is, a lot of times people want to

transcribe that. They don't play my arrangement. Mine is not the arrangement that was used, but see, I had the contract so that's why my name appears as the arranger. But people like that version. Again, I guess, because mine had not been out, I don't think I had put it out yet. I'm hoping my next volume will, you know, have these songs that I did not put in the first volume. And now many times, I regret that. But it's just that in memory of my sister, I wanted hers to be the first volume to go out and the second to follow to have the things I had done for Kathleen Battle and Jesse Norman and other things. So that's what happened with "Scandalized my Name."

Now other pieces of mine, I don't know. Now, one gentleman told me, I think that he had transcribed my "Come unto Him," you know, "He shall feed His flock." I said, you did? I said, "why didn't you call me?" I said, "I had copies here." (Both Laugh) He said, "Oh well, I'll buy it." I said, "yeah, I'll send it to you." (Both Laughing) "Oh, you know," he said, "I just sat here and transcribed it." And I'm thinking, "really?" I do think that people do need to look and see if there is a publication or ask other artists. I have had that to happen. I think, it was "Sinner Please," where one gentleman was in a choir that I work with called "Children of the Gospel." He called me recently, he said "I'd like to get a copy of your 'Sinner Please' for a friend of mine, because nobody can seem to find it." He said, "well I know Miss Curenton, so I will call her and see if she has a copy that we can buy." And so, it just really made me think, okay Evelyn, get this together and get the next volume out.

Because I haven't put those arrangements out there, I think that's why some people will transcribe because they want to do them. I hadn't made them really available and that's a shame, because that is...how old is that concert? That's been quite a while ago.

IFH: But it still speaks to people.

ESC: Yeah.

IFH: Are you finding that you mentioned speaking with Brandi Sutton, are you finding that singers of her generation are interested in your music?

ESC: Believe it or not, I do, especially those who are studying, going on to college and institutes like that. They are so interested in singing the spirituals. And I'm glad to hear that, because sometimes you know people are into so much of the contemporary music that they're forgetting their own. I'm always excited when I hear that. You know, I think the thing that bothers me still is that people, instead of buying the music, they pass songs back and forth to each other and just copy. I don't think they realize that they are taking money out of our pockets by doing that. And because I've had different young people, say "I sang such and such a song on my recital or concert." And I say, "you did?" Thinking, I don't remember seeing a request coming from that person for that piece. You, know? I have a website. It's not like, it's like I'm not out there, you know. I can send you what I have, you know, until it is compiled if it's not compiled. So, I appreciate those who do their homework and will look me up and actually ask for copies.

Question 9: *I have noticed that you, like other female composers of note, have not been included in some of the more popular African American collections of songs. Of note would be collections by Dr. Willis Patterson, Margaret R. Simmons and Jeanine Wagner, Vivian Taylor, etc. However, Kathy W. Bullock, and Donna M. Cox, have included you in their volume. I am referencing the collections of volumes that are inclusive of or dedicated to spirituals and also to those who are art song volumes. As has been discussed earlier, it is understandable that you are not included in art song anthologies by black composers, but you do have a few art songs that have not been published. Have you been asked to submit works to such volumes? Are there any factors that have or may not have precluded you from this market?*

ESC: Looking at your question, I'm not really sure what happened. Only Kathy Bullock is one of the few that actually approached me. There was another woman, Hildegard?²¹ I think she approached me about putting something in her book. I have struggled with taking myself seriously believe it or not. My daughter said, "mommy you know a lot of those students at Juilliard, they are walking around with your CD. And folks, you know, they want to know where to get the music." I had started initially wanting to put my music in various music schools' libraries and somewhere along the line I lost steam on that. It does take a lot to stay up with these kinds of things. And, and I'm sorry that I did lose steam on that and, hopefully, I can figure it out. Some things that you have mentioned, I just I think you mentioned about a spiritual database, or something?

IFH: Mm hmm. Your name is out there on it. I can show it to you. . . I think the first place to start, and we've been speaking about it and it's in progress, are to finish those in-progress pieces and then [get] them in PDF.

ESC: Yeah, and at that time when I was approached by Helen Walker-Hill, I really had not put a list of my things together; my things were so, like all over the place, at that time

²¹ Hildegard music publishing focuses on the publication of music by female composers both past and present. For more information, visit their website at <https://www.hildegard.com/>.

and I had a friend who they told me, and she said, “you should be in this book! You should have your list of things!”²²

Question 10: *I have also noticed that the membership of famous black classical style composers was predominately male. That is not to say that there were not included in this hall of fame, black female composers. Consider Florence Price (1887-1953), Margaret Bonds (1913-1972), Undine Smith Moore 1904-1989), Betty Jackson King (1928-1994), Julia Perry (1924 – 1979), and Dorothy Rudd Moore (1940) to name a few. These women, born around the turn the first quarter of the 20th century have written compositions that remain a part of the standard repertoire for singers of music by African Americans. What inspiration have you drawn from these women? Does the fact that they were women make a difference on their acceptance as composers, not to mention their race? Do you believe that there are any disparities between male and female composers?*

ESC: Well, it’s interesting because I guess the first one that to me that I knew about was, and, and I really didn’t realize this for many years, was Margaret Bonds. I would hear that song . . . umm . . . I think, was at a Leontyne Price concert and she was doing that, “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands,” and I said, “that’s a woman!” And it just, you know it hit me like a ton of bricks. I said, “wow isn’t that something!”²³ Because again heretofore, there weren’t many black women composers that I was familiar with at all, so, and not until recent years, and I mean really literally within the last 10, 15, maybe 20 years, that I’ve been introduced to the music of Undine Smith Moore. I didn’t know anything about her. I didn’t hear about Betty Jackson King until I was doing the Kathleen Battle, Jesse Norman concert. And that was I think because of “Ride up in the Chariot,” which is a part of that medley that I did with the “Swing Low.” I had not heard of Julia Perry and Dorothy Rudd Moore. I had not heard of Florence Price. I learned of her, within the last four years when I was doing some work at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts. I saw her music and began to read about her life, the fact that she was one of the, I think the first black woman to go to higher learning into the college level conservatory, the New England Conservatory, and to hear that, I think that she was Margaret Bond’s teacher.

²² Walker-Hill, H. (2007). *From Spirituals to symphonies: African-American women composers and their music*. University of Chicago Press.

²³ Bonds, M. (1963). *He’s got the whole world in his hands: A spiritual*. Mercury Music Corp.

But still Florence Price now, what her music is now, the rage, you know. Now they program her symphonic repertoire when, at the time when she was at New England Conservatory her things were just held in the coffers because of her color. She had to lie and say she was Hispanic, I think, in order to even get into school. And conductors would not perform her music because of her color. . . because of the race situation. I can't recall when she actually got somebody to do it, but I can't imagine what that must have felt like to have all that knowledge and you can't get people to perform your music because of your color and you're a woman, you know all of those things. I don't understand why women had been pushed to the side through the years. And now we're getting, it's like we've been Suffragettes in a different way. You know? (Laughing) I don't know what that has been like.

But now I know the New York Philharmonic, not long before the pandemic, had a crew of white female composers, and I thought that was not, not a good thing. To me, they should have been a mixture of women, but at least for them to begin to have women as composers, I think it was either somebody on that board or something who was requiring that, you know, but I'm not quite sure. When you look at the history, most of the composers were men, you know, coming up with the history of composition. You know, those are the European writers and whatnot.

I can't speak about females during the time of slavery and Africa because music was a part of who we were. So then, you see, those early books were plantation songs that were taken down. It never really says if they were male or female because everybody was out there singing in the plantations- all kinds of music. You know, so there were probably women out there and I'm sure things dealing around children and things like that, to me sounds like things that would have been women speaking about babies and whatnot, like that "Little Darlin'" and you know, and little songs like that. I would imagine those would be black women possibly doing those kinds of pieces, but in general, until academia, I don't know that we have a lot, you know that really speaks of women as composers and other than like your Moore, Florence Price, and Margaret Bonds. You know, ones coming out of higher learning.

Question 11: *Lastly, what words of advice do you have future composers?*

ESC: Well, I think that we need to learn more about marketing, especially women. When I've talked to other women black composers, some in my generation complain about not being heard and whatnot. But I'm thinking, we need to learn all we can when it comes to marketing in this day of the computer age. We need to also get with people who are connected in the fields that we want to write, you know, get with people who are mentors. If you want to do film scoring, if you want to write for symphonic groups, and all, you need to be with mentors and people who have those kinds of connections. We should learn how to get things played and how to start meeting some of these conductors. We should know how to get a website up. You know, all of these variables are things that I think that we need to know. And, you know, you should get as much skill as you can in the theory so

that you can teach. So, I'm thinking as writers, particularly to be open to be able to write in different genres not to just to be stuck in a box, it makes sense, I think. It'll make you definitely more viable and definitely more versatile. And I think you will get more commissions and things be with the versatility. Don't frown-up if it's hip hop or something you don't know, just begin to research. It's a study. The field is open, you know. And I think that what's going to keep you working and make you viable and make you the rage and demand. Be versatile. Learn these various styles of our culture, especially black composers. Be open to study so much of what it is that you love and different genres. It just makes you that much more versatile, keeps you working.

IFH: Well, I want to say that you called the "newest sensation" in a dissertation that I was reading the other day. It was written some time ago. That was how you were, you were perceived. I want to say that you probably still are a new sensation to this generation.

ESC: Well, bless your heart.

IFH: I hope that you will continue to be a new sensation for years to come, beyond both our days.

ESC: Thank you, that that is just commendable; I've never heard that. But thank you for sharing that with me.

IFH: Oh, you're welcome. It is just, it has been a pleasure.

CHAPTER THREE

PERFORMANCE PRACTICES AND ANNOTATED INDEX:

A DESCRIPTIVE WORKS CATALOGUE

“Using the content of this repertoire and the process of learning and performing songs by African American composers, we seek to accomplish three main goals: to facilitate dialogue that deepens a performer’s knowledge and understanding of America’s history of systemic racism; to expose audiences to the music and poetry of suppressed African American voices, thereby integrating the repertoire into the canon of American art song; and to foster transformative empathy by looking through the lens of the African American Experience.”²⁴

-Randy Jones

3.1: Overview and Performance Practices

3.1.1: Overview

The music of Evelyn Simpson-Curenton exhibits a level of craftsmanship that leaves performers eager to sing it. However, some singers may have reservations when considering her music because of the high level of skill required to perform it as they recognize the exquisite blending of classical compositional techniques within her arrangements of spirituals and hymns. And because they have not yet been added to the classical singers’ canon, these arrangements are overlooked by those who do not understand their efficacy. In part, this is due to the stigma placed on music written by African American composers. Detractors denigrate the value of African American music and imply that it should only be sung by African Americans. Further, removing the “African American” moniker, many teachers and performers avoid new music simply

²⁴ Jones, R. (2019). *So you want to sing spirituals: A guide for performers*. Rowman & Littlefield, p. 160.

because it has never been heard before, and few are willing to program the unknown. Thus, the contents of this chapter, which is the crux of this dissertation, is designed to eliminate the complexities of song selection surrounding Simpson-Curenton's solo voice and music pieces. The pertinent snapshot details about each song are intended to make them understandable and attractive to would-be users. Finally, her arrangements of spirituals and hymns merit clear and concise discussion due to the inherent natures of both genres. Below is important information about these songs that will bring them to life for the teacher, singer, and researcher.

3.1.2: Concert Spirituals

It is pertinent to define the term "spirituals" before embarking upon the sub-designation of spirituals as "concert spirituals." Over the years, the terminology for this category of music has been amended several times. Spirituals have been referenced as: "slave songs," "negro spirituals," "spirituals," "black songs," and "African American Spirituals." Terminology changes were made as sensitivities impacted political correctness; subsequently, the terms for spirituals reflected then-current phraseology trends. The US Library of Congress currently uses the phrase "African American Spirituals" for the category of music we call *Spirituals*. Most recently, these songs have been labeled, "American Negro Spirituals" in the writing of the highly respected impresario and founder/director of the American Spirituals Ensemble, Dr. Everett McCorvey.²⁵

²⁵ "The American Negro Spirituals are the folk songs created by the enslaved Africans after their arrival in North America between 1619 and 1860" (NATS American Negro Spiritual Categories. (n.d.) National Association of Teachers of Singing. Retrieved June 23, 2021 from: https://www.nats.org/American_Negro_Spiritual_Competition.html).

Writing for the *National Association of Teachers of Singing* (NATS), he tackles the issue of terminology in his statement:

The term *American Negro Spirituals* speaks to the history, the suffering, the hope and the resolve of a people who were able to sing through their suffering and tell and re-tell their heroic stories of triumph and survival through these songs... While some of the language in the music is updated in order to be sung in a more contemporary style and to remove the barrier of dialect, the melodies, the sentiment and the stories of the spirituals are over 400 years old and need to be sung and remembered. . . the ultimate goal is for these melodies to be celebrated and sung by all.²⁶

We must understand that these songs are labeled with different titles, are worthy of respect, and should be considered as a part of the tapestry of American society. For the purposes of this dissertation, the terms, “spiritual” and “American Negro spiritual” are used interchangeably.

The sub-term “concert spiritual” has been in use since the days of Roland Hayes (1887-1977), Harry T. Burleigh (1888-1977), and Hall Johnson (1888-1970), all of whom were pioneers in the form. In agreement with this idea were others, including Edward Boatner (1898-1981) who published his own anthology of concert spirituals, *Spirituals Triumphant, Old and New*, with Willa A. Townsend in 1927. Over the years, concerns about maintaining the original versions of spirituals have waned; this is in part due to the bastardization of spirituals during the hateful practice of minstrelsy. In the forward of Boatner’s compilation, the authors write that the style of arrangements have the...

...tendency to get away from the harmony and characteristic way in which the songs were originally sung, and therefore much of their real import is lost. To the end that the ‘old-

²⁶ McCorvey, E. (n.d.). in NATS American Negro Spiritual Categories. (n.d.) National Association of Teachers of Singing. Retrieved June 23, 2021, from: https://www.nats.org/American_Negro_Spiritual_Competition.html.

time' way of singing these songs may be preserved, is this edition brought forth.²⁷

Though the “old -time way of singing these songs” has been refashioned by Simpson-Curenton, they bring honor to the genre. She has carried forth with those aforementioned pioneers of the late nineteenth century. Her work in these arrangements is imaginative, creative, and elegant. This praise is not limited to her spirituals settings but reflects this writer's view of all the music discussed in this paper. It is without a doubt that others share this opinion.

Though not mentioned in the publication *From Spirituals to Symphonies: African American Women Composers and Their Music*, Simpson-Curenton is recognized in its appendix of selected composers. It is worth noting that like her cohorts, she has thrived musically in times when the style of composition transitioned greatly. As Walker-Hill so eloquently states,

They have passed through a host of musical trends and “isms:” traditional, classicism, nationalism, racialism, modernism, serialism, neoclassicism, chance music, minimalism, electronic sound production, and multidisciplinary composition. They have incorporated African-American idioms to varying degrees, from nonexistent to prominent.²⁸

Simpson-Curenton has brought forth her musical ideas in ways that reflect her elegant, creative, and imaginative gifts. She incorporates African American idioms and authentic histories in her work. Thus, her spirituals should be considered part of the standard repertoire for recitals and concerts.

²⁷ Jones, R. (2016). Edward Boatner Biography. *Afrocentric voices from 'Classical' music*. <http://afrovoices.com/edward-boatner-biography/>.

²⁸ Walker-Hill, H. (2007). *From s to symphonies: African-American women composers and their music* (p. 43). University of Chicago Press.

3.1.3: Types of Spirituals

The act of selecting songs for the studio or stage can be daunting to even the most experienced teachers and singers. One way to consider a song is to look at its poetry. And so, I describe the types of spirituals for songs in this catalogue based upon their texts. My descriptors are taken directly from the monumental work of Randye Jones in her book, *So You Want to Sing Spirituals: A Guide for Performers*.²⁹ This is a valuable category for those interested in programming music based on theme. It is also an aid to those who wish to learn more about this musical form that for many years was misunderstood and abused by people who wished to diminish its quality. Some spirituals may be listed under more than one category using the coding below.

1. Songs of Sorrow
2. Songs of Consolation and Faith
3. Songs of Resistance, Defiance, and Deliverance
4. Songs of Jubilation and Triumph
5. Songs of Judgement and Reckoning
6. Songs of Regeneration
7. Songs of Spiritual Progress
8. Songs of Transcendence

²⁹ Jones, R. (2019). *So you want to sing spirituals: A guide for performers*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Songs of Sorrow (SS): songs that ultimately express hope for a brighter future, tell of “unhappiness, abuse, disappointment, disillusionment with humanity, longing, yearning, exile, loss and beleaguerment” (Erskine Peters as cited in Jones, 2019, p. 60).

Songs of Consolation and Faith: Songs that expressed the slaves’ “abiding faith in the power of prayer to help (them) overcome” (Jones, 2019, p. 62). Peters defines them as songs that “speak of the healing potion and the agents available to those who have undergone and withstood the insufferable” (as cited in Jones, 2019, p. 62).

Songs of Resistance, Defiance, and Deliverance: These were songs that acted as a disguise for a secondary meaning. To those informed, the songs housed “secret signals” of a covert action or plan (Peters as cited in Jones, 2019, p. 62).

Songs of Jubilation and Triumph: The themes of these texts were vehicles for the expression of “celebration, assurance of forgiveness from sins, and eternal peace” (Peters as cited in Jones, 2019, p. 64).

Songs of Judgement and Reckoning: These songs reflect the biblical concept of reaping what one sows. One’s soul is deemed either righteous or sinful and is thus rewarded at the judgement to live in heaven or hell, according to their lifestyle.

Songs of Regeneration: These songs or baptism of water or the baptism of the Holy Spirit are based on the Christian tenet of purging one's life sin to walk down the path of righteousness.

Songs of Spiritual Progress: These songs express the hope that one would live a consistent life according to the teachings of Christianity with the goal of one day living in heaven.

Songs of Transcendence: These songs reflect the reality of everyday living and the need to survive. They were modes of expression without boundaries set by social norms.

3.1.4: Considerations for Usage of Dialect

“The Negro spiritual as displayed through spirituals has permeated and colored the entire United States. Spirituals have introduced certain barbarisms into the American language and they have spread abroad the Negro dialect . . . Perhaps never before have the songs of a people woven such charms.”³⁰

Understanding proper performance practices of all music is important. The underscored word in the first sentence in this chapter must be the word “all.” The use of dialect is the right arm of performance practices when it comes to spirituals. In the most general sense, dialect is the morphing of the mother language spoken by peoples of differing geographic regions. In the case of American Negro spirituals, English is not the

³⁰ Fisher, M. M. (1998). Negro slave songs in the United States, Foreword by Ray Allen Billington. Kensington Publishing, p. 191.

mother tongue of the originators of the genre. African slaves were the originators of spirituals and for them, English was a secondary language. It is also important to keep in mind that Africa, their homeland, is not a place where only one mother tongue is spoken; rather, there were at the time many differing languages and people groups. According to The African Language Program at Harvard,

With anywhere between 1000 and 2000 languages, Africa is home to approximately one-third of the world's languages. The diversity of Africa's languages is evidenced by their populations. In total, there are at least 75 languages in Africa which have more than one million speakers. The rest are spoken by populations ranging from a few hundred to several hundred thousand speakers. Most of the languages are primarily oral with little available in written form.³¹

The acquisition of English for the enslaved Africans had to have been very challenging. Communication amongst themselves too had to be difficult. We must consider that these non-English speakers were mixed together with other Africans who spoke different African languages. Even harder to understand were the nuances they heard by the American English speakers who themselves possessed differing dialects. Over time, the manner of speech developed by slaves evolved into what is called a dialect of English. It is not to be assumed that all blacks spoke the same dialect. After all, they lived throughout the country where their speech was influenced by their surroundings. Miles Mark Fisher expounded on this premise when he wrote: "When negro singing was understood in Virginia, it was a mixture of African and English. Around Louisiana slaves sang in a dialect that was a jargon of African and French, such as was used in South Carolina and in Haiti.

³¹ Introduction to African languages. (n.d.). Retrieved April 11, 2021, from <https://alp.fas.harvard.edu/introduction-african-languages>.

Negro singing retained this linguistic synthesis throughout slavery.”³² Suffice it to say, that even today, dialects in African American communities vary from one region to another. It cannot be assumed, then, that there is one standardized dialect to be used in the performance of spirituals. It is my opinion that would-be singers should study the text, making the end game one of achieving an authentic enunciation based upon research, what one may hear or speak in one’s own geographical region, the author’s dialect cues, and through listening to high quality recordings.

In her textbook, *English and German Diction for Singers: A Comparative Approach*, Amanda Johnston does not address the performance of spirituals. She does introduce readers to the idea that singers ought to make it their work to consider several factors when making pronunciation choices. She says, “Perhaps the greatest challenge of singing in English is overcoming preconceived ideas about one’s mother tongue. . . one must approach the mother language as one would a foreign language, namely with the same degree of preparation. Indeed, few singers take the time to analyze the exact vowels they are producing when singing in English. This would be unthinkable in a foreign language.”³³ This is the belief of Evelyn Simpson-Curenton.

In our first-person interview, Simpson-Curenton emphatically stressed that it is the obligation of all singers of spirituals to make the language and the dialect a matter of research. Due to the limited scope and space allotted in this dissertation, it includes only a few points on this matter succeeded by a list of sources that are excellent tools for singers.

³² Fisher, M. M. (1998). *Negro Slave songs in the United States*, Foreword by Ray Allen Billington. Kensington Publishing, p. 13.

³³ Johnston, A. (2016). *English and German diction for singers: A comparative approach*, Second ed. Rowman & Littlefield, p. 39.

Firstly, spirituals should not be performed inauthentically nor with mal intentions. These songs were sacred to their originators and have been bastardized through minstrel shows, in movies, on radios, and the concert stage. Let us not promote this kind of behavior in this age where inclusion and equality are the mantra for so many. Secondly, singers should observe the text written by the arranger. In the case of Simpson-Curenton, she does imply the use of dialect. For example, she opts to write the text in “Sinner, Please Don’t Let This Harvest Pass” as *Sinnuh please don’ let dis harvest pass and die an’ lose yo’ soul at las.’* There are other arrangements of hers in which she writes less dialect into the text. This does not negate the singer’s obligation to learn how to apply the style on their own. When listening to Kathleen Battle and Jessye Norman perform “Scandalize My Name,” we hear Battle sing in a dialect not indicated by the arranger. However, with her understanding of the style she was able to utilize dialect in a manner that makes the performance authentic.

Simpson-Curenton’s Text

Well, I met my sister the other day. I give her my right hand. But just as soon as ever my back-a was turn’d, she scandalized my name.

Battle’s Interpretation

Well, ah met mah sistuh duh other day. Ah give her mah rat han. But jes as soon as e-vah mah back-a was turn’d, she scandalized mah name.³⁴

For readings on spirituals that give that include a discussion of dialect, I suggest three texts. The first, though a bit less practical is *Negro Slave songs in the United States*

³⁴ Battle, K. and Norman, K. (1991). *Spirituals in concert*. Deutsche Grammophon.

by Miles Mark Fisher.³⁵ More practical is the text, *So you want to wing Spirituals: A guide for performers* by Randy Jones.³⁶ I also suggest reading *The Hall Johnson concert Spirituals* by Eugene Thamon Simpson.³⁷ In the latter, the author is addressing the arrangements of Hall Johnson, yet the segment on dialect is applicable for all spirituals considering that Johnson was one of the first composers to set them in concert form. It would be worthwhile to study the actual scores of Hall Johnson's (1888-1970) spirituals as well as the anthologies of his contemporaries: Harry Thacker Burleigh (1866-1949), James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938), Rosamond Johnson (1873-1954), R. Nathaniel Dett (1882-1943), Florence Price (1887-1953), Roland Hayes (1887-1977), William Grant Still (1895-1978), Edward Boatner (1989-1981), Undine Smith Moore (1904-89), and Margaret Bonds (1913-72).

It is important to remember that Evelyn Simpson-Curenton's arrangements of spirituals are intended to be performed in a formal concert setting. Concert spirituals were developed in an effort to pull them out of the wreckage of mockery made of them by minstrel shows and other acts of degradation. It should be kept in mind that one can perform spirituals without the use of dialect. Many composers believe it is better to sing without dialect rather than to mispronounce words or to feel ill at ease in singing dialect. Both this author and Simpson-Curenton share this notion. Though not speaking of spirituals, African American composer, Nkieru Okoye's (1972) broached this topic in a recent virtual interview with the 2021 Spirituals Project Symposium, a project of, Lamont School of

³⁵ Fisher, M. M. (1998). *Negro Slave songs in the United States*, Foreword by Ray Allen Billington. Kensington Publishing.

³⁶ Jones, R. (2019). *So you want to sing spirituals: A guide for performers*. Rowman & Littlefield.

³⁷ Simpson, E. T. (2018). *The Hall Johnson concert spirituals: An annotated guide to interpretation and performance*. Infinity Publishing.

Music University of Denver. Okoye decisively did not write dialect in the text of her famed 2014 opera, *Harriet Tubman: When I Crossed That Line to Freedom*.³⁸ Critics and performers of the opera have questioned this choice. However, it cannot be assumed that dialect usage is a must simply because a composition is black themed and/or written by a black composer. Okoye said of her opera:

Some of the critics are saying hey, we don't understand the language of it. Why isn't there slave dialect in there? ... and I will have to sit down and have to defend my work.³⁹

Her point is one of perception. She made her choice emphatically for various reasons. Audiences and performers may have expectations that black music should “sound black” based on preconceived ideas. Performers should strive to be true to the music and the text without distorting its message. Composers have intentions for their work. Therefore, it is more admirable to sing in standard English if a composer has not indicated dialect in the work. In the case that dialect has been indicated, a performer can opt not to sing it if they are not proficient.

Hall Johnson was married to the work of providing models of arrangements that were authentic, tasteful, and worthy of the concert stage. He was often recruited by black professional classical singers to arrange spirituals for them. I am particularly inspired by Fisher's comments on the existence of concert spirituals. He says,

The originators of spirituals would hardly have believed their ears had they heard Marian Anderson on Easter, 1939, sing their songs to an estimated 7,000 people at the base of Lincoln's Monument, in Washington, D.C. Spirituals with

³⁸ Okoye, N. (n.d.). *Harriet Tubman: When I Crossed That Line to Freedom*. American Opera Project. <https://www.aopopera.org/tubman>.

³⁹ Holland, M. R. (2021, June 5). The 2020 Spirituals Project Symposium. *You Tube*. Lamont School of Music University of Denver. <https://youtu.be/fjs4hLX9IQc?t=5282>.

formal titles are now to be found listed on programs of artists, to be sung either by groups or by soloists, in *a cappella* fashion or with orchestra, piano, or organ accompaniment. All approximations of the original language of the spirituals simply provide transportation for the thoughts of Negroes. These songs were used by the black masses, and their incorrect grammar is not exaggerated.⁴⁰

It is Evelyn Simpson-Curenton's multifaceted ability to compose that has placed in the spotlight at as an arranger of concert spirituals. The singer of her arrangements should desire to present them in a manner befitting their beauty. Her intention for each gem is that they should bring honor to her work and the shoulders upon which she stands as a composer. I recommend that singers should work with a vocal coach and/or singing teacher who skilled in dialect singing. Also, it is important that one hears high quality performances in dialect. To this end, below is a listed of suggested readings and recordings.

Suggested Listening:⁴¹

Roland Hayes (1887-1977)

Marian Anderson (1897-1993)

Paul Robeson (1898-1976)

Dorothy Manor (1910-1996)

Robert McFerrin (1921-2006)

Leontyne Price (b. 1927)

Florence Quivar (b. 1944)

⁴⁰ Fisher, M. M. (1998). *Negro Slave songs in the United States*, Foreword by Ray Allen Billington. Kensington Publishing, p. 177.

⁴¹ This is a list of pioneering professional black singers who regularly include/included concert spirituals in their performances.

Jessye Norman (1945-2019)

Kathleen Battle (b. 1948)

3.1.5: Hymn Arrangements

Like her spirituals, Simpson-Curenton's hymns are purposed for church, concert, and recital use. The arrangements contain vocal and pianistic gestures that are commonly heard in African American churches. They are structured using the idiomatic improvisation of black singers. According to Randye Jones, slaves "reshaped the hymns to better fit their aesthetic."⁴² Thus, what is found here is part of that tradition of improvisation and harmonic richness infused into these hymns, which in their purest form contain a storehouse of richness in their own merits, just as the spirituals. Text painting is the approach that led to the arrangements of these hymns. Initially, they were performed as improvisations. Inspired "in the moments" in which they were sung, Simpson-Curenton and her sister Joy's interpretations became normalized overtime and what is notated in them are the results of what occurred in live performances. That is not to imply that the sisters did not plan and practice these arrangements before performing them. The frameworks of the arrangements expanded in live performances and those expansions became standardized and consistent with each performance. The composer prefers that future performers sing them as written, taking few if any tasteful improvisatorial liberties.

Classical hymn arrangements may seem of little use in the classical voice studio. But they have a place. Classical singers do not only sing only in opera houses and recital halls, but they also sing wherever music is needed, including the church.

⁴² Jones, R. (2019). *So you want to sing spirituals: A guide for performers*. Rowman & Littlefield, p. 16.

African American researcher, Dr. James Abbingtion has written extensively on music in the black church.⁴³ Here, he addresses the value of spirituals and hymns in the black church:

By neglecting and casting out the historical congregational spirituals, traditional Christian hymns, and hymns by Black composers, the Black church loses the rich musical heritage and legacy that has made it possible for new generations to enter.⁴⁴

It is important that suitable arrangements of standard hymns be written for highly trained classical singers and pianists. In the black church, these arrangements are often done by ear and happen quite organically. Written in creative collaboration with her sister, Joy Simpson, Evelyn Simpson-Curenton's arrangements in many instances, happened in the same way. These arrangements are a merging of the sister's religious experiences, classical training, culture, and blackness.

3.2: Catalogue and Song Index

3.2.1: The Purpose of this Catalogue

For the purposes of this catalogue, I created a system to offer the reader snippets of information about each song in order to streamline the process of their programming. Considerations for these elements are song categorization, the selection of repertoire, and pedagogical insights. Categorization is constructed on ideas outlined in Barbara Doscher's book *From Studio to Stage*, a compilation of Doscher's notes, edited by John Nix.⁴⁵ Song

⁴³ "Dr. Abbingtion's research interests include music and worship in the Christian church, African American sacred folk music, organ, choral music, and ethnomusicology." Emory University. (n.d). James Abbingtion. <http://music.emory.edu/home/people/biography/abbington-james.html>

⁴⁴ Abbingtion, J. (2009). Music wars: A perspective from the Black Church. *Liturgy*, 24(4), 40–47. <https://doi.org/10.1080/04580630903022220>.

⁴⁵ Doscher, B. M., & Nix, J. (2002). *From studio to stage: Repertoire for the voice*. Scarecrow Press.

selection criteria is based on Nix's article, "Criteria for Selecting Repertoire" (2002).⁴⁶ Christopher Arneson's text, *Literature for Teaching: A Guide for Choosing Solo Vocal Repertoire from a Developmental Perspective* has been useful in looking at music in this paper through a pedagogical lens.⁴⁷ Richard Boldrey's chapter, "Voice Categories" in the book *Singers' Edition, Operatic Arias* serves as a companion to Arneson's work.⁴⁸ The concepts presented in each of the above-mentioned sources were of great assistance in creating entries for each song.

These entries are records intended to provide information about language, text, range, tessitura, tempo, level of difficulty, voice types, instrumentation, genre, and publication details. Also included are performance notes provided by the composer for specific songs. Finally, this catalogue includes composer-endorsed recommendations for sound recordings of the songs. Suggested recordings are intended to provide learners with authentic examples that express the stylistic inflections that are often most difficult to express in words alone.

3.2.2: About these Arrangements

Included in this index are settings of spirituals and hymns arranged in a classical style, some of which have traditionally been performed by African Americans in a blending of gospel and classical styles. As previously stated, the arrangements of all the music in Simpson-Curenton's volume, *African American Music for the Classical Singer: Spirituals*

⁴⁶ Nix, J. (2002). "Criteria for selecting repertoire." *Journal of Singing*, 58(3), 217-21.

⁴⁷ Arneson, C., & Athey-Janka, L. (2014). *Literature for teaching: A guide for choosing solo vocal repertoire from a developmental perspective*. Inside View Press.

⁴⁸ Boldrey, R., et. al. (2005). *Singers' edition, operatic arias*. Pacific Isle Pub.

and Hymns, are the result of years of collaborations with her late sister, Joy Simpson, who was a renowned operatic soprano. According to Simpson-Curenton, Joy collapsed on stage in Cape Town, South Africa while in concert. The archives of the Associate Press reported on March 29, 1987, “Joy Simpson, the black American opera singer who collapsed while performing ‘Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child,’ has died of a brain hemorrhage. She was 40.”⁴⁹ To Evelyn, carrying on the memory of her sister and the legacy of her musical excellence led to penning these arrangements that had for so long gone unscored. The collection is a chronicle of the musical lexicon between the sisters and includes spirituals, hymns, gospel, jazz, and classical music. The published works written for Kathleen Battle and Jessye Norman were arranged specifically for their 1991 *Spirituals in Concert*. Though the performances recorded on that concert may be slightly different than the printed scores, they are published individually in solo/choral/orchestral arrangements. Simpson-Curenton was contacted by the famed Metropolitan Opera vocal coach, Sylvia Olden Lee, and Dr. Willis Patterson, preeminent researcher of art songs and spirituals written by black composers, to write these arrangements for the 1991 *Spirituals in Concert* at Carnegie Hall. Conductor James Levine brought together the supporting performers: The Metropolitan Opera Chorus and Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic and Hubert Laws, flutist. Simpson-Curenton is planning a second volume of these works as arrangements for solo voice and piano. The projected works in the upcoming publication will include spirituals, hymns and possibly two art songs.

⁴⁹ Associated Press. (1987). American Opera Singer Joy Simpson Dies. AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/af20d129ae397898d39e8ba723d8af87>.

3.2.3: Voice Categories

It is most important to consider a performer's characteristics when selecting repertoire. One must observe many factors, including "range, tessiture, timbre, weight and agility."⁵⁰ Of further importance in evaluating the difficulty level of repertoire is the knowledge of a singer's technical skill level, musicianship, expressive abilities, and overall musical experience. This is a subjective attempt to categorize these songs based on my knowledge of pedagogy, experience, and research in preparation for this task. Though not included in the scope of this paper, the musical and textual elements of each song were reviewed before making my recommendations. The words of Arneson are found pertinent to this endeavor:

While some teachers are blessed with opportunities to work with professional singers who come to the studio just to polish repertoire or prepare for a new role at a large opera house, the majority of us work with children, young adults in the academic setting and amateur singers who have gaps in technique. The use of repertoire to meet a pedagogical end is critical in creating and meeting goals set by you and your student. When evaluating repertoire requires an in-depth look into the musical aspects of a song, categorizing repertoire requires the application of pedagogical knowledge of vocal skills that can be addressed by the elements found in a piece.⁵¹

Recognizing that the repertoire in this paper is fit for many kinds of singers, readers should note that this music was arranged for and performed by a highly proficient vocalist. This, however, does not negate its potential accessibility to less proficient singers. The voice categories and difficulty levels presented in the final analysis provide the first step for

⁵⁰ Boldrey, R., et. al. (2005). *Singers' edition, operatic arias*. Pacific Isle Pub., p. 4.

⁵¹ Arneson, C., & Athey-Janka, L. (2014). *Literature for teaching: A guide for choosing solo vocal repertoire from a developmental perspective*. Inside View Press. pp.8-9. (digital copy).

research in consideration of this repertoire.

3.2.4: Index of Songs

This index is organized alphabetically under each category.

African American Music for the Classical Singer: Spirituals and Hymns

Amazing Grace
Balm in Gilead
Git on Board
He Shall Feed His Flock Like a Shepherd from "The Messiah" by G.F. Handel
Lil David
Sometimes I Feel
O What a Beautiful City

Battle-Norman Arrangements for Voice and Piano: Spirituals

Calvary Medley
Lord, How Come Me Hear
O Glory
Over My Head -Lil David
Scandalize My Name
Swing Low Medley

Forthcoming Publications: Spirituals and Hymns

Fix Me Jesus
Great Is Thy Faithfulness
His Eye Is on The Sparrow
In the Garden
Lord, I Don't Feel No- Way Tired
They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love

Possible Publication: Art Songs

Eternal Spring (for Kathleen Battle)
Reflections (for baritone)

3.2.5: African American Music for the Classical Singer: Spirituals and Hymns

Amazing Grace

Other Titles: None

Language: English

Poet: John Newton (1725-1807)

Type of Spiritual: None

Theme: Religious

Genre: Hymn

Key: G major to A \flat major

Range: D4-C6

Tessitura: D4 – F5

Tempo: Largo \downarrow = 60 and Maestoso \downarrow = 55

Difficulty Level: Advanced

Voice Types: Soprano/Tenor

Composer's Notes for the Performers: The opening scene of this song presents an old mother of the church humming as she leads the choir in singing this hymn. The song lyrics expound on the trials of life and how God always brings us through them all. As the piece modulates, the woman thinks of the joy of heaven and how glorious it will be to see her loved ones who have gone before. The pain and misery of life will all be over and forever the saints will praise the creator in glorified bodies that shine "bright as the sun."

General Comments: This piece is highly advanced rhythmically and calls for a great depth of expressive ability. The range is sweeping ascending to a high C6 and calls upon the

singer to phonate in the upper tessiture over multiple measures. Regarding the origin of the hymn, Randy Jones writes, “While there are books, recordings and music scores that include the song *Amazing Grace* with spirituals, the song is a hymn . . . It is often performed in the manner of a spiritual or in a more gospel music style, but this is an interpretive decision, not a historical one.”⁵² In this arrangement, the hymn is written in gospel style with a rich harmonic accompaniment that calls upon a great collaboration between the vocalist and pianist.

Publication: ESC Publishing, 1990

Instrumentation: Piano; Orchestrated

Other Voice and Piano Arrangements: Mark Hayes (1953)

Recommended Recording: The album *Devotions* by Janice Chandler⁵³

⁵² Jones, R. (2019). *So you want to sing spirituals: A guide for performers*. Rowman & Littlefield. pp. 16.

⁵³ Chandler Eteme, J. *Devotions* [CD]. (2007). Sligo: Evelyn Simpson-Curenton.

Balm in Gilead

Other Titles: There is a Balm in Gilead

Language: English, Negro Dialect

Poet: Traditional Negro Spiritual (before 1865)

Type of Spiritual: Songs of Regeneration; Song of Transcendence

Theme: Anguish/Religious/Metaphoric

Genre: Spiritual

Key: G major to A \flat major

Range: D4-E5

Tessitura: G4 – C5

Tempo: Largo ♩ = 104 and ♩ = 50

Difficulty Level: Beginning to Advanced

Voice Types: All voices, especially mezzo and baritone

Composer's Notes for the Performers: The church bell is heard in this piece as the congregants gather for worship. The singer, a congregant, meditates within about feeling discouraged then encourages himself/herself with the words "There is a Balm in Gilead." The congregant's attention turns to others with the words "If you cannot preach like Peter." As the congregants leave the church the bells in the church tower continue to ring in the distance. The comforting and concluding thought as the worship hour ends, "There is a Balm in Gilead," is sung while leaving the edifice.

General Comments: To be sung with broad legato lines. Phrasing can be suited with the development of the singer's abilities. The recitative-like accompaniment is written in block and rolling chords. The melody includes grace notes, hemiola, syncopation, portamento

and jazz symbols. This civil war spiritual was made popular by the Fisk Jubilee Singers in 1909. *Folk Songs of the American Negro* by Frederick Jerome Work and John Wesley Work, II, provided the first publication of “There is a Balm in Gilead.”⁵⁴

Publication: ESC Publishing, 1990

Instrumentation: Piano also Orchestrated

Other Voice and Piano Arrangements: Harry T. Burleigh (c. 1915); George Shirley (1980);⁵⁵ Shelton Becton (n. d.); Timothy Amukele (1999)

Recommended Recording: The album *Devotions* by Janice Chandler⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Richardson, P. (2013, October 16). Hymnody. *Grove Music Online*. <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.ezproxy.uky.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002249813>.

⁵⁵ ASIN: B079K4GSLW Publisher: Music Minus One MMO 4048 (January 1, 1980)

⁵⁶ Chandler Eteme, J. *Devotions* [CD]. (2007). Sligo: Evelyn Simpson-Curenton.

Git on Board⁵⁷

Other Titles: The Gospel Train; Get on Board; Git on Board Little Children

Language: English, Negro Dialect

Poet: Traditional Negro Spiritual (before 1865)

Type of Spiritual: Song of Resistance, Defiance and Deliverance; Song of Judgement and Reckoning

Theme: Religious/Code

Genre: Spiritual

Key: A major - B \flat major

Range: E4- B \flat 6

Tessitura: E4 – F5

Tempo: None indicated

Difficulty Level: Advanced

Voice Types: Soprano, can be sung by tenor

Composer's Notes for the Performers: In the beginning of this piece, we hear the sound soft the train whistle and the voice of the conductor beckoning us to climb aboard. The train begins slowly and accelerates to full power in the accompaniment. The singer again portrays Aunt Nelly or Uncle Joe from the deep-south speaking in dialect and a vocal color that appeals to children should be used [sic]. The vocalist is singing in a playful way to the audience (the other passengers). The accompaniment helps to show different aspects of the train ride. The genre changes from classical to New Orleans jazz near the end of the piece.

⁵⁷ *Notational errors were made in the original publication. See the appendix of this document for the corrected measure(s).

When the accompaniment returns to the classical genre singing the final refrain “Git on Board,” the vocal color becomes operatic through the end of the piece.

General Comments: This piece requires different vocal colors within, spoken, jazz, and classical. The singer should be comfortable singing in the upper middle register for extended periods of time. The legato line is important. “This African-American spiritual was first published in 1872 as one of the songs of the Fisk Jubilee Singers.”⁵⁸

Publication: ESC Publishing, 1990

Instrumentation: Piano also Orchestrated

Other Voice and Piano Arrangements: H.T. Burleigh (1921); Roland Hayes (1948); Moses Hogan (2000); Hall Johnson⁵⁹

Recommended Recording: The album *Devotions* by Janice Chandler⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Get on Board: About the Song. (n. d.). Ballad of America. Retrieved Mar. 13, 2021 from <https://balladofamerica.org/get-on-board/>.

⁵⁹ Johnson, W., Johnson, H., & Ward, L. (2007). *Hall Johnson, thirty spirituals for high voice and piano*. Schirmer.

⁶⁰ Chandler Eteme, J. *Devotions* [CD]. (2007). Sligo: Evelyn Simpson-Curenton.

He Shall Feed His Flock Like a Shepherd

Other Titles: He Shall Feed His Flock

Language: English

Poet: George Frederic Handel (1685-1759)

Type of Spiritual: None

Theme: Religious

Genre: Aria/oratorio

Key: F major

Range: B3-C6

Tessitura: D4 – G5

Tempo: None

Difficulty Level: Advanced

Voice Types: Soprano

Composer's Notes for the Performers: This arrangement was inspired by Pearl Williams-Jones arrangement of J.S. Bach's "Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring" and the hymn "Jesus Lover of My Soul" (by C. Wesley and S. B. Marsh). The inspiration came to me in my hometown of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania early one Sunday morning as I listened to a Sunday television broadcast. Pearl in her sultry contralto voice sang in a style I had never heard- Classical/Jazz/Gospel fusion. Though I was still in high school, Pearl's beautiful classical piano playing juxtaposed to a Jazz/Gospel vocal was the most fascinating combination I had ever heard. Later I heard other African American women, for example Nina Simone and Roberta Flack perform in a similar way. *He Shall Feed His Flock Like a Shepherd* is an arrangement that can be used by singers who do not wish to improvise. Singers who do

not improvise can sing as written and as the Baroque musicians did freely, add their own embellishments.

General Comments: Originally written by Handel, this piece was to be sung by two soloists, first by a mezzo and then by a soprano. What is done in this arrangement is, the melody is sung by one person who has a range wide enough to sustain a range of approximately 2 octaves plus an additional half step. Knowledge of Handel's composition is a must and a willingness to experiment with improvisation is encouraged. This would be a marvelous arrangement for students of vocal jazz.

Publication: ESC Publishing, 1990

Instrumentation: Piano; Orchestrated

Other Voice and Piano Arrangements: Mark Hayes (1953)

Recommended Recording: The album *Devotions* by Janice Chandler;⁶¹ *Handel's Messiah: A Soulful Celebration* by Mervyn Warren;⁶² Anne Sofie von Otter and Sylvia McNair conducted by Sir Neville Marriner⁶³

⁶¹ Chandler Eteme, J. *Devotions* [CD]. (2007). Sligo: Evelyn Simpson-Curenton.

⁶² *Handel's Messiah: A soulful celebration*. (1992). Burbank, CA: Reprise Records.

⁶³ Jennens, C., McNair, S., Otter, A. S., Chance, M., Hadley, J., Lloyd, R., Marriner, N., et. al. (2003). *Messiah: The 250th anniversary performance*. Philips Classics Production.

Lil' David⁶⁴

Other Titles: The Gospel Train; Little David Play on Your Harp; Li'l David Play on Your Harp

Language: English, Negro Dialect

Poet: Traditional Negro Spiritual (After 1865?)

Type of Spiritual: Song of Judgement and Reckoning; Song of Transcendence

Theme: Religious

Genre: Spiritual

Key: G major

Range: D4-G5

Tessitura: G4 – E5

Tempo: ♩= 215

Difficulty Level: Intermediate to Advanced

Voice Types: Soprano, can be sung by tenor

Composer's Notes for the Vocalist: An African American mother or father of the rural South plays a little game with his/her young ones as they dance and are sung to in this playful vignette. The singer should have fun with this piece and avoid singing with an operatic color. The vocal color should be similar to a parent singing to their little toddler. In the verses, the soloist is telling a story, so you should not try to sing in tempo. Do observe the *a tempo* after the solos. It is more authentic to sing in dialect. There are no diphthongs nor European articulation of the words. After the last verse, "Play on your harp," the vocal

⁶⁴ *Notational errors were made in the original publication. See the appendix of this document for the corrected measure(s).

color becomes a rich warm operatic color and quickly goes back to the original color of the A material, being mindful you are singing to children.

Composer's Notes for the Pianist: The introductory accompaniment in this piece mimics the harp. The section accompanying the refrain is a fusion of harp, guitar, and contrabass. A light touch should be used in the refrain. Be playful along with the soloist and do not overpower the soloist. After the last verse, dig into the keys for a more orchestral approach under the words "Play on your harp." Then, return to Leggiero and playfulness till the end of the piece.

General Comments: Duple meter, changing meter, syncopation, varying vocal colors, recitative, glissando. The singer should be careful to plan quick breaths in the quick moving refrains. The legato line is important.

Publication: ESC Publishing, 1990

Instrumentation: Piano also Orchestrated

Other Voice and Piano Arrangements: Harry T. Burleigh (c. 1921); Roland Hayes (1948)

Recommended Recording: The album *Devotions* by Janice Chandler⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Chandler Eteme, J. *Devotions* [CD] (2007). Sligo.

Sometimes I Feel

Other Titles: Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child; Motherless Child

Language: English, Negro Dialect

Poet: Traditional Negro Spiritual (before 1865)

Type of Spiritual: Song of Sorrow

Theme: Anguish/Religious/Metaphoric

Genre: Spiritual

Key: A minor

Range: E4-A5

Tessitura: E4 – E5

Tempo: Andante ♩ = 85

Difficulty Level: Advanced

Voice Types: Soprano, can be sung by tenor

Composer's Notes for the Performers: The haunting piano introduction should be poignant as it sets the mood for the soloist to portray a despondent slave mourning his/her woeful condition and state of mind. Each verse crescendos in dynamics as the soloist becomes more engulfed in despair. The peak of despair is reached when "True believer" is sung. The slave "A long way from home," thinks of their earthly home and motherland Africa, and a heavenly home after death.

General Comments: Changing meter, dramatic vocal expression, legato line. The singer should be comfortable singing in the upper middle register for extended periods of time. The legato line is important. This civil war spiritual was made popular by the Fisk Jubilee Singers in the 1870s and was also recorded by Paul Robeson in 1926.

Publication: ESC Publishing, 1990.

Instrumentation: Piano also Orchestrated

Other Voice and Piano Arrangements: Harry T. Burleigh (c.1921); Roland Hayes (1948); Moses Hogan (2000)

Recommended Recording: The album *Devotions* by Janice Chandler⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Chandler Eteme, J. *Devotions* [CD] (2007). Sligo.

O, What a Beautiful City

Title: Oh, What a Beautiful City

Language: English, Negro Dialect

Poet: Traditional Negro Spiritual (After 1865?)

Type of Spiritual: Song of Transcendence; Song of Judgement and Reckoning

Theme: Religious

Genre: Spiritual

Key: Gb major-A major

Range: Db4-E5

Tessitura: Gb4 – E5

Tempo: ♩. = 66

Difficulty Level: Intermediate to Advanced

Voice Types: Mezzo, can be sung by baritone and tenor

Composer's Notes for the Vocalist: For soprano soloist with piano accompaniment. The entrance of the fanfare in the beginning of this piece depicts a vision of the heavens slowly descending. The soloist in awe of this spectacle sings with breathy excitement. Each entrance of the fanfare increases in volume and brings the heavens a little closer in the vision. The fanfare is majestic, never rushed. The soloist passage is treated as a recitative and full of excitement.

Composer's Notes for the Pianist: The accompaniment simulates the harp and creates a dreamlike atmosphere at the conclusion of the piece as the soloist portrays visualizing the slowly ascending heavens. The finale Fanfare and the arpeggiation help the listener sense the vision is disappearing.

General Comments: Duple meter, changing meter, syncopation, grace notes, middle passaggio for females and tenors, upper passaggio for baritones. Vowel modification may be needed for baritones.

Publication: ESC Publishing, 1996

Instrumentation: Piano also Orchestrated

Other Voice and Piano Arrangements: Edward Boatner (1940); Timothy Amukele (2003)

Recommended Recording: The album *Devotions* by Janice Chandler⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Chandler Eteme, J. *Devotions* [CD] (2007). Sligo.

**3.2.6: Battle-Norman Arrangements for Voice and Piano:
American Negro Spirituals**

Calvary Medley

Other Titles: NA

Language: English, Negro Dialect

Poet: Traditional Negro Spiritual

Type of Spiritual: Songs of Sorrow, Song of Judgement and Reckoning

Theme: Religious

Key: C# minor

Range: C# 4- B5

Tessitura: G# 4 – E5

Tempo: ♩ = 48

Difficulty Level: Intermediate to Advanced

Voice Types: All female voices, Tenor

Composer's Notes for the Performers: NA

General Comments: This arrangement juxtaposes 2 spirituals as partner songs “Calvary” and “He Never Said a Mumblin’ Word,” which is the main melody. This powerful arrangement was written for Jessye Norman’s performance on the Battle Norman concert in 1991. The piano accompaniment opens with “Calvary;” the voice enters in measure 6 singing the main melody. A strong C# pedal tone is heard in most of the music. Infused with text painting, emotional depth is required of the performers. This arrangement is primarily sung in the lower register of the voice and a mixture of head voice is suggested.

The high B5 is sung on an open vowel. Vocal colors indicated include sprechstimme and recitative.

Publication: Voice & Piano Score is Unpublished; choral/orchestral score is published

Instrumentation: Piano

Other Voice and Piano Arrangements: Betty Jackson King (1954);⁶⁸ Charles Brown (1995);⁶⁹ Moses Hogan (2008);⁷⁰ Roland Hayes (1927)⁷¹

Recommended Recordings: The recording *Spirituals in Concert* by Kathleen Battle & Jessye Norman;⁷² *Calvary* by Randy Jones;⁷³ *Calvary* by Marietta Simpson & Evelyn Simpson-Curenton (flute & piano);⁷⁴ *Calvary* by Yolanda Rhodes;⁷⁵ *He Never Said a Mumbalin' Word* by Kevin Johnson;⁷⁶ *He Never Said a Mumbalin' Word* by Charles Holland⁷⁷

⁶⁸ Hayes, R. (2001). He never said a mumberlin' word. In *My favorite Spirituals: 30 songs for voice and piano* (pp. 121–122). score, Dover Publications, Inc.

⁶⁹ Brown, C. (2002). Calvary. In W. C. Patterson (Ed.), *The new Negro Spiritual* (pp. 12–15). score, No publication information given.

⁷⁰ Hogan, M. (2001). He never said a mumbalin' word (Crucifixion). In *The deep river collection for high voice: Ten spirituals arranged for solo voice and piano. Vol. 1* (pp. 6–10). score, Hal Leonard.

⁷¹ Hayes, R. (2001). He never said a mumberlin' word. In *My favorite Spirituals: 30 songs for voice and piano* (pp. 121–122). score, Dover Publications, Inc.

⁷² Battle, K. and Norman, K. (1991) *Spirituals in concert*. Deutsche Grammophon.

⁷³ Jones, R. (2008, April 18). *Calvary (Negro Spiritual)/Betty Jackson King* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/x8vdSWzDhtY>.

⁷⁴ Simpson, M., & Simpson-Curenton, E. (2017, April 4). Calvary [song]. Soundcloud. <https://soundcloud.com/tyonce-3/calvary-arr-marietta-simpson-and-evelyn-simpson-curenton>.

⁷⁵ Rhodes, Y. (2019, April 4). *Calvary (Arr. C. Brown) (Live)* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/kQfYLOrX_ac.

⁷⁶ Johnson, K. D. (2018, July 9). *He never said a mumbalin' word* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/CFvoUmy6wXM>.

⁷⁷ Divaslair. (2010, October 17). *He never said a mumbalin' word (Negro Spiritual)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIgLRIVJkhE>.

Lord, How Come Me Here

Other Titles: None

Language: English, Negro Dialect

Poet: Traditional Negro Spiritual

Type of Spiritual: Song of Sorrow

Theme: Religious

Genre: Spiritual

Key: G Minor

Range: D4-D5

Tessitura: G4 – G5

Tempo: ♩ = 58

Difficulty Level: Intermediate to Advanced

Voice Types: All Voices

Composer's Notes for the Performers: NA

General Comments: This plaintive melody is a recitative. The accompaniment is a reduction of the choral parts written for the 1991 Battle/Norman concert.⁷⁸ The singers should understand the text in order to perform it well. The text expresses the perspective of the slave who wishes they'd never been born. No time signature is given, but it is indicated that the eighth note stays even throughout the melody. The accompanist should weave in and around the singer (this should be planned and requires that both performers listen to each other). In a tasteful manner, the singer should explore a vocal coloration in this piece as the sound of sorrow, and crying is appropriate. The composer writes in vocal

⁷⁸ Battle, K. and Norman, K. (1991). *Spirituals in concert*. Deutsche Grammophon.

scooping. This arrangement spends extended time in the lower/middle passaggio of the voice, placing demands on the singer that require excellent breath management and access to the head voice mix.

Publication: *Art Songs and Spirituals by Contemporary African American Composers*⁷⁹

Instrumentation: Piano; Orchestrated

Other Voice and Piano Arrangements: Hall Johnson (1917)

Recommended Recording: The recording *Spirituals in Concert* by Kathleen Battle & Jessye Norman;⁸⁰ Marian Anderson;⁸¹ Roland Hayes;⁸² Angela Brown⁸³

⁷⁹ Bullock, K. W., & Cox, D. M. (Eds.). (2011). *Art Songs and Spirituals by contemporary African American composers*. Personal Best Ministries Press.

⁸⁰ Battle, K. and Norman, K. (1991). *Spirituals in concert*. Deutsche Grammophon.

⁸¹ Anderson, M., Motley, J., & Johnson, H. (1964). Marian Anderson in rehearsal with Hall Johnson and John Motley [Tape]. Colenda Digital Repository. University of Pennsylvania. <https://colenda.library.upenn.edu/catalog/81431-p3vd6p77z>.

⁸² Johnson, H. (n.d.). *Five Negro work songs (Lord, how come me here?)* [Song]. *The Spirituals Database*. <http://spirituals-database.com/omeka/items/show/8739>.

⁸³ Simpson-Curenton, E. (2004). *Lord, how come me here?* [Song]. *The Spirituals Database*. <http://spirituals-database.com/omeka/items/show/6005>.

O Glory⁸⁴

Other Titles: Oh, Glory!

Language: English, Negro Dialect

Poet: Traditional Negro Spiritual

Type of Spiritual: Songs of Transcendence, Song of Jubilation and Triumph

Theme: Religious

Key: G major

Range: B3- Bb5

Tessitura: D4 – D5

Tempo: Freely improvised, ♩ = 72

Difficulty Level: Intermediate to Advanced

Voice Types: All female voices, Tenor

Composer's Notes for the Performers: NA

General Comments: “Oh, Glory” was arranged by Hall Johnson who published it in 1956.⁸⁵ It is indicated in Johnson’s arrangement that adherence to the rhythm is imperative. He also states that there should be a strongly accented downbeat the first note of every measure. Simpson-Curenton’s arrangement requires the same feeling. Performed by Kathleen Battle in 1991 with chorus, this arrangement uses the piano to replace the chorus. There is a wonderful flute solo in the introduction and an obligato that weaves in and out of the soloist’s melody. This arrangement spends extended time in the lower/middle

⁸⁴ This arrangement was done for Kathleen Battle and is reduced here for solo voice and piano.

⁸⁵ Johnson, H. (1956). *Oh Glory!* [Song]. African Diaspora Music Project.
<https://africandiasporamusicproject.org/items/show/21875>.

passaggio of the voice, placing demands on the singer that require excellent breath management and access to the head voice mix.

Publication: Unpublished

Instrumentation: Piano

Other Voice and Piano Arrangements: Hall Johnson (1956)⁸⁶

Recommended Recording: The recording *Spirituals in Concert* by Kathleen Battle & Jessye Norman;⁸⁷ Robert McFerrin (1959),⁸⁸ the album *Devotions* by Janice Chandler⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Johnson, H. (2003). Oh, Glory! In *The Hall Johnson Collection* (pp. 108–111). score, Carl Fischer.

⁸⁷ Battle, K. and Norman, K. (1991) *Spirituals in concert*. Deutsche Grammophon.

⁸⁸ Johnson, H. (1959). *Oh, Glory!* [Song]. *The Spirituals Database*. <http://spirituals-database.com/omeka/items/show/6541>.

⁸⁹ Chandler Eteme, J. *Devotions* [CD]. (2007). Sligo.

Over My Head⁹⁰-Lil David (Medley)

Other Titles: Up Above My Head, Over My Head, I Hear Music in the Air

Language: English, Negro Dialect

Poet: Traditional Negro Spiritual

Type of Spiritual: Songs of Transcendence

Theme: Religious

Key: E major and A \flat major

Range: G4-G5

Tessitura: Eb4 – C6

Tempo: $\text{♩} = 76$

Difficulty Level: Advanced

Voice Types: Soprano and Tenor

Composer's Notes for the Performers: NA

General Comments: This arrangement is a medley comprising “Over My Head” and “Lil’ David” (See the above entry for “Lil’ David”). It was performed by soprano, Kathleen Battle and flutist, Hubert Laws (1939) in 1991.⁹¹ This arrangement is scored for solo voice, flute, and *harp*. A professional flutist who possesses improvisational skills is recommended. The harp accompaniment looks much like piano notation, so it is possible to be realized by a pianist. The composer’s use of harp is deeply rooted in text painting.

⁹⁰ This spiritual was made popular by Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Marie Knight. “In 1995, the National Association for Music Education (then known as the Music Educators National Conference) published a list of songs that “every American should know.” Wikipedia contributors. (2021, January 31). Up Above My Head. In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 00:22, May 11, 2021, from https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Up_Above_My_Head&oldid=1004003100

⁹¹ Battle, K. and Norman, K. (1991). *Spirituals in concert*. Deutsche Grammophon.

Instrumental glissandos abound! As for the soloist, the opening is written as recitative and is sung with the flutist weaving in and out of the melody. The more structured “Lil’ David” is more structured following the 4/4 meter with its syncopated melody. Several ascending vocal glissandi are required. This arrangement is best suited for voices that are comfortable singing in the upper passaggio.

Publication: Unpublished

Instrumentation: Solo flute and harp

Other Voice and Piano Arrangements: Tim Amukele (2012);⁹² Roy Jennings (1996);⁹³ Uzee Brown, Jr. (2002)⁹⁴

Recommended Recording: The recording *Spirituals in Concert* by Kathleen Battle & Jessye Norman⁹⁵

⁹² Made available without expense by the composer at <http://www.timamukele.com/solo-works-and-piano>.

⁹³ Jennings, R. (1996). *Over my head*. An Arch Angel Publication.

⁹⁴ Brown, U. (2002). Over My Head, I Hear Music in the Air. In *Tryn’ to Make Heaven My Home* (pp. 8–12). essay, Roger Dean Publishing Company.

⁹⁵ Battle, K. and Norman, K. (1991). *Spirituals in concert*. Deutsche Grammophon.

Scandalize My Name

Other Titles: None

Language: English, Negro Dialect

Poet: Traditional Negro Spiritual

Type of Spiritual: Songs of Spiritual Progress; Songs of Transcendence

Theme: Religious

Key: G major

Range: D4-D5

Tessitura: D4 – B4

Tempo: None

Difficulty Level: Beginning to Intermediate

Voice Types: All

Composer's Notes for the Performers: This song was written for Jessye Norman and Kathleen Battle.⁹⁶ My sister Marietta, who is now an opera singer, sung the spiritual, *Scandalize My Name* as a solo. Most importantly, it needs to be very dramatic and animated. It should be sung as if by “down home sistahs,” with no classical “airs.” Enjoy the fermatas! Performers can improvise little words and gestures to make it represent gossiping sisters talking. Just have fun!!⁹⁷

General Comments: This fun piece calls for expressive energy sung in a conversational manner all the while maintaining a connection to the breath and resonance. Sprechstimme

⁹⁶Simpson-Curenton says that the arrangement performed by Battle and Norman is not what she had written. That arrangement was done by Sylvia Olden Lee. Simpson-Curenton was given credit because she was commissioned for the arrangement presented in this dissertation.

⁹⁷ Bullock, K. W., & Cox, D. M. (Eds.). (2011). *Art songs and Spirituals by contemporary African American composers*. Personal Best Ministries Press. p. 11

is found in the final two measures of the arrangement using the words “He scandaliz’d my name!” The 1990 arrangement is for two voices.⁹⁸ The version published in the Bullock and Cox anthology is for solo voice.⁹⁹ The arranger has indicated that she has plans to rearrange the accompaniment for an upcoming publication.

Publication: *Art Songs and Spirituals by Contemporary African American Composers*¹⁰⁰

Instrumentation: Piano; Orchestrated

Other Voice and Piano Arrangements: Hall Johnson (1949)¹⁰¹

Recommended Recording: The Album *Scandalize My Name* by Paul Robeson;¹⁰² The recording *Spirituals in Concert* by Kathleen Battle & Jessye Norman¹⁰³

⁹⁸ ESC Publishing, 1990

⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 175-178

¹⁰⁰ Bullock, K. W., & Cox, D. M. (Eds.). (2011). *Art songs and Spirituals by contemporary African American composers*. Personal Best Ministries Press.

¹⁰¹ Johnson, Ward, Johnson, Hall, & Ward, Laura. (2007). *Hall Johnson, thirty spirituals for high voice and piano*. G. Schirmer.

¹⁰² Robeson, P. (1976). *Scandalize my name*. Classics Records Library.

¹⁰³ Battle, K. and Norman, K. (1991). *Spirituals in concert*. Deutsche Grammophon.

Sinner, Please Don't Let This Harvest Pass

Other Titles: None

Language: English, Negro Dialect

Poet: Traditional Negro Spiritual

Type of Spiritual: Song of Judgement and Reckoning

Theme: Religious

Genre: Spiritual

Key: C# minor

Range: B3-G#5

Tessitura: C# 4 – C#5

Tempo: Largo ♩ = 116

Difficulty Level: Beginning to Intermediate

Voice Types: Mezzo/Baritone

Composer's Notes for the Performers: This song was arranged for Jessye Norman. She selected this particular song for me to arrange for her. It gives the idea of African drum with a plaintive, earthy approach to the accompanying. The piece has that "sotto voce" effect. Since it is in the mezzo range, it needs that earthy, very spirited style with a lot of poignancy and urgency. The vocal color needs to be dark, conveying a sense of urgency throughout. After the big climax, the tremolo with the strings increases in pathos as the song starts to end. In other words, it should never be sung dry and academic! (More like lieder, with its forward motion, simplicities.) This song is very line-oriented and should not have ad lib added.

General Comments: As indicated by the composer, the singer should sing each phrase with consistent legato. A consistent awareness of the syncopated bass line should be embodied in the melodic line, which enables the singer to keep movement in the breath. The word “sinnuh” is written in dialect, meaning “sinner.” The singer should never allow the [ə] or [ʌ] to be sung in the back of the throat but should strive for optimal resonance in the word.

Publication: *Art Songs and Spirituals by Contemporary African American Composers*¹⁰⁴

Instrumentation: Piano; Orchestrated

Other Voice and Piano Arrangements: H.T. Burleigh (1917)

Recommended Recording: The recording *Spirituals in Concert* by Kathleen Battle & Jessye Norman;¹⁰⁵ The album *Devotions* by Janice Chandler¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Bullock, K. W., & Cox, D. M. (Eds.). (2011). *Art Songs and Spirituals by contemporary African American composers*. Personal Best Ministries Press.

¹⁰⁵ Battle, K. and Norman, K. (1991). *Spirituals in concert*. Deutsche Grammophon.

¹⁰⁶ Chandler Eteme, J. (2007). *Devotions* [CD]. Sligo.

Swing Low Medley¹⁰⁷

Other Titles: None

Language: English, Negro Dialect

Poet: Traditional Negro Spiritual

Type of Spiritual: Songs of Transcendence, Song of Spiritual Progress

Theme: Religious/Metaphoric

Key: A \flat major and F major

Range: D4-D5

Tessitura: E \flat 4 – F5

Tempo: Freely improvised, $\text{♩} = 76$ and $\text{♩} = 108$

Difficulty Level: Advanced

Voice Types: Soprano and Tenor

Composer's Notes for the Performers: NA

General Comments: This medley is titled after its first spiritual, “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot,” was recorded by the Fisk University Jubilee Quartet in 1909.¹⁰⁸ Its text is inspired by the Biblical text found in Chapters 2 and 11 in the Book of II Kings. This code song was used by the underground railroad and abolitionists. The second spiritual, “Ride Up in the Chariot,” was made famous by African American composer Betty King Jackson (1928-1994). Simpson-Curenton’s medley was performed by Kathleen Battle in 1991 with chorus. The voice and piano arrangement assign the call-and-response structure of the

¹⁰⁷ This arrangement was done for Kathleen Battle and is reduced here for solo voice and piano.

¹⁰⁸ Anderson, T. P. (2002). “*Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*”—*The Fisk University Jubilee Quartet (1909)*. Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/national-recording-preservation-board/documents/Swing%20Low%20article.pdf>.

music to the soloist. In other places, the piano replaces is the choral sections. The opening measures are acapella while the rest is accompanied. This arrangement spends extended time in the upper passaggio of the voice, placing demands on the singer that require excellent breath management and access to the head voice.

Publication: Unpublished

Instrumentation: Piano

Other Voice and Piano Arrangements: Harry T. Burleigh (1917),¹⁰⁹ Betty King Jackson (1983)¹¹⁰

Recommended Recording: The recording *Spirituals in Concert* by Kathleen Battle & Jessye Norman;¹¹¹ *Ride Up in the Chariot* performed by Angelique Clay on SoundCloud¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Burleigh, H. T. (1984). *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*. In *The Spirituals of Harry T. Burleigh* (pp. 10–13). Score, Belwin-Mills Publishing Group.

¹¹⁰ King Jackson, B. (2002). *Ride Up in the Chariot*. In W. C. Patterson (Ed.), *The New Negro Spiritual* (pp. 65–68). score, Place of publication not identified.

¹¹¹ Battle, K. and Norman, K. (1991). *Spirituals in concert*. Deutsche Grammaphon.

¹¹² Clay, A. (n.d.). “*Ride up in the chariot*” arranged by Betty Jackson King [Song]. Soundcloud. <https://soundcloud.com/angeliqueclay/ride-up-in-the-chariot>.

3.2.7: Forthcoming Publications: American Negro Spirituals and Hymns

Fix Me Jesus

Other Titles: Faithfulness

Language: English, Negro Dialect

Poet: Traditional Negro Spiritual

Type of Spiritual: Songs of Judgement and Reckoning

Theme: Religious

Genre: Spiritual

Key: Eb major to E major

Range: C4-E5

Tessitura: E4 – B4

Tempo: Freely, Slow, steady

Difficulty Level: Beginning to Advanced

Voice Types: All

Composer's Notes for the Performers: None written

General Comments: This spiritual has been included in a handful of African American hymnals and was arranged for voice and piano by Hall Johnson and for choir by Hall Johnson and Moses Hogan. Simpson-Curenton's arrangement syncopates the melody and accompaniment more than the Johnson voice and piano arrangement, and she arranges the harmonic structure with a different voicing. This is an excellent spiritual for the development of the legato line in the singer's voice.

Publication: Publication Pending

Instrumentation: Piano

Other Voice and Piano Arrangements: Hall Johnson (1949)

Recommended Recording: Louise Toppin, Kathleen Battle, Eugene Thamon Simpson
(none of Simpson-Curenton's arrangement)

Great is Thy Faithfulness¹¹³

Other Titles: Faithfulness

Language: English

Poet: Thomas Chisholm (1866-1960)

Type of Spiritual: NA

Theme: Religious

Genre: Hymn

Key: Eb major to E major

Range: D4-G#5

Tessitura: G4 – E5

Tempo: Andante ♩ = 105

Difficulty Level: Beginning to Advanced

Voice Types: All

Composer's Notes for the Performers: None written

General Comments: This popular hymn is found in most hymnals, both old and new. Simpson-Curenton's arrangement was a collaborative effort between herself and her late sister, Joy Simpson. The opening of the piece begins with the chorus. The melody includes several trills (though this may be optional based upon the skill level of the singer). The second verse is melodically embellished, and the final presentation allows for the soloist to ad lib in the final two measures. The accompaniment is floridly written in the classical style.

¹¹³ Chisholm's poem was written in 1923. William M Runyan (1870-1957) wrote the music. The text is based on a Lamentation 3:23 in the Bible.

Publication: Unpublished

Instrumentation: Piano

Other Voice and Piano Arrangements: None Recommended

Recommended Recording: None of Simpson Curenton's

His Eye is On the Sparrow¹¹⁴

Other Titles: His Eye is on the Tiny Bird¹¹⁵

Language: English

Poet: Civilla D. Martin (1866-1948)¹¹⁶

Type of Spiritual: NA

Theme: Religious

Genre: Gospel Hymn

Key: D \flat major

Range: A \flat 3 – A \flat 5

Tessitura: F4 – E \flat 5

Tempo: Expressive, with rubato

Difficulty Level: Beginning to Advanced

Voice Types: All

Composer's Notes for the Performers: None written

General Comments: This text is based on the several biblical scriptures: Psalm 32:8, Matthew 6:26, Matthew 10:29–31, and Luke 12:6–7. This arrangement uses vocal melodic

¹¹⁴ The music for this gospel hymn was composed by Charles H. Gabriel (1856-1932). First recorded in 1925 by Rev. William McKinley Dawkins, it was made popular by Ethel Waters, Mahalia Jackson, and Whitney Houston. Fenner, C. [Ed]. (2018-2021). His eye is on the sparrow. Hymnology Archive. <https://www.hymnologyarchive.com/his-eye-is-on-the-sparrow>.

¹¹⁵ Wikipedia contributors. (2021, April 28). His eye is on the sparrow. In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved May 6, 2021, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=His Eye Is on the Sparrow&oldid=1020280074](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=His_Eye_Is_on_the_Sparrow&oldid=1020280074).

¹¹⁶ According to Martin, in 1905, the text “was written at the bedside of a bedridden saint in the city of Elmira, N.Y. I was reading and singing to her, and during our conversation I asked her if she did not sometimes get discouraged. She answered, ‘How can I be discouraged, when my Father watches the sparrows, and I know He loves and cares for me?’” Fenner, C. [Ed]. (2018-2021). His eye is on the sparrow. Hymnology Archive. <https://www.hymnologyarchive.com/his-eye-is-on-the-sparrow>.

gestures that are commonly sung in the black church, leading the melody to feel improvised. Text painting is infused into the highly pianist accompaniment leaving no necessity for improvisation as the style of writing already sounds improvisatory. The harmonic structure borrows harmonies from other keys in keeping with the idea of text painting. The melody is highly syncopated, but for singers who are familiar with the gospel hymn style of singing, these gestures are familiar. It is not advised that inexperienced singers add this to their repertoire without the guidance of a knowledgeable voice instructor or coach.

Publication: Unpublished

Instrumentation: Piano

Other Voice and Piano Arrangements: None Recommended

Recommended Recording: Ethel Waters; Mahalia Jackson, & Whitney Houston (none of Simpson-Curenton's arrangement)

In the Garden¹¹⁷

Other Titles: Faithfulness

Language: English

Poet: C. Austin Miles (1868-1946)

Type of Spiritual: NA

Theme: Religious

Genre: Hymn

Key: Eb major to E major

Range: B3-G Ab5

Tessitura: d4 – Eb5

Tempo: Sweetly, with rubato

Difficulty Level: Beginning to Advanced

Voice Types: All

Composer's Notes for the Performers: None written

General Comments: “In the Garden” as arranged by Simpson-Curenton and her sister Joy was performed at many of their concerts. As with all of her hymn arrangements, text painting can be found throughout. The melody has been altered from the original with the addition of syncopation and passing tones. The choice of key, G major, keeps this setting personal for the performers and the listener. The modulation of half-step to Ab major is impactful as it happens in only one measure. Though classical in nature, singers should

¹¹⁷ Considered a gospel hymn, Miles wrote this hymn in 1912. Fenner, C. (2019, September 18). *In the garden*. Hymnology Archive. <https://www.hymnologyarchive.com/in-the-garden>.

approach the voice with a lyrical style. Much time is spent in the lower voice and the mixing of head voice into the register is suggested. The Ab5 is written on an open vowel. In measure 79, the composer suggests the singers replace the words “that I am His own” with their own name. The note says: “Can be replaced with: And He tells, me (singer’s name) you are My own.” For lower voice singers who wish to perform this arrangement, an option for the Ab5 is to sing it an octave lower.

Publication: Unpublished

Instrumentation: Piano

Other Voice and Piano Arrangements: None Recommended

Recommended Recording: None of Simpson Curenton’s

Lord, I Don't Feel No-way Tired

Other Titles: Lord, I Don't Feel No-ways Tired; I Don't Feel No-ways Tired

Language: English, Negro Dialect

Poet: Traditional Negro Spiritual

Type of Spiritual: Songs of Transcendence, Song of Jubilation and Triumph

Theme: Religious

Key: B \flat -C \flat

Range: B \flat 3 – C6

Tessitura: F4 – Eb5

Tempo: ad.lib with passion, Languid ♩ = ♩.

Difficulty Level: Advanced

Voice Types: Duet- Soprano & Tenor

Composer's Notes for the Performers: NA

General Comments: This duet begins in acapella unison. Both voices are given opportunity to sing portions of the melody before a free-form type of call and response begins. When the music modulates to the new key, both singers sing extensively in the middle to upper registers of their voices. Singers should sing with emotional depth and understanding.

Publication: Unpublished

Instrumentation: Piano

Other Voice and Piano Arrangements: Harry T. Burleigh (1917)¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ Burleigh, H. T. (1984). I don't feel no-ways tired. In *The Spirituals of Harry T. Burleigh*, Belwin Mills, pp. 129-132.

Recommended Recordings: The recording *Spirituals in Concert* by Kathleen Battle & Jessye Norman;¹¹⁹ Robert McFerrin (1959),¹²⁰ the album *Devotions* by Janice Chandler¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Battle, K. and Norman, K. (1991). *Spirituals in concert*. Deutsche Grammaphon.

¹²⁰ Johnson, H. (1959). *Oh, Glory!* [Song]. *The Spirituals Database*. <http://spirituals-database.com/omeka/items/show/6541>.

¹²¹ Chandler Eteme, J. *Devotions* [CD]. (2007). Sligo.

They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love¹²²

Other Titles: They'll Know We Are Christians; We Are One in the Spirit; St. Brendan's

Language: English

Poet: Peter Scholtes (1938–2009)

Type of Spiritual: NA

Theme: Religious

Genre: Hymn

Key: G minor to A minor

Range: D4-A5

Tessitura: G4 – E5

Tempo: Lively with Fury ♩. = 130, multiple tempo changes

Difficulty Level: Intermediate/Advanced

Voice Types: All

Composer's Notes for the Performers: This is another one of those collaborations with my sister, Joy. The fiery piano interludes depict clamor and confusion. When the voice comes in, it declares, "We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord." The voice is the calming factor that brings peace amid discord as it calls out for unity and love.

General Comments: This hymn is sometimes mistaken for a spiritual. According to Wikipedia, "They'll Know We Are Christians" (also known as "They'll Know We Are Christians By Our Love" or "We Are One in the Spirit") is a Christian hymn written in the

¹²² Like many post-Vatican II hymns, "They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love," a favorite song during the folk mass of the later 1960s and 1970s, has reached beyond its Roman Catholic origins. Taylor, J. (2019, June 27). History of Hymns: They'll know we are Christians by our love. Discipleship Ministries. <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/history-of-hymns-theyll-know-we-are-christians-by-our-love>.

1960s by then-Catholic priest, the late Fr. Peter Scholtes.”¹²³ Simpson-Curenton’s arrangement is full of rhythmic energy with several meter changes. It captures the essence of the folk- style performance ideals in this classical arrangement. The singer should possess a high level of breath control in order to achieve quick breaths between phrases. Avoid pushing the voice. It may be sung by all voices; it is suggested that the last four measures of the song be transposed an octave down for lower voiced singers.

Publication: ESC Publishing, 2017

Instrumentation: Piano

Other Voice and Piano Arrangements: None

Recommended Recording: None

¹²³ Wikipedia contributors. (2021, January 21). They’ll know we are Christians. In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved April 9, 2021, from https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=They%27ll_Know_We_Are_Christians&oldid=1001802114

3.2.8: Possible Publications

Eternal Spring¹²⁴

Other Titles: NA

Language: English

Poet: Cynthia Biggs¹²⁵

Type of Spiritual: NA

Theme: Love/Imagery

Genre: Art Song

Key: Eb major

Range: C4 – Bb5

Tessitura: Eb4 – D5

Tempo: Moderate

Difficulty Level: Intermediate to Advanced

Voice Types: All female, Tenor

Composer’s Notes for the Performers: The composer indicates that the piece was written for Kathleen Battle, but it was never performed.

General Comments: *Recitativo* is indicated above the introductory measure of this art song. This marking indicates that the pianist approaches the accompaniment as a vocalist would sing. When the soloist enters, the arranger notes, “moderate (freely-with great

¹²⁴ Music by Carolyn Mitchell, arranged by Evelyn Simpson-Curenton.

¹²⁵ Cynthia Biggs is a famous African American songwriter, producer, and publisher. Wikipedia contributors. (2020, April 12). Cynthia Biggs. In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved May 9, 2021, from https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cynthia_Biggs&oldid=950516904.

feeling).” These notations hint to the performers that liberty for musical breadth and rubato are expected. The lilting melody has returning melodic themes giving the piece cohesiveness. Because prosody place one word on almost every note of the melody, the singer should work to have clear diction. Making use of text painting, the florid accompaniment supports the melodic line. Singers should listen for the interesting harmonic shifts as the melody never ends on the tonic. Good intonation is a must, particularly when the closing measure ends on a Picardy 3rd. Singers should not push the voice as much time is spent singing in the middle passaggio. The B \flat 5 is sung on an open vowel, making it approachable for high voices.

Publication: *Unpublished*

Instrumentation: Piano

Other Voice and Piano Arrangements: NA

Recommended Recording: None available

Psalm 150¹²⁶

Other Titles: None

Language: English

Poet: Biblical Text

Type of Spiritual: NA

Theme: Religious

Genre: Sacred Jazz Anthem, Jazz/Gospel Fusion

Key: F minor

Range: Ab3-G5

Tessitura: D4 – E4

Tempo: Jaunty, swinging

Difficulty Level: Advanced

Voice Types: All

Composer's Notes for the Performers: None written

General Comments: This exciting piece is written in jazz style with a highly syncopated base line ostinato. The work requires that both pianist and vocalist be rhythmically and harmonically proficient. The piano's driving base line ostinato appears in most of the music with alterations from time to time. Though it disappears in places for the sake of text painting and harmonic necessity, the piano is often juxtaposed with differing rhythmic ideas in the right hand. The melodic line for the vocalist is highly segmented with melodic motives that appear in an improvisatory way. Wide and dissonant intervals often appear in the syncopated melody. Vocal jazz elements are written in the melodic line, which includes

¹²⁶ This original composition is the work of both Evelyn Simpson-Curenton and Joy Simpson.

spoken text, falloffs, and singing on the consonant [m]. The melodic line is also littered with half steps (some are written an octave apart), minor and major 7ths and arpeggios. The harmonic landscape is suggestive as it implies C minor, F minor and B minor; however, the tonality is dominated by the sound of F minor. The key signature changes to B minor in mm. 63-68 and then shifts the C minor until the F minor ostinato reappears in measure 89. The music vacillates between C minor and F minor until F minor prevails in the closing measures. The song is through-composed yet held together by the ostinato and rhythmic motives.

Publication: *Unpublished*

Instrumentation: Piano

Other Voice and Piano Arrangements: NA

Recommended Recording: None available

Reflections¹²⁷

Other Titles: NA

Language: English

Poet: The Composer

Type of Spiritual: NA

Theme: Death

Genre: Art Song

Key: A minor to C minor

Range: B \flat 3 – E5

Tessitura: E \flat 4 – E \flat 5

Tempo: Moderato ♩ = 90 (tempo and meter changes throughout)

Difficulty Level: Intermediate to Advanced

Voice Types: Mezzo/Baritone

Composer's Notes for the Performers: This piece is written with the concept of Death and the Maiden or like the story of the *Erlkönig* where the father and the child are riding on the horse and death keeps calling the child who is ill.¹²⁸ The singer becomes all of the characters in this piece. Vocally and pianistically, performers should use various moods and colors to help the audience know who is speaking and their emotions.

General Comments: The key signature of this piece indicates E \flat major, but the tonality hovers around c minor and A \flat . This tonal instability text and the vacillating meter changes

¹²⁷ This yet to be published piece was commissioned by Johnny Butler, professor of voice at UDC in Washington, D.C. in memory of his mother.

¹²⁸ Johann Wolfgang's poem *Der Erlkönig* was published in 1782. Franz Schubert set it to music in 1815.

between 3/4 and 4/4 and is used as a form of painting. The structure of the composition is tertian in that we see thematic materials related to the state of mind of the dying mother and the response of her child/death. In A she is talking to the child. In B, she is in a dream-like state. In C the child/death is speaking to her.

This weaving in and out of musical themes effectively assists in telling the story as the mother drifts away in death. Both the singer and the accompanist should be good actors as they perform this piece. The singer is required to use different vocal colors: speech and vocal fall-off are part of the tonal color landscape. The melodic rhythm is syncopated. The composer has indicated that the piece may be sung by a mezzo though it was originally composed for a baritone.

Publication: *Unpublished*

Instrumentation: Piano

Other Voice and Piano Arrangements: NA

Recommended Recording: None available

CHAPTER FOUR PERSEVERING EVELYN SIMPSON-CURENTON'S MUSIC

“...momentum was lost in the 1940’s 1950’s and 1960’s and Florence Price and many of her contemporaries were nearly forgotten. Most recent decades have seen progress in some areas. . .Despite . . . marginalization, concert music by both black men and black women has continued to thrive.”¹²⁹

We can draw plausible correlations between politics and the arts. The United States grappled with moral issues of race, segregation, Jim Crow and the Great Depression during the post-Civil War years, 1865-1877 and into the 1940’s. In response, the work of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, ethnomusicologists, and artists of the Harlem Renaissance (1917-1930) took traction as blacks strove to find a place of respect in the nation. Sparse performances of African American music on mainstream stages burgeoned as pockets of sympathies slowly increased amid systemic racism. Many were encouraged that change was afoot when at the age of 42, contralto, Marian Anderson (1897-1993), who been denied opportunities to perform in mainstream venues and opera houses, broke ground in 1939 when she gave a critically acclaimed open-air concert at the Lincoln Memorial. The politically charged events surrounding civil rights, the war in Vietnam, and the deaths of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., and President John F. Kennedy were accompanied by the acceptance of a handful of significant black opera singers: soprano Camilla Williams (1919-2012), the first African American to have a recurrent contract with the New York City Opera, soprano Leontyne Price (b. 1927) who gave 201 performances at the Metropolitan Opera House beginning in 1961 and the first African American tenor to sing

¹²⁹ Walker-Hill, H. (2007). *From Spirituals to Symphonies: African-American women composers and their music*. University of Chicago Press, pp. 353.

a leading role in the MET, George Shirley (b. 1934). With the birth of the internet in the 1980's, cellular phones, and the development social media platforms in the 1990's, society became increasingly aware of social issues, resulting in an intense surgency toward social justice, equality, and inclusion. Rapid dissemination of black music is swelling through performance, research, and publication not only of the overlooked black composers of the past, but of those in this digital age.

The world-changing events in the years 2020 and 2021 will go down in infamy. History will not forget the global impact of the deathly spread of COVID-19, which became the backdrop as black Americans struggled with police brutality perpetrated against them. After the murder of George Floyd by former police officer Derrick Chauvin and Chauvin's subsequent conviction, the senseless of the killing of black men and women continued despite Chauvin's imprisonment. President Donald J. Trump's loss for re-lection on a campaign drenched in accusations of voting fraud added to racial tensions and exposed voting rights inequities. Social tensions increased with the subsequent election of Joe Biden, the oldest U.S President, and Kamala Harris, the first American female Vice President (also a woman of African American heritage). The shocking insurrection at the White House on January 6, 2021 was made even more disturbing as the nation observed the blatant lack of police forces during the uprising. This shed light on the often-underplayed systematic racism against African Americans. Many postulated that had the insurrection been spearheaded by blacks rather than white supremacists, the police would have been more visible.

What does this have to do with Evelyn Simpson-Curenton, who seems nestled in a corner of the musical world? The answer is everything. Simpson-Curenton is an African

American female composer in whom people are interested because she seeks social justice and gives voice to misrepresented people through her compositions. More than ever, artists are using music as a means to uproot old and lingering social disparities. These actions are drawing attention to the high-quality contributions that African American composers, such as Simpson-Curenton, have made in the world. Music by black composers is being performed and discussed all over social media and blogs from personal domiciles and other non-traditional locales, on opera stages, and in recital halls. In his article “What-or who-is antifa?” Stanislav Vysotsky said, “The arts have long been a part of anti-fascist efforts . . .”¹³⁰

Through this lens, the music of African American composers takes center stage. Performers, composers, educators, and researchers have found this the right time to bring lesser-known music to the forefront. Entire recitals of new and old compositions and commissioned works by African Americans are taking place as an outcry against social norms. Platforms are offered to black women and men to perform in venues where they are normally underrepresented. This is a good time for the music of African Americans; it is the endeavor of this dissertation to encourage the continuance of such social justice work through its use. Evelyn Simpson-Curenton’s contributions are significant and socially influential pieces of art. Her contributions as arranger and composer have added more value to the repertory of spirituals, hymns, and art songs for solo voice and piano. Her body of work, though not limited to the solo voice domain, is expressive, innovative, and full of sonorous harmonies, rhythms, and textures.

¹³⁰ Vysotsky, S. (2021, January 14). *What – or who – is antifa?* The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/what-or-who-is-antifa-140147>.

Following in the footsteps of her predecessors, such as H.T. Burleigh, and Hall Johnson, Simpson-Curenton's spirituals have been conceived with the intention of preserving the dignity with which they originated. The striking beauty and efficacy of her settings of hymns reflect the rich heritage of hymnody and gospel music in the black church and should be treated as skillfully as the music of the European composers who fill the canon taught in classical studios. Simpson-Curenton's works point back to female composers such as Amy Beach (1876-1944), Margaret Bonds (1913-1972), Fanny Mendelssohn, Florence Price (1887-1953), and Clara Schumann (1819-1896). Fortunately, the music of the virtuosic composer, Evelyn Simpson-Curenton will continue through promotion, publication, and performances of the highest caliber.

Appendix A

Score Corrections

Appendix A outlays corrections to scores that were mis transcribed in *African American Music for the Classical Singer: Spirituals and Hymns*. The composer provides corrections “Git on Board,” measures 19-23, 34-36, and 65.

This image shows a musical score for the piece "Git on Board," measures 19-23. It is a piano and solo score. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 19-20, and the second system covers measures 21-23. The solo part is written in a treble clef, and the piano part is written in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The lyrics are: "board Lil' chil-dren Dere's room for man-y a more Duh" (measures 19-20) and "Gos-pel train am a com-in I hear it just at han-el" (measures 21-23). A chord symbol 'D' is indicated above the solo line in measure 21. The piano part features a complex, rhythmic accompaniment with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes.

This is it the previously printed score of measures 19-23 of “Git on Board”

This image shows a musical score for the piece "Git on Board," measures 20-23. It is a piano and solo score. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 20-21, and the second system covers measures 22-23. The solo part is written in a treble clef, and the piano part is written in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The lyrics are: "room fo' man-y a mo'. Duh gos-pel train am a com-in I" (measures 20-21) and "hear it just at han' I here de' car wheel's rum-buh-lin' an'" (measures 22-23). A chord symbol 'D' is indicated above the solo line in measure 20. The piano part features a complex, rhythmic accompaniment with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. A dynamic marking 'f' is present at the beginning of the piano part in measure 22, and 'R.H.' is marked above the piano part in measure 23.

This is the updated version of measures 19-23 of “Git on Board”

Musical score for measures 33-36 of "Git on Board". The score is in G major and 2/4 time. It features a Solo line and a Piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "hear de' train a com-in She's com-in' room de curve She's loos-in' all her stem and brakes and strain in eb - ry nerve. Git on board Lil' chil-dren Git on board Lil' chil-dren Git on". The score includes a G chord marking above measure 33 and an H marking above measure 36. The piano part has a complex, rhythmic accompaniment.

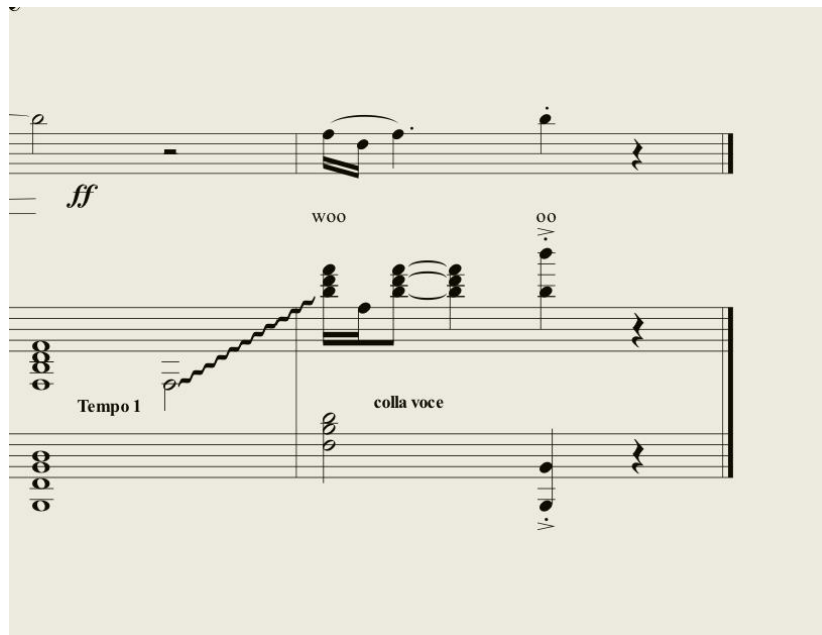
This is the previously printed version of meas. 34-36 of “Git on Board”

Musical score for measures 33-36 of "Git on Board" (previously printed version). The score is in G major and 2/4 time. It features a Solo line and a Piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "hear de train a com - in She's com - in' roun de curve She's loos - nin' all her steam and brakes and f strain in eb - ry nerve. Git on board lil' chil - run. Git on board lil' chil - run. Git on". The score includes a G chord marking above measure 33 and an H marking above measure 36. The piano part has a complex, rhythmic accompaniment. Dynamic markings *f* and *mf* are present.

This is the updated version of meas. 34-36 of “Git on Board”



Previously printed version of measure 65 of “Git on Board”



New version of the final measure of “Git on Board”

Appendix B

First-Person Interview Continuation

In the interview with Evelyn Simpson-Curenton, she shared an experience with me that I considered to be the heart of this project. Because of its spiritual tone, I have elected to place it in the appendix. We were discussing the time she was writing for the Battle/Norman concert. I was wondering if she was nervous during the experience. What ensued is presented below.

Iris Fordjour-Hankins (IFH): So, what was it like when you found yourself in the room, with all of these incredible people.

Evelyn Simpson-Curenton (ESC): Oh. That was scary.

IFH: It had to have been.

ESC: Well, my heart began to pound inside me when I went to the first piano rehearsal with James Levine, Kathleen Battle, and Jessye Norman. It hit me like a ton of bricks. “You are getting ready to go in there and do a piano rehearsal with these divas and James Levine.” My heart started quaking like boom boom boom inside my chest!

I took the train to get to the rehearsal. I say now that the Lord allowed the train to stop. My heart was pounding, and I sat there with my little scores trembling in my hand; I think, in Newark. The train went BOOM, and just stopped. And I thought I was going to be late, and I was scared. I said, “oh Lord, please,” I said, “we can’t, I can’t be late for this rehearsal!” I was just sitting there praying. And the Lord spoke to me. I knew He had to speak to me to get me together; it was so clear in my spirit. He said, “you are to fear no one but me.” And all of a sudden, I felt this shiver come from the crown of my head. Now that’s definitely one of those old sayings, “from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet.”

IFH: Oh yes. My mother used to say that.

ESC: Well, that’s it. That’s what it did. It started at my head, these trickles came all the way down from my head and went to my feet. I felt this complete calm come over me. And my heart stopped flapping and I was in complete peace. And do you know? Not long after that clarity, the train when, woosh! And the power went right back on. There we were on our way to New York. I said, “Lord, you had to speak to your daughter.”

IFH: He had to stop everything.

ESC: To let me know that He's the one that's in control. And I am to fear no one but Him.

IFH: We can shout right here.

ESC: Do you hear me? I'm telling you, that that was the peace of God that came over me to prepare me to go into that rehearsal.

IFH: Hmm. Wow, this is going to be the heart of our paper right here.

ESC: Oh?

IFH: I don't know how, but it's going to be the heart of the paper. You just really blessed me with that one. Yes, sometimes He just has to stop everything to get your attention. He wanted you to know that you belonged in the room.

ESC: Well, He said, "I sent you to do a work for me."

IFH: Yeah! You belonged. And look at all the people you blessed as a result of that, I mean...

ESC: Well, God is good.

Appendix C

Further Publications

This is a listing of other publications by Evelyn Simpson Curenton. Though it is not complete this listing is a sampling of the breadth of Simpson-Curenton's body of work.

Choral Music:

Psalm 91 (acapella, for 3 SATB Choirs with tenor solo)¹³¹

Lord How Come Me Here?¹³²

Let's Build a Bridge (Patriotic) SATB/Solo/Piano (optional Band or Orchestra)

African American Church Music Series

1. In Christ (SATB)¹³³

2. Amazing Grace (SATB)¹³⁴

3. Go Tell It on the Mountain (SATB, divisi solo)¹³⁵

4. Do You Believe/ Certainly Lord (Solo/SATB/Guitar)¹³⁶

Solo Choral and Orchestral Arrangements

For Kathleen Battle and Jessye Norman, *Spirituals in concert*, Performed at Carnegie Hall N.Y. (1991)¹³⁷

1. Sinner Please Don't Let This Harvest Pass

2. Swing low Medley

3. Lord How Come Me Here?

4. O Glory

5. Scandalize My Name (Original version not on CD)

6. Calvary/ They Crucified My Lord Medley

7. Over My Head/ Lil' David (Original version not on CD)

¹³¹ Morning Star Music with ECS Publish Group and E.C. Schirmer

¹³² Hogan, M. (2002). *The Oxford book of spirituals*. Oxford University Press.

¹³³ Simpson-Curenton, E. (2012). *In Christ* (Ser. African American Church Music Series). GIA Publications, Inc.

¹³⁴ Simpson-Curenton, E. (2001). *Amazing Grace* (Ser. African American Church Music Series). GIA Publication, Inc.

¹³⁵ Simpson-Curenton, E. (2014). *Go Tell It on The Mountain* (Ser. African American Choral Music Series). GIA Publications, Inc.

¹³⁶ Simpson-Curenton, E., Cuddy, K., & East, R. (2000). *Do You Believe/ Certainly Lord*. GIA.

¹³⁷ Morning Star Music with ECS Publish Group and E.C. Schirmer

Hymnals:

African American Heritage Hymnal¹³⁸
Several Editorial Contributions

Instrumental Music

Three Spirituals for Flute and Piano¹³⁹

1. Git on Board
2. Calvary
3. Li'l David

Organ Arrangements: African American Organ Music Anthology¹⁴⁰

1. *O Come, O Come Emmanuel*
2. *Were You There?* (Spiritual)

Web Resources

Evelyn Simpson-Curenton Website: <https://evelynsimpsoncurenton.com/about.html>

Artist- Simpson-Curenton, Evelyn, - GIA Publications:
<https://www.giamusic.com/store/artists/evelyn-simpsoncurenton>

Evelyn Simpson-Curenton: Hymnary.org:
https://hymnary.org/person/SimpsonCurenton_E

The Spirituals Database: Evelyn Simpson-Curenton: http://spirituals-database.com/omeka/search?query=Evelyn+Simpson-Curenton&query_type=keyword&record_types%5B%5D=Item&record_types%5B%5D=File&record_types%5B%5D=Collection&submit_search=Search

¹³⁸ Williams, N. E. (2001). *African American heritage hymnal*. (R. J. Batastini & D. Carpenter, Eds.). GIA Publications.

¹³⁹ Simpson, M., & Simpson-Curenton, E. (2015). *Three Spirituals for flute and piano*. Theodore Presser Company.

¹⁴⁰ Terry, M. T. (2000). *African-American organ music anthology*. Morning Star Music Publishers of St. Louis.

Appendix D

Listing of Music, Recordings, and Websites

Appendix D provides information about where to hear recordings of Evelyn Simpson-Curenton's music in the form a selected Discography of websites.

Morning Star Recordings of music by Evelyn Simpson-Curenton¹⁴¹

1. Three Spirituals for Flute/ Piano
2. Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing Flute (and optional Alto Flute) and Piano
3. Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child

Recorded Albums

Devotions¹⁴²

Spirituals in Concert¹⁴³

Sound Cloud

“Calvary” flute and piano with Marietta Simpson and Evelyn Simpson Curenton
<https://soundcloud.com/tyonce-3/calvary-arr-marietta-simpson-and-evelyn-simpson-curenton>

YouTube

Three Spirituals, by Evelyn Simpson-Curenton
<https://youtu.be/zp5W3cUrneM>

Simpson-Curenton's world premiere of Passages with George Mason University Center for the Arts

<https://youtu.be/TlnRK16vWDk?t=4565>

Reflections (student performance)

<https://youtu.be/YXcT3Xzpli4>

My Soul Hath Found a Refuge in Thee with the Aeolians of Oakwood University

<https://youtu.be/fmK8HheqdIY>

¹⁴¹ Morningstar and GIA Choral Music Theodore Presser Company.

¹⁴² Chandler Eteme, J. (2007). *Devotions* [Album]. Sligo.

¹⁴³ Battle, K., & Norman, K. (1991). *Spirituals in concert*. Deutsche Grammaphon.

Documentaries

Evelyn Simpson Curenton: A Musical Genius in All Rights with Indiana University
Bloomington

<https://youtu.be/B9ERXCtJ1rE>

Podcast

Melanated Moments with Joshua Thompson and Angela Brown

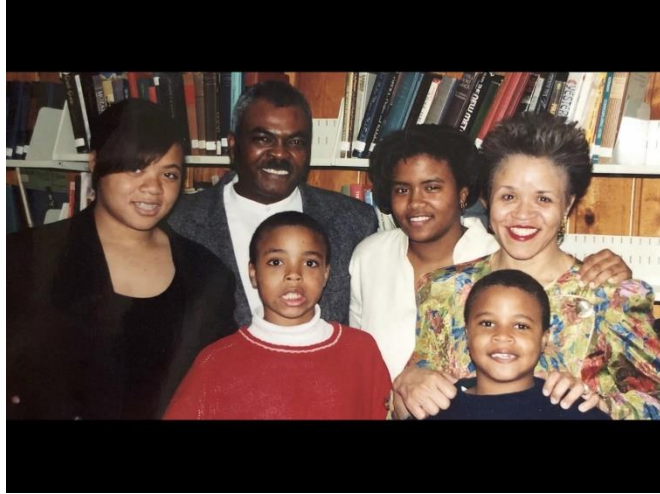
<https://www.classicalmusicindy.org/podcast-episode/episode-2-musical-royalty-evelyn-simpson-curenton/>

Appendix E

Photos of the Composer

Appendix E displays photos of the composer and her musical family.





*The Family Concert
December 2006*

Simpson Photography



Evelyn Simpson-Curenton





This photo was taken the day of my lecture recital on May 19, 2021. The lecture recital based on this dissertation. The program notes are found in Part 2 of this document.

Pictured: Iris Fordjour-Hankins, Evelyn Simpson-Curenton and Lloyd Mallory, Jr.
Associate Professor / Choral Director Professor / Choral Director.

Part Two: Program Notes

Program

From Spirituals to Art Songs by Black Composers

presented by

Iris Fordjour-Hankins, Soprano

In a DMA Recital

with

Cliff Jackson & Evelyn Simpson-Curenton Piano

May 17, 2015

University of Kentucky School of Music

Niles Gallery

6:30 pm

Lil' David (1990) Evelyn Simpson-Curenton (b. 1953)
Sometimes I Feel (1990)
Git on Board (1990)

Evelyn Simpson-Curenton, pianist

City Called Heaven (1930) Hall Johnson (1888-1970)
Mother to Son (1928)
Ride On, King Jesus! (1951)

To Be Baptized (1973). Undine Smith Moore (1904-1989)
Watch and Pray (1973)
Set Down! (1951)

-INTERMISSION-

That Black Reef (2003) Dolores White (b. 1932)
Velvet Shoes (2001)

Two Songs for Julie-Ju (1972) Noel Da Costa (1929- 2002)
Such A Pretty Black Girl
It's Time to Sleep

Cantata for Voice and Piano (1964) John Daniels Carter (1932-1981)
I. Prelude
II. Rondo
III. Recitative
IV. Air
V. Toccata

Lil' David

Lil' David play on yo' harp
Halelu.

Lil' David was a Shepherd by
he killed Goliath and he shouted for joy.

Joshua was the son of Nun
he never would quit till his work was done.

Done told you once
done told you twice
dere's sinnuhs in hell fo' shootn' dice.

Sometimes I Feel

Sometimes I feel like a motherless child
A long way from home
A long way from home

Sometimes I feel like I'm almost gone
A long way from home
A long way from home

True believer
A long way from home
A long, long way from home

Git on Board

All aboard

Git on board Lil' chilrun
Git on board Lil' chilrun
Dere's room fo' many a mo'

Duh gospel train am a comin
I hear it just at han'
I hear de' car wheels rum-buh-lin'
an rollin' thru duh lan'.

I hear de train a comin'
She's comin' roun' de curve
She's loosnin' all her steam and brakes
and strainin' eb-ry nerve.

*Next stop is Glory
Yes, duh fare is cheap
an all can go
duh rich and duh po' o' dere*

No second class aboard dis' train
no dif'rence in a duh fare.

Jes it on board Lil' chilrun
Git on board Lil' chilrun
Dere's room fo' many a mo'

City Called Heaven

I am a poor pilgrim of sorrow
And I'm left in this whole wide world alone
No hope have I for tomorrow
I'm trying to make heaven my home.

Sometimes, I am tossed and driven, Lord
Sometimes I don't know where to roam
I've heard of a city called heaven
And I'm striving to make heaven my home

My mother has reached that pure glory
My father's still walkin' in sin
My brother and sister won't own me
Because I am tryin' to get in

Mother to Son

Well, son, I'll tell you:
 Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
 It's had tacks in it,
 And splinters,
 And boards torn up,
 And places with no carpet on the floor—
 Bare.

But all the time
 I'se been a-climbin' on,
 And reachin' landin's,
 And turnin' corners,
 And sometimes goin' in the dark
 Where there ain't been no light.

So boy, don't you turn back.
 Don't you set down on the steps
 'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
 Don't you fall now—
 For I'se still goin', honey,
 I'se still climbin',
 And life for me ain't been no crystal
 stair.

Ride On, King Jesus!

Ride on King Jesus
 No man can-a hinder me.

For He is King of kings,
 He is Lord of lords,
 Jesus Christ,
 de first an' las',
 No man works like Him.

King Jesus rides a milk-white horse,
 No man works like Him
 Duh river of Jerdin he did cross.
 No man works like Him.

King Jesus rides in de middle o' de air,
 Oh! He calls duh saints from ev'ry-
 where.

Ah! Ride on King Jesus!
 No man can-a hinder me.

He is duh Kin,
 He is duh Lord, Ha!
 Jesus Christ, duh first an' las',
 No man works like Him!
 Ride on, Jesus!

To Be Baptized

Take me to the water
 to be baptized

Jesus sav'd me
 Bless His name.

Here comes another one to be baptized
 Amen.

Oh! Here comes another one all dressed in white
 Amen.

Take me to the water
 to be baptized
 Go under the water and-a-be baptized.

Watch and Pray

Mama, is Massa goin' to sell us
tomorrow?

Yes, yes, yes.

Oh watch and pray

Is he a goin' to sell us down to Georgia?

Yes, yes, yes.

Oh watch and pray

Oh mama Don't you grieve after me.

Oh Watch and Pray.

Set Down!

Set down!

Set down!

Just go to heav'n and I can't set down.

Look over yonder,

What I see

Angels from the harvest fields coming

after me

Look over yonder,

What I see

My mother and father coming after me

Set down!

Set down!

Just go to heav'n and I can't set down.

That Black Reef-

James Kilgore, poet (1928-1988)

That black reef
they tell us each morning
sometimes by fire
sometimes by dancing earth
and sometimes by burning winter winds
that he who is three
maybe halfway there
and he who is one hundred
may be several years from shore

We cannot know
how soon the waves will leave us on the
beaches
we cannot know
how many days or nights we have to
love and hate
we cannot know
how many summers or winters we have
to laugh
upon the waves
before the boat sails or drift

Velvet Shoes

Let us walk in the white snow
In a soundless space;
With footsteps quiet and slow,
At a tranquil pace,
Under veils of white lace.

I shall go shod in silk,
And you in wool,
White as white cow's milk,
More beautiful
Than the breast of a gull.

We shall walk through the still town
In a windless peace;
We shall step upon white down,
Upon silver fleece,
Upon softer than these.

We shall walk in velvet shoes:
Wherever we go
Silence will fall like dews
On white silence below.
We shall walk in the snow.

Two Songs for Julie-Ju

I.

Such a pretty black girl is my Julie-Ju
A pretty little black girl is my Julie
She makes me laugh
She makes me sing
Hey bobborebop
My Julie brings laughter and song to me
When things go wrong my Julie brings laughter and song to me
When things go wrong for me
Hey bobborebop
Skeedaddledo
Julie, Julie, Julie, Julie, Julie-Ju

II.

It's time to sleep and dream the dreams little girls love to dream, Julie-Ju
And while you dream I'll also dream but not the joys and laughter you will dream
My dreams are hope for your tomorrow
You'll be strong enough to beat the sorrows that wait for you:
So close your eyes while your mother sings for you
Skeedaddle Skeedaddle Skeedaddledo
And your father still wakes you to play peek-a-boo
Hey bobborebop
He loves you too
Close your eyes and dream the dreams little girls love to dream Julie-Ju and sing
bobborebop
Dream daddledo
Pretty little black girl Julie, my Julie Julie-Ju

Cantata
For voice and piano

I. Rondo¹⁴⁴

Peter go ring dem bells
Ring a dem bells.
Oh, Peter go ring a dem bells today.
Oh, Peter go ring a dem bells.
I heard from heaven today.
Wonder where my mother has gone?
Heard from heaven today.

II. Recitative

Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
along way from home
Sometimes I feel like I'm almost gone.
along way from home.
True believer,
along way from home.

III. Air

Let us break bread together on our
knees.
When I fall on my knees,
wid' my face to da rising sun,
Oh, Lord have mercy on me.

Let us drink wine together on our knees.
When I fall on my knees,
wid' my face to da rising sun,
Oh, Lord have mercy on me.

Let us praise God together on our knees.
When I fall on my knees,
wid' my face to da rising sun,
Oh, Lord have mercy on me. Amen.

IV. Toccata

Ride on King Jesus,
no man can a hinder me.
He is King of Kings.
He is Lord of Lords.
Jesus Christ, first and last,
no man works like him.

King Jesus rides a milk white horse,
no man works like him,
The river of Jordan He did cross,
no man works like him

¹⁴⁴ Movement 1 is a piano prelude that does not include voice. It is called "I. Prelude."

Notes

John Daniels Carter (1932-1981) is most popular for his work, *Cantata* for voice and piano.¹⁴⁵ The highly performed set was written for Leontyne Price who debuted the work. It is his only published work. The details of Carter's life have been sketchy and according to those who knew him, inaccurate. Most recently, Casey Robards wrote the first known academic publication on the life of Carter. Carter was an accomplished pianist and composer-in-residence with the Washington National Symphony who performed his "Requiem Seditiosam:" In Memoriam Medgar Evers. The work is a five-movement cycle that begins with a piano prelude that poignantly sets the tone for the rest of the work that includes voice. Movement 2, "Rondo" is a setting of the spiritual "Peter Go Ring Dem Bells." The haunting spiritual, "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" is the text chosen for this segment aptly labeled "Recitative." The composer allots space for the singer to explore expressive gestures as he uses the style of *accompagnato*. Movement 4 is a spiritual that is found in most hymnals. Writing for Hymnology Archive, Chris Fenner says of the spiritual,

In the study of spirituals, some songs were widely disseminated before they were committed to print, but others, like this one, can be traced to a particular region. "Let us break bread together on our knees" has its roots in coastal South Carolina, or more generally, a stretch of the U.S. east coast sometimes known as the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, named after the dialect.¹⁴⁶

Observe the text used by Carter. The dialect he has written uses 'wid' for the word 'with' and 'da' for the word 'the.'

¹⁴⁵ Carter, J. (1964). *Cantata: For voice and piano*. Southern Music Pub. Co.

¹⁴⁶ Fenner, C. (2019, February 12). *Let us break bread together*. Hymnology Archive. <https://www.hymnologyarchive.com/let-us-break-bread-together>.

Movement 3, Toccata is a setting of “Ride on, King Jesus.” The odd numbered meter of 5/4 makes the composer’s melody fiery, however there are frequent changes in meter spanning duple, triple, and quadruple time signatures with the quarter note remaining the ictus throughout.

Noel Da Costa (1929-2002) was born in Nigeria to Jamaican parents who immigrated to New York when Noel was young. He graduated from Queens College in 1952 and studied with Luigi Dallapiccola (1904-1975) on a Fulbright scholarship.¹⁴⁷ As a composer, jazz violinist, and choral conductor, Da Costa taught at Hampton University, City University of New York, and Rutgers. *Two Songs for Julie-Ju* uses the words of African American poet, George Huston Bass (1938-1990).¹⁴⁸ Bass, a graduate of Fisk University worked as Langston Hughes’ assistant from 1959-1963 and taught playwriting at Brown University. The bisectonal work is a fusion of jazz, blues, and bebop. Scat phrases litter the melody giving the vocalist opportunities to use various tone colors and text painting to bring out the text.

Hall Johnson (1888-1970) was born in Georgia and is considered one of the most influential African American Composers of all times. He was also an accomplished violinist, and essayist who was fluent in both German and French. Johnson coached opera singer Shirley Verrett in German, as well as many other singers. Johnson is noted for his choral and solo arrangements of spirituals. The Hall Johnson Negro Choir provided the soundtrack for the 1936 film version of the play *Green Pastures*. Though “City Called Heaven” and his most popular “Ride on King Jesus” are concert spirituals, “Mother to Son”

¹⁴⁷ Italian composer Luigi Dallapiccola was best known for his lyrical twelve-tone compositions.

¹⁴⁸ Patterson, W. C. (1977). *Two Songs for Julie-Ju*. In *Anthology of art songs by black American composers* (pp. 130–136). essay, E.B. Marks Music.

is an art song whose text is the poetry of Langston Hughes. The Carl Fisher Publication *The Hall Johnson Collection* contains over 50 of Hall Johnson's arrangements, including "Ride on King Jesus" and "Mother to Son."¹⁴⁹

Undine Smith Moore (1904-1989) was born in Virginia. On scholarship from Julliard Graduate School, she studied music at Fisk University and earned her master's degree from Columbia University's Teachers College. As a longtime educator, Moore retired from Virginia State University in 1972. She was called the "Dean of Black Women Composers" and was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. Her compositions include instrumental, piano, choral, and solo works. "Set Down!" was first performed by Johnella Adams with pianist Buckner Gamby. "Watch and Pray" (1972) and "To Be Baptized" (1973) are considered companion songs and were first performed by the operatic soprano Camilla Williams in 1973. All three of these compositions can be found in Willis C. Patterson's anthology, *The New Negro Spiritual Collection*.¹⁵⁰

Evelyn Simpson-Curenton (b. 1953) is a composer, arranger pianist, organist, and singer. She has gained international acclaim through her talents as a performer and composer. Approached by Metropolitan Opera vocal coach Sylvia Oden, Lee Simpson-Curenton has done several arrangements, including arrangements for Kathleen Battle and Jessye Norman for their 1991 Carnegie Hall Concert titled *Spirituals in Concert*.¹⁵¹ Simpson-Curenton is a virtuosic composer adept in several genres. Many of her compositions are published and are available for purchase. Her collection volume *African*

¹⁴⁹ Johnson, H. (2003). *The Hall Johnson Collection* (The Masters Collection). New York, NY: Carl Fisher, LLC.

¹⁵⁰ Patterson, W. C., Johnson, H., Brown, C. S., Dent, C., Dett, R. N., Harper, T., Fax, M., & Moore, U. S. (2002). *The new Negro spiritual collection*. W.C. Patterson.

¹⁵¹ Battle, K., & Norman, K. (1991). *Spirituals in Concert*. [Video]. Deutsche Grammophon.

American Music for the Classical Singer: Spirituals and Hymns is a self-publication. Her distinctive style is reflected in the concert arrangements of “Lil’ David,” “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child,” and “Git on Board.” Though not mentioned in the publication *From Spirituals to Symphonies: African American Women Composers and Their Music*, Simpson-Curenton is recognized in its appendix of selected composers. It is worth noting that like her cohorts, she has thrived musically in times when the style of composition transitioned greatly. As Walker-Hill so eloquently states,

They have passed through a host of musical trends and “isms”: traditional, classicism, nationalism, racialism, modernism, serialism, neoclassicism, chance music, minimalism, electronic sound production, and multidisciplinary composition. They have incorporated African-American idioms to varying degrees, from nonexistent to prominent.¹⁵²

Simpson-Curenton has brought forth her musical ideas in ways that reflect her elegant, creative, and imaginative gifts. She incorporates African American idioms and authentic histories in her work. Thus, her spirituals should be considered part of the standard repertoire for recitals and concerts.

Dolores White (b. 1932), born in Chicago, Illinois, is a composer, pianist, educator, and lecturer. She holds degrees in piano and composition from Oberlin College Conservatory and Cleveland Institute of Music. “Velvet Shoes,” composed in 2000, is a setting of Elinor Wylie’s (1885-1928) highly anthologized poem.¹⁵³ Numerous composers have set this poem to music. “That Black Reef” is a setting of the poetry of James Kilgore

¹⁵² Walker-Hill, H. (2007). *From Spirituals to symphonies: African-American women composers and their music* (p. 43). University of Chicago Press.

¹⁵³ White, D., Simmons, M. R., & Wagner, J. (2004). *Velvet shoes: Soprano or tenor*. (A new anthology of art songs by African American composers.) Southern Illinois University Press.

(1928-1988) who modeled his poetry after Langston Hughes (1902-1967).¹⁵⁴ White's unique compositional style incorporates American and European musical traditions. Both settings embark upon the text with a uniquely delicate touch, treating the music as if she were the poet. Her melodies tend to lie in the upper register of the voice, perhaps indicating that she herself is a soprano. She is now retired.

Thank you: Dr. Angelique Clay-Everett, Dr. Everett McCorvey, Professor Cliff Jackson, Evelyn Simpson-Curenton, Janet Scott, my husband Ernest A. Hankins III, my children, Iman and Ernest IV, my mother Gertis Fordjour, Pastor Jonathan Smith, the Lima Drive Seventh-Day Adventist Church Family, Jeanette Pollard, and to all of the wonderful guests who attended this presentation. May God bless you.

¹⁵⁴ White, D., Simmons, M. R., & Wagner, J. (2004). *That black reef*. (A new anthology of art songs by African American composers.) Southern Illinois University Press

Program
From Spirituals to Art Songs by Black Composers
presented by
Iris Fordjour-Hankins, Soprano
In a DMA Recital
with
Cliff Jackson

April 17, 2016
University of Kentucky School of Music
Singletary Center
4:00 pm

Knoxville: Summer of 1915, Op 25 (1947)Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

Songs of Separation (1949) William Grant Still (1895-1978)

- I. Idolatry
- II. Poème
- III. Parted
- IV. If you should go
- V. A black Pierrot

-INTERMISSION-

Malven (1948)Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

5 Lieder, op. 39 (1899)

- Leises Lied, no. 1
- Junghexenlied, no. 2
- Befreit, no. 4

Frühlingsfeier Opus 56, no 5

Poema en Forma de Canciones (1917) Joaquin Turina (1882-1949)

- I. Dedicatoria
- II. Nunca olvida
- III. Cantares
- IV. Los dos miedos
- V. Las locas por amor

Knoxville: Summer of 1915

It has become that time of evening when
people sit on their porches, rocking
gently and talking gently and watching
the street
and the standing up into their sphere of
possession of the tress,
of birds' hung havens, hangars. People
go by; things go by.

A horse, drawing a buggy,
breaking his hollow iron music on the
asphalt:
a loud auto: a quiet auto:
people in pairs, not in a hurry,
scuffling, switching their weight of
aestival body, talking casually,
the taste hovering over them of vanilla,
strawberry, pasteboard, and starched
milk,
the image upon them of lovers and
horsement, squared with clowns in
hueless amber.

A streetcar raising into iron moan;
stopping;
belling and starting, stertorous; rousing
and raising again
its iron increasing moan
and swimming its gold windows and
straw seats
on past and past and past,
the bleak spark crackling and cursing
above it
like a small malignant spirit
set to dog its tracks;
the iron whine rises on rising speed;
still risen, faints; halts;
the faint stinging bell;
rises again, still fainter;
fainting, lifting lifts,
faints foregone;
forgotten.
Now is the night one blue dew;
my father has drained,

he has coiled the hose.
Low on the length of lawns,
a frailing of fire who breathes.
Parents on porches:
rock and rock.

From damp strings morning glories hang
their ancient faces.
The dry and exalted noise of the locusts
from all the air at once enchants my
eardrums.

On the rough wet grass
of the backyard
my father and mother have spread quilts
We all lie there, my mother, my father,
my uncle, my aunt, and I too am lying
there.

They are not talking much, and the talk
is quiet,
of nothing in particular,
of nothing at all.
The stars are wide and alive,
they all seem like a smile
of great sweetness,
and they seem very near.

All my people are larger bodies than
mine,
with voices gentle and meaningless
like the voices of sleeping birds.
One is an artist, he is living at home.
One is a musician, she is living at home.
One is my mother who is good to me.
One is my father who is good to me.
By some chance, here they are,
all on this earth;

and who shall ever tell the sorrow
of being on this earth, lying, on quilts,
on the grass,
in a summer evening,
among the sounds of the night.

May God bless my people,
my uncle, my aunt, my mother, my good
father,
oh, remember them kindly in their time
of trouble;
and in the hour of their taking away.

After a little
I am taken in
and put to bed.
Sleep, soft smiling,
draws me unto her;
and those receive me,
who quietly treat me,
as one familiar and well-beloved in that
home:
but will not, oh, will not,
not now, not ever;
but will not ever tell me who I am.

Songs of Separation

I. Idolatry - Arna Bontemps (1902-1973)

You have been good to me,
I give you this:
The arms of lovers empty as our own,
Marble lips sustaining one long kiss,
And I will journey there to make a sign
and kneel before your face,

And the hard sound of hammers
breaking stone.
For I will build a chapel in the place
where our love died.
And set an old bell tolling in the air.

II. Poème - Phillipe Thoby Marcelin (1904-1975)

Ce n'était pas l'aurore,
mais je m'étais levé
en me frotant les yeux.
Tout dormait allen tour.
Les bananiers sous ma fenêtre,
Frissonnaient dans le clair de lune calme.
Alors, j'ai pris ma tête dans me mains
et j'ai pensé à vous.

*Dawn had not yet broken
But I arose,
Rubbing my eyes.
Round about, all were sleeping.
The banana trees beneath my window
Shivered in the calm moonlight.
Then, I took my head in my hands
And thought of you.*

III. Parted –

Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906)

She wrapped her soul in a lace of lies,
With a prime deceit to pin it;
And I thought I was gaining a fearsome
prize,
So I staked my soul to win it.
We wed and parted on her complaint,
And both were a bit of barter,
Tho' I'll confess that I'm no saint,
I'll swear that she's no martyr.

IV. If You Should Go –

Countee Cullen (1903-1946)

Love, leave me like the light, the gently
passing day;
We would not know, but for the night,
when it has slipped away.
Go quietly, a dream, when done,
Should leave no trace that it has lived,
Except a gleam across the dreamer's
face.

VI. A Black Pierrot–
Langston Hughes (1902-1967)

I am a black pierrot:
She did not love me,
So I crept away into the night and the
night was black, too.

I am a black pierrot:
She did not love me,
So with my once gay-colored soul
shrunken like a balloon without air,

I am a black pierrot:
She did not love me,
So I wept until the red dawn dripped
blood over the eastern hills and my heart
was bleeding too.

I went forth in the morning to seek a
new brown love.

Leises Lied - Richard

Richard Dehmel (1863 - 1920)
Soft Song– Sharon Krebs, translation

In einem stillen Garten
An eines Brunens Schacht,
Wie wollt' ich gerne warten
Die lange graue Nacht!

Soft Song
In a silent garden
At the shaft of a well,
How gladly would I wait
The long grey night through.

Viel helle Lilien blühen
Um des Brunens Schlund;
Drin schwimmen golden die Sterne,
Drin badet sich der Mond.

Many bright lilies bloom
About the abyss of the well;
Within it the stars swim golden,
Within it the moon bathes.

Und wie in den Brunnen schimmern
Die lieben Sterne hinein,
Glänzt mir im Herzen immer
Deiner lieben Augen schein.

And as the dear stars shimmer
[Down] into the well,
Always within my heart shines
The radiance of your dear eyes.

Die Sterne doch am Himmel,
Die stehen all' so fern;
In deinem stillen Garten
Stünd' ich jetzt so gern

But the stars upon the heavens
Are all so far away;
Within your silent garden
I would so gladly now be standing.

Befreit

Richard Dehmel (1863 - 1920)
Freed - Emily Ezust, translation

Du wirst nicht weinen. Leise, leise
wirst du lächeln: und wie zur Reise
geb' ich dir Blick und Kuß zurück.
Unsre lieben vier Wände! Du hast sie
bereitet,
ich habe sie dir zur Welt [geweitet] --
o Glück!

Dann wirst du heiß meine Hände fassen
und wirst mir deine Seele lassen,
läßt unsern Kindern mich zurück.
Du schenktest mir dein ganzes Leben,
ich will es ihnen wiedergeben --
o Glück!

Es wird sehr bald sein, wir wissen's
beide,
wir haben einander befreit vom Leide;
so [geb'] ich dich der Welt zurück.
Dann wirst du mir nur noch im Traum
erscheinen
und mich segnen und [mit mir] weinen --
o Glück!

You will not weep. Gently
you will smile, and as before a journey,
I will return your gaze and your kiss.
Our dear four walls you have helped
build;
and I have now widened them for you
into the world.
O joy!

Then you will warmly seize my hands
and you will leave me your soul,
leaving me behind for our children.
You gave me your entire life,
so I will give it again to them.
O joy!

It will be very soon, as we both know -
but we have freed each other from
sorrow.
And so I [return] you to the world!
You will then appear to me only in
dreams,
and bless me and weep with me.
O joy!

Junghexenlied –
Otto Bierbaum (1865 - 1910)
Song of the Young Witch – Alberto Pedrotti, translation

Als nachts ich überm Gebirge ritt,
Rack, schack, schacke mein Pferdchen,
Da ritt ein seltsam Klingeln mit,
Kling, ling, klingelalei.

Es war ein schmeichlerisch bittend
Getön,
Es war wie Kinderstimmen schön.

Mir wars, ich streichelt' ein lindes Haar,
Mir war so weh und wunderbar.

Da schwand das Klingeln mit einemmal,
Ich sah hinunter ins tiefe Thal.

[Da] sah ich Licht in meinem Haus,
Rack, schack, schacke mein Pferdchen,
Mein Bübchen sah nach der Mutter aus,
Kling, ling, klingelalei.

When by night I rode over the
mountains,
Rack, schack, schacke, my little horse,
A strange ringing seemed to be riding
along with me,
Kling, ling, klingelalei.

It was a beguilingly pleading sound,
It was as beautiful as the voices of
children.

It was as if I were caressing a soft [head
of] hair,
I felt so melancholy and wondrous.

Then the ringing disappeared all at once,
I gazed down into the deep valley.

[There] I saw light within my house,
Rack, schack, schacke, my little horse,
My little lad was looking out for his
mother,
Kling, ling, klingelalei

Frühlingsfeier

Heinrich Heine (1797 - 1856)

Spring Festival-Emma Lazarus, translation

Das ist des Frühlings traurige Lust!
Die blühenden Mädchen, die wilde
Schar,
Sie stürmen dahin mit flatterndem Haar
Und Jammergeheul und entblößter
Brust:
“Adonis! Adonis!”

Es sinkt die Nacht. Bei Fackelschein
Sie suchen hin und her im Wald,
Der angstverwirret widerhallt
Vom Weinen und Lachen und
Schluchzen und Schreien:
“Adonis! Adonis!”

Das wunderschöne Jünglingsbild,
Es liegt am Boden blaß und tot,
Das Blut färbt alle Blumen rot,
Und Klagelaut die Luft erfüllt:
“Adonis! Adonis!”

This is the spring-tide's mournful feast;
The frantic troops of blooming girls
Are rushing hither with flying curls,
Mourning they smite their bare white
breast,
Adonis! Adonis!

The night has come. By the torches'
gleams
They search the forest on every side,
That echoes with anguish far and wide,
With tears, mad laughter, and sobs and
screams,
Adonis! Adonis!

The mortal youth so strangely fair,
Lies on the cold turf pale and dead;
His heart's blood staineth the flowers
red,
And a wild lament fulfills the air,
Adonis! Adonis!

Poema en Forma de Canciones

I. Nunca olvida

Ya que este mundo abandono antes de
dar cuenta a Dios, aquí para entre los dos
mi confesión te diré.

Con toda el alma perdono
hasta a los que siempre he odiado. A ti
que tanto te he amado
nunca te perdonaré!

II. Cantares

Más cerca de mí te siento Cuando más
huyo de tí Pues tu imagen es en mí
Sombra de mi pensamiento.
Vuélvemelo a decir Pues embelesado
ayer Te escuchaba sin oír Y te miraba
sin ver.

III. Los dos miedos

Al comenzar la noche de aquel día Ella
lejos de mí,
¿Por qué te acercas tanto? Me decía,
Tengo miedo de ti.
Y después que la noche hubo pasado
Dijo, cerca de mí:
¿Por qué te alejas tanto de mi lado?
¡Tengo miedo sin ti!

Never Forget

Since I am leaving this world,
And before I give my account to the
lord, I will confess to you,
Here, between the two of us.

With all my soul I forgive those
Whom I have always hated.
You, whom I have deeply loved,
I will never forgive!

Flee as I may your embraces

Flee as I may your embraces, Closer
forever I'm caught; My ev'ry dream,
ev'ry thought Your haunting vision
retraces.
Speak more to me,
For yesterday, as I was enraptured, I
listened to you without bearing,
I looked at you without seeing.

The Two Fears

With the onset of that night,
She, remote from me, said:
Why do you come so close to me? I am
afraid of you.
And after the night had passed, She,
close to me, said:
Why do you move away from me? I am
afraid without you

IV. Las Locas por amor

Te amaré diosa Venus si prefieres
Que te ame mucho tiempo y con cordura
Y respondió la diosa de Citeres:
Prefiero como todas las mujeres
Que me amen poco tiempo y con locura.
Te amaré diosa Venus, te amaré.

The extremes of love

I will love you, Divine Venus, if you
desire That I love you eternally and with
discretion. The goddess of Cythera
replied to me:
I prefer, as all women do, that you love
me for a short time and passionately. I
will love you, Divine Venus, I will love
you.

Notes

In 1948, *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* was commissioned by renowned soprano, Eleanor Steber (1914-1990). American poet, James Agee's 1938 nostalgic text is the muse for this rondo-like rhapsody composition.¹⁵⁵ Samuel Barber (1910-1981), the composer of *Knoxville*, was moved when he learned that Agee's writing is deeply personal and was prompted by the loss of his father. Barber found the piece meaningful as his father was experiencing poor health. The character in the piece is a male who takes a look back at his childhood in Knoxville, Tennessee. It is impossible for the piano reduction to capture the rich and colorful sounds of *Knoxville* that are found in Barber's orchestral setting. The website *Song of America* characterizes Knoxville as a "concert scene" or dramatic song for soprano and orchestra.¹⁵⁶ Many wonderful performances of the work have been recorded; Elanor Steber and soprano Leontyne Price's renditions are highly praised.

William Grant Still (1895-1978) is most widely known for his *Symphony No. 1*, "Afro American" (1930). Though his accomplishments and musical works earned him the moniker "Dean of African American Composers," his vocal music is seldom heard, particularly his three song cycles, *Songs of Separation* (1945), *Rhapsody* (1955) and *From the Hearts of Women* (1961). As a black nationalist, he linked poetry and song by using the verse of Harlem Renaissance black poets. A well-written article can be found on the web pages of the African Artsong Alliance group. They write about Still's *Songs of Separation*:

The construction of the cycle is palindromic. Songs I and V are written in a quasi-arioso style, with melodic vocal lines which range from expansive contours to recitative. Songs II and IV are similar in their chordal treatment

¹⁵⁵ Barber, S., & Agee, J. (1952). *Knoxville, summer of 1915: For voice and orchestra, op. 24*. New York: G. Schirmer.

¹⁵⁶ Knoxville: Summer of 1915 (OP. 24). (2018, August 06). Retrieved May 28, 2021, from <https://songofamerica.net/song/knoxville-summer-of-1915-op-24/>.

of the accompaniment. Both evoke a hushed atmosphere. Song III is unlike any of the others.¹⁵⁷

Songs of Separation consists of five poems: Arna Bontemps' (1902-1973) "Idolatry", "Poème" written in French by the Haitian born Philippe Thoby-Marcelin (1904-1975); Paul Laurence Dunbar's (1872-1906) "Parted," "If You should Go" by Countee Cullen (1903-1946); and "A Black Pierrot" by the famous Langston Hughes (1902-1967). In 1946, Austrian-American mezzo-soprano Herta Glaz premiered the cycle via a national broadcast titled *Concert Time* (she continued to perform it well into her career).¹⁵⁸ Interestingly, the starting pitch of each melody in the cycle is the note A. The pitch may represent a character in the cycle as the poems are organized as a depiction of the stages of grief.

German composer, Richard Strauss (1864-1949) a disciple of Richard Wagner wrote magnificently for the soprano voice. Richard Strauss' *Op. 39* was written in 1898. contains 5 lieder: Five Songs (Lieder): 1. Leises; 2. Junghexenlied; 3. Der Arbeitsmann; 4. Befreit; and 5. Lied an meinen Sohn. "Befriet" is perhaps one of Strauss' most beautiful lieder and was actually the last lieder written in the opus. Its most famous line of music is serene and tranquil as with the exclamation, 'o *Glück!*' ('O happiness!'). The poetry Richard dehmel (1863-1920) was used for all the lieder except one "Junghexenlied", Otto Bierbaum (1865-1910). "Frühlingsfeier" is the fifth song in his *Op 56* collection of songs. The poem, published in 1906 was written by Heinrich Heine, (1797-1856). According to Stevens,

¹⁵⁷ Perkins Holly, E. (n.d.). William Grant Still. Retrieved May 27, 2021, from <https://artsongalliance.org/composers/william-grant-still>

¹⁵⁸ AfriClassical.com, "William Grant Still (1895-1978) African American Composer, Arranger Conductor & Oboist Dean of African American Composers," William J. Zick, 2015, <http://chevalierdesaintgeorges.homestead.com/still.html#50>.

"Frühlingsfeier" is perhaps the most elaborate of Strauss' songs He says, "Strauss' song is in his most grandiose vein."¹⁵⁹ According to editor Richard Stevens, "The success of the songs often depends on the skill with which these are handled. . ." ¹⁶⁰ Indeed these songs are most beautiful. They reflect the human spirit from the German point of view.

Poema en forma de canciones, Op. 19 (Poem in the form of songs) by Joaquín Turina (1882-1949) was a nationalist Spanish composer who promoted 20th-century Spanish music. His contemporaries included Manuel de Falla (1876-1946), Isaac Albeniz (1860 - 1909), and Enrique Granados (1867 - 1916). Turina strove to combine the European and Andalusian styles of writing in his musical compositions. Andalusian music originated in the 18th -century and it celebrates folk music, vocal (cante) flamenco, guitar (toque) flamenco and dance (baile) flamenco. Ramón María de las Mercedes de Campoamor y Camposorio (1817 - 1901) wrote the Spanish text of, *Poema en forma de canciones* which contains four cantares which are preceded by an introductory piano "Dedicatoria," which sets expressive music which follows it. According to Caroline Wright who wrote the liner notes for the recording,

The following songs are full of contrast, from the wistful vocal melody floating above soft piano chords in *Nunca olvida* (Never forget) and the lilting sweetness of *Los dos miedos* (Doubly afraid) to the agitated piano

¹⁵⁹ "Frühlingsfeier"

¹⁶⁰ Ibid

figuration of *Cantares* (Songs) and the joyful exuberance of *Las locas por amor* (Women passionate for love).¹⁶¹

This exhilarating music reflects the best of Turina's accomplishments who is one of the most celebrated, honored, and awarded Spanish composers.

Welcome! My enthusiasm for warm and passionate music that expresses the complexities of the human experience inspired the selection of music for this recital. It is my desire that in sharing it, you will experience and be touched its beauty. *Thank you for coming.*

Thank you, Dr. Angelique Clay-Everett, and Professor Cliff Jackson for the time that you've invested in me. Your efforts have not been in vain. May God bless you as you continue to inspire students to become the best singers and musicians they can become.

¹⁶¹ Turina, J. (2011). *Poema en forma de canciones*. On Josquin Turina Songs [CD]. Munich: Naxos.

Program
A Chamber Recital
presented by
Iris Fordjour-Hankins, Soprano
with
Dr. Aimee Fincher, piano
Dr. Lloyd Mallory, flute & piano
Dr. Renee Collins, conductor
The Valley Conservatory String Ensemble

May 3, 2021
Oakwood University Church
Huntsville, AL
7:00 pm

Vier Letzte Lieder, Op. 36Richard Strauss (1864-1949)
I. Frühling
II. September
III. Beim Schlafengehen
IV. Im Abendrot

Songs of Love and JusticeAdolphus Hailstork (b. 1941)
I. Justice
II. Difficulties
III. Decisions
IV. Love

-INTERMISSION-

The Faces of LoveJake Heggie (b. 1961)
I. I Shall Not Live in Vain
II. As Well As Jesus?
III. If You Were Coming in the Fall
IV. It Makes No Difference Abroad
V. At Last, To Be Identified!

My Soul's Been Anchored In the Lord Florence Price (1887-1953)

He's Got the Whole World In His Hands Margaret Bonds (1913-1972)

Vier Letzte Lieder (Four Last Songs)

I. Frühling

In dämmrigen Grüften
Träumte ich lang
Von deinen Bäumen und blauen Lüften,
Von deinem Duft und Vogelsang.

Nun liegst du erschlossen
In Gleich und Zier,
Von Licht übergossen
Wie ein Wunder vor mir.

Du kennst mich wieder,
Du [lockest]¹ mich zart,
Es zittert durch all meine Glieder
Deine selige Gegenwart.

II. September

Der Garten trauert,
Kühl sinkt in die Blumen der Regen.
Der Sommer schauert
Still seinem Ende entgegen.

Golden tropft Blatt um Blatt
Nieder vom hohen Akazienbaum.
Sommer lächelt erstaunt und matt
In den sterbenden Gartentraum.

Lange noch bei den Rosen
Bleibt er stehen, sehnt sich nach Ruh.
Langsam tut er die großen
Müdigwordnen Augen zu.

I. Spring

In dusky vaults
I have long dreamt
of your trees and blue skies,
of your scents and the songs of birds.

Now you lie revealed
in glistening splendour,
flushed with light,
like a wonder before me.

You know me again,
you beckon tenderly to me;
all of my limbs quiver
from your blissful presence!

II. II. September

The garden is mourning,
the rain sinks coolly into the flowers.
Summer shudders
as it meets its end.

Leaf upon leaf drops golden
down from the lofty acacia.
Summer smiles, astonished and weak,
in the dying garden dream.

For a while still by the roses
it remains standing, yearning for peace.
Slowly it closes its large
eyes grown weak

III. Beim Schlafengehen

[Nun] der Tag mich [müd] gemacht,
Soll mein sehnlisches Verlangen
Freundlich die gestirnte Nacht
Wie ein müdes Kind empfangen.

Hände, laßt von allem Tun,
Stirn vergiß du alles Denken,
Alle meine Sinne nun
Wollen sich in Schlummer senken.

Und die Seele unbewacht
Will in freien Flügen schweben,
Um im Zauberkreis der Nacht
Tief und tausendfach zu leben.

IV. Im Abendrot

Wir sind durch Not und Freude
Gegangen Hand in Hand,
Vom Wandern [ruhn wir beide]¹
Nun überm stillen Land.

Rings sich die Täler neigen,
Es dunkelt schon die Luft,
Zwei Lerchen nur noch steigen
Nachträumend in den Duft.

Tritt her, und laß sie schwirren,
Bald ist es [Schlafenszeit]²,
Daß wir uns nicht verirren
In dieser Einsamkeit.

O weiter stiller Friede!
So tief im Abendrot,
Wie sind wir wandermüde --
Ist [das]³ etwa der Tod?

III. While Going to Sleep

Now that the day has made me so tired,
my dearest longings shall
be accepted kindly by the starry night
like a weary child.

Hands, cease your activity,
head, forget all of your thoughts;
all my senses now
will sink into slumber.

And my soul, unobserved,
will float about on untrammelled wings
in the enchanted circle of the night,
living a thousandfold more deeply.

IV. In the Twilight

Through adversity and joy
We've gone hand in hand;
We rest now from our wanderings
Upon this quiet land.

Around us slope the valleys,
The skies grow dark;
Two larks alone are just climbing,
As if after a dream, into the scented air.

Come here and let them whirl past,
For it will soon be time to rest;
We do not wish to get lost
In this solitude.

O wide, quiet peace,
So deep in the red dusk...
How weary we are of our travels --
Is this perhaps - Death? --

Songs of Love and Justice

I. Justice

When evil men plot,
good men must plan.

When evil men burn and bomb
good men must build and bind

When evil men shout ugly words of
hatred

good men must commit themselves to
the glories of love

When evil men would seek to perpetuate
an unjust status quo,

good men must seek to bring into being
a real order of justice

III. Decisions

Ev'ry man must decide whether he will
walk in the light

Every man must decide whether he walk
in the light of created altruism

or the darkness of destructive selfishness

This is the judgement

Life's most persistent and urgent
question

What are you doing?

II. Difficulties

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 so difficult to like some people.

But Jesus: "Love them"

for love is greater than like.

What are you doing for others?

Ev'ry man must decide

What are you doing?

IV. Love

Love is the only force

capable of transforming an enemy into a
friend

Love

The Faces of Love

I. I Shall Not Live in Vain

If I can stop one heart from breaking
I shall not live in vain;
If I can ease one life the aching
Or cool one pain
Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again
I shall not live in vain

III. If You Were Coming in the Fall

If you were coming in the Fall
I'd brush the Summer by
With half a smile, and half a spurn
As Housewives do, a Fly

If I could see you in a year
I'd wind the months in balls
And put them each in separate Drawers
For fear the numbers fuse

If only Centuries, delayed
I'd count them on my hand
Subtracting, til my fingers dropped
Into Van Dieman's Land

If certain, when this life was out
That yours and mine, should be
I'd toss it yonder, like a Rind
And take Eternity

But, now, uncertain of the length
Of this, that is between
It goads me, like the Goblin Bee
That will not state its sting

II. As Well as Jesus?

So well that I can live without—
I love thee—then How well is that?
As well as Jesus?
Prove it me
That He—loved Men—
As I—love thee—

IV. It Makes No Difference Abroad

It makes no difference abroad
The Seasons—fit—the same
The Mornings blossom into Noons
And split their Pods of Flame

Wild flowers—kindle in the Woods
The Brooks slam—all the Day
No Black bird bates his Banjo
For passing Calvary

Auto da Fe—and Judgment
Are nothing to the Bee
His separation from His Rose
To Him—sums Misery

V. At Last, to Be Identified!

At last, to be identified!
At last, the lamps upon thy side
The rest of Life to see!

Past Midnight! Past the Morning Star!
Past Sunrise!
Ah, What leagues there were
Between our feet, and Day!

My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord

In the Lord, in the Lord,
My soul's been anchored in the Lord.
Before I'd stay in hell one day,
My soul's been anchored in the Lord;
I'd sing and pray myself away,
My soul's been anchored in the Lord.
I'm going to pray and never stop,
My soul's been anchored in the Lord;
Until I've reached the mountain top,
My soul's been anchored in the Lord.

He's Got the Whole World in His Hands

He's got the whole world in His hand
He's got the whole world in His hand
He's got the whole world in His hand
He's got the whole world in His hand.

He's got the woods and the waters in His hand
He's got the woods and the waters in His hand
He's got the sun and the moon right in His hand
He's got the whole world in His hand.

He's got the birds and the bees right in His hand
He's got the birds and the bees right in His hand
He's got the beasts of the field right in His hand
He's got the whole world in His hand.

He's got you and me right in His hand
He's got you and me right in His hand
He's got everybody in His hand
He's got the whole world in His hand.

Notes

Richard Strauss' (1864-1949) last known work is the song cycle, *Vier Letzte Lieder*, *Op. 36*.¹⁶² It is ironic that the work's theme centers around the acceptance of death. There are many poignant moments in the piece; it is infused with a sense of serenity and beauty. The four lieder, "Frühling," "September," "Beim Schlafengehen," and "Im Abendrot" are perhaps the best of the composer's work. *Vier Letzte Lieder* is written for soprano and orchestra has been recorded by numerous artists. "Malven" was composed in the same year as *Op. 36* but was not included in the cycle, which was written in 1948 when Strauss was 84 years of age. The soaring melodic lines reflect Strauss' love for the soprano voice as they float above the lush orchestral accompaniment. Kirsten Flagstad (1895-1962), the acclaimed Norwegian operatic soprano for whom they were written premiered them posthumously in 1950 with the Philharmonic Orchestra in London.

Adolphus Hailstork (b. 1941), inspired by the sermons of Martin Luther King, Jr, used words from King's sermons as the text in his powerful song cycle, *Songs of Love and Justice* (1992). They have been recorded by researcher and soprano Dr. Louise Toppin, and conductor Julius P. Williams recorded them with the Dvořák Symphony Orchestra Prague. Typical of Hailstork's compositional style, this work is multidimensional in its usage of harmonies, rhythms, melodies and textures. The cycle's four texts grapple with the issues of racial injustice, which is reflected in the tensions written into the orchestration pitted against through-composed melodies. The four movements, "Justice," "Difficulties," "Decisions," and "Love" are powerful representations of Hailstork's extraordinary gift as

¹⁶² Strauss, R. (1898). *Vier letzte Lieder*. EMI.

a composer. Willis C. Patterson published it in his anthology, *Second Anthology of Art Songs by Black American Composers*, for voice and piano.¹⁶³

The Faces of Love by American composer Jake Heggie (b. 1961) is a setting of five esteemed female American poets, Emily Dickinson's (1830-1886) poems. The first in the set, "I Shall Not Live in Vain," is dedicated to soprano Renée Fleming. Kristin Clayton is the dedicatee for the second song "As Well as Jesus?" Song four, "It Makes No Difference Abroad," was written for Carol Vaness, and "At Last, to be Identified" was written for Nicolle Foland. Song three, "If You Were Coming in the Fall" has no dedicatee. The composer encourages singers to enjoy finding different vocal colors as they sing this work. In the foreword of his volume, *The Faces of Love: The Songs of Jake Heggie*, he shares:

In these songs, the singer encounters the full gamut of the influences I grew up with: folk music, jazz, pop, opera, rock, [and] art song. I encourage performers to embrace these elements in the songs and not shy away from them. If it feels jazz, well, it probably is.¹⁶⁴

The Faces of Love is warm and delightful. Its melodies are endearing, and the extemporaneous sounding accompaniments engage the modern musical sensibilities.

The spirituals on this program, "My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord" by composer Florence Price (1887-1953) and Margaret Bonds' (1913-1972) "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands" are towering examples of concert spirituals. The term "concert spiritual" has been in use since the days of Roland Hayes (1887-1977), Harry T. Burleigh (1888-1977), and Hall Johnson (1888-1970), all of whom were pioneers in the form. Concert spirituals were developed in an effort to pull them out of the wreckage of mockery

¹⁶³ Patterson, W. C., Adams, L., Adams, L., Adams, L., Adams, L., Anderson, T. J., Dett, R. N., Work, J. W. (2002). *The second anthology of art songs by African American composers*. W.C. Patterson.

¹⁶⁴ Heggie, J. (1999). *The faces of love the songs of Jake Heggie*. Hal Leonard Auslfg.

made of them by minstrel shows and other acts of degradation. Both of these pieces, “My Soul’s Been Anchored in the Lord” and “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands” are considered standards in the classical repertoire and appear regularly on recitals and concerts throughout the world.

Thank you to my husband, Ernest Hankins III; daughter Iman Isabella; son EJ (Ernest Hankins, IV); my father, Isaac Fordjour (Janet); and my brothers Ike, Derrick, and Ricky. Special thanks to Dr. Angelique Clay-Everett, the late Dr. Pearse Lyons of Alltech, Inc; the late Jeanette Pollard; Dr. Renee Collins, founder of Valley Conservatory and her faculty; Dr. Eurydice Osterman, Dr. Aimee Fincher, Dr. Lloyd Mallory; my students at Oakwood University and Valley Conservatory. Most of all, I must thank the prolific composer, Evelyn Simpson-Curenton-the reason for this recital.

Program
Lecture Recital:
Shining a Spotlight on Female African American Composer Evelyn Simpson-
Curenton

presented by
Iris Fordjour-Hankins, Soprano
with
Evelyn Simpson-Curenton, piano
Dr. Lloyd Mallory, flute

May 19, 2021
University of Kentucky
Schmidt Vocal Arts Center
12: 30 pm

Get on Board Lil' ChilrunEvelyn Simpson-Curenton (b. 1953)

In the Garden

Swing Low Medley

O Glory (*Dr. Lloyd Mallory, flute*)

Reflections

They'll Know We Are Christians By Our Love

Notes

The notes for this recital are contained in the pages of this dissertation, *Shining a Spotlight on Female African American Composer Evelyn Simpson-Curenton*.

Bibliography

- Abbington, J. (2009). Music wars: A perspective from the Black Church. *Liturgy*, 24(4), 40–47. <https://doi.org/10.1080/04580630903022220>.
- AfriClassical.com, “William Grant Still (1895-1978) African American Composer, Arranger Conductor & Oboist Dean of African American Composers,” William J. Zick, 2015, <http://chevalierdesaintgeorges.homestead.com/still.html#50>.
- Anderson, M., Motley, J., & Johnson, H. (1964). Marian Anderson in rehearsal with Hall Johnson and John Motley [Tape]. Colenda Digital Repository. University of Pennsylvania. <https://colenda.library.upenn.edu/catalog/81431-p3vd6p77z>.
- Anderson, T. P. (2002). “Swing low, sweet chariot”—*The Fisk University Jubilee Quartet (1909)*. Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/national-recording-preservation-board/documents/Swing%20Low%20article.pdf>.
- Arneson, C., & Athey-Janka, L. (2014). *Literature for teaching: A guide for choosing solo vocal repertoire from a developmental perspective*. Inside View Press.
- Associated Press. (1987). American Opera Singer Joy Simpson Dies. AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/af20d129ae397898d39e8ba723d8af87>.
- Barber, S., & Agee, J. (1952). *Knoxville, summer of 1915: For voice and orchestra, op. 24*. G. Schirmer.
- Battle, K., & Norman, K. (1991). *Spirituals in concert*. [Video]. Deutsche Grammophon.
- Boldrey, R., et. al. (2005). *Singers' edition, operatic arias*. Pacific Isle Pub.
- Bonds, M. (1963). *He's got the whole world in his hands: A spiritual*. Mercury Music Corp.
- Brown, C. (2002). Calvary. In W. C. Patterson (Ed.), *The New Negro Spiritual* (pp. 12–15). essay, no publication information given.
- Brown, U. (2002). Over My Head, I Hear Music in the Air. In *Tryn' to make Heaven my home* (pp. 8–12). essay, Roger Dean Publishing Company.
- Brownlee, L., & Sneed, D. (2013). *Spiritual sketches*. LeChateau Earl Records.
- Brunelle, P. (2020, August 27). *Evelyn Simpson Curenton: Musical moments with Philip Brunelle*. Vocal Essence. <https://www.vocalescence.org/musical-moments-with-philip-brunelle-june-18-2020-evelyn-simpson-curenton/>.
- Bullock, K. W., & Cox, D. M. (Eds.). (2011). *Art Songs and Spirituals by contemporary African American composers*. Personal Best Ministries Press.
- Burleigh, H. T. (1984). I don't feel no-ways tired. In *The Spirituals of Harry T. Burleigh* (pp. 129–132). essay, Belwin Mills.
- Burleigh, H. T. (1984). Swing low, sweet chariot. In *The Spirituals of Harry T. Burleigh* (pp. 10–13). essay, Belwin-Mills Publishing Group.
- Carter, J. (1964). *Cantata: For voice and piano*. Southern Music Pub. Co.
- Chandler Eteme, J. (2007). *Devotions* [Album]. Sligo.
- Clay, A. (n.d.). “Ride up in the chariot” arranged by Betty Jackson King [Song]. Soundcloud. <https://soundcloud.com/angeliqueclay/ride-up-in-the-chariot>.
- Divaslair. (2010, October 17). *He never said a mumbalin' word (Negro Spiritual)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TlgLRIVJkhE>.
- Doscher, B. M., & Nix, J. (2002). *From Studio to Stage: Repertoire for the voice*. Scarecrow Press.

- Emory University. (n.d). James Abbington.
<http://music.emory.edu/home/people/biography/abbington-james.html>
- Fenner, C. [Ed]. (2019, September 18). *In the garden*. Hymnology Archive.
<https://www.hymnologyarchive.com/in-the-garden>.
- Fenner, C. [Ed]. (2018-2021). *His eye is on the sparrow*. Hymnology Archive.
<https://www.hymnologyarchive.com/his-eye-is-on-the-sparrow>.
- Fenner, C. (2019, February 12). *Let us break bread together*. Hymnology Archive.
<https://www.hymnologyarchive.com/let-us-break-bread-together>.
- Fisher, M. M. (1998). *Negro slave songs in the United States*, Foreword by Ray Allen Billington. Kensington Publishing.
- Get on Board: About the Song. (n. d.). *Ballad of America*. Retrieved Mar. 13, 2021 from
<https://balladofamerica.org/get-on-board/>.
- Handel's Messiah: A soulful celebration*. (1992). Burbank, CA: Reprise Records.
- Hayes, R. (2001). He never said a mumberlin' word. In *My favorite Spirituals: 30 songs for voice and piano* (pp. 121–122). essay, Dover Publications, Inc.
- Heggie, J. (1999). *The faces of love the songs of Jake Heggie*. Hal Leonard Auslfg.
- History of the Disklavier. (2021). Yamaha Disklavier.
<https://www.disklavier.com/history-of-the-disklavier>.
- Hogan, M. (2001). He never said a mumbalin' word (Crucifixion). In *The deep river collection for high voice: Ten spirituals arranged for solo voice and piano. Vol. 1* (pp. 6–10). essay, Hal Leonard.
- Holland, M. R. (2021, June 5). The 2020 Spirituals Project Symposium. *You Tube*. Lamont School of Music University of Denver.
<https://youtu.be/fjs4hLX9IQc?t=5282>.
- Introduction to African languages. (n.d.). Retrieved April 11, 2021, from
<https://alp.fas.harvard.edu/introduction-african-languages>.
- Jackson King, B. (2015). Calvary. In V. Taylor (Ed.), *Art songs & Spirituals by African-American women composers* (pp. 2–6). essay, Hildegard Publishing Company.
- Jennens, C., McNair, S., Otter, A. S., Chance, M., Hadley, J., Lloyd, R., Marriner, N., et. al. (2003). *Messiah: The 250th anniversary performance*. Philips Classics Production.
- Jennings, R. (1996). *Over my head*. An Arch Angel Publication.
- Johnson, H. (1951). *Ride on, King Jesus: King of kings: Negro spiritual*. C. Fischer.
- Johnson, H. (1959). *Oh, Glory!* [Song]. *The Spirituals Database*. <http://spirituals-database.com/omeka/items/show/6541>.
- Johnson, H. (1956). *Oh Glory!* [Song]. African Diaspora Music Project.
<https://africandiasporamusicproject.org/items/show/21875>.
- Johnson, H., & Hughes, L. (1970). *Mother to son*. Carl Fischer.
- Johnson, H. (2003). Oh, Glory! In *The Hall Johnson Collection*. Carl Fischer, pp. 108-111.
- Johnson, H. (1980). *City called heaven: Spiritual*. Carl Fischer.
- Johnson, H. (n.d.). Five Negro work songs (Lord, how come me here?) [Song]. *The Spirituals Database*. <http://spirituals-database.com/omeka/items/show/8739>.
- Johnson, K. D. (2018, July 9). *He never said a mumbalin' word* [Video]. YouTube.
<https://youtu.be/CFvoUmy6wXM>.

- Johnson, W., Johnson, H., & Ward, L. (2007). *Hall Johnson, thirty spirituals for high voice and piano*. Schirmer.
- Johnson, H. (2003). *The Hall Johnson Collection* (The Masters Collection). New York, NY: Carl Fisher, LLC.
- Johnston, A. (2016). *English and German diction for singers: A comparative approach*, Second ed. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Jones, R. (2019). *So You Want to Sing Spirituals: A Guide for Performers*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Jones, R. (2016). Edward Boatner Biography. *Afrocentric voices from 'Classical' music*. <http://afrovoices.com/edward-boatner-biography/>.
- Jones, R. (2008, April 18). *Calvary (Negro Spiritual)/Betty Jackson King* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/x8vdSWzDhtY>.
- King Jackson, B. (2002). Ride up in the Chariot. In W. C. Patterson (Ed.), *The New Negro Spiritual* (pp. 65–68). essay, Place of publication not identified. Knoxville: Summer of 1915 (OP. 24). (2018, August 06). Retrieved May 28, 2021, from <https://songofamerica.net/song/knoxville-summer-of-1915-op-24/>
- McGinty, D. (1995). *American Music*, 13(2), 247-249. doi:10.2307/3052263.
- NATS American Negro Spiritual Categories. (n.d.) National Association of Teachers of Singing. Retrieved June 23, 2021, from: https://www.nats.org/American_Negro_Spiritual_Competition.html.
- Newland, M. (2013, July 25). Lee, Sylvia Olden. *Grove Music Online*. Retrieved 25 Apr. 2021, from <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002242092>.
- Nix, J. (2002). "Criteria for selecting repertoire." *Journal of Singing*, 58(3), 217-21.
- Okoye, N. (n.d.). *Harriet Tubman: When I Crossed That Line to Freedom*. American Opera Project. <https://www.aopopera.org/tubman>.
- Patterson, W. C. (1977). Two Songs for Julie-Ju. In *Anthology of art songs by black American composers*, essay, E.B. Marks Music, 130-136.
- Patterson, W. C. (Ed.). (2002). *The new Negro spiritual collection*. C. Patterson.
- Patterson, W. C., Johnson, H., Brown, C. S., Dent, C., Dett, R. N., Harper, T., Fax, M., & Moore, U. S. (2002). *The new Negro spiritual collection*. W.C. Patterson.
- Patterson, W. C., Adams, L., Adams, L., Adams, L., Adams, L., Anderson, T. J., Dett, R. N., ... Work, J. W. (2002). *The second anthology of art songs by African American composers*. W.C. Patterson.
- Peyton, N. (2020, March 6). *Africa's first elected female president to train 'wave' of women leaders*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-africa-women-politics-trfn/africas-first-elected-female-president-to-train-wave-of-women-leaders-idUSKBN20T01D>.
- Rhodes, Y. (2019, April 4). *Calvary (Arr. C. Brown) (Live)* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/kQfYLOrX_ac.
- Richardson, P. (2013, October 16). Hymnody. *Grove Music Online*. <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.ezproxy.uky.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002249813>.
- Robeson, P. (1976). *Scandalize my name*. Classics Records Library.

- Ross, A. (2020). Black scholars confront white supremacy in classical music. *The New Yorker*, September 21, 2020 issue.
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/09/21/black-scholars-confront-white-supremacy-in-classical-music>.
- Simpson, E. T. (2018). *The Hall Johnson concert spirituals: An annotated guide to interpretation and performance*. Infinity Publishing.
- Simpson, M., & Simpson-Curenton, E. (2015). *Three Spirituals for flute and piano*. Theodore Presser Company.
- Simpson, M., & Simpson-Curenton, E. (2017, April 4). Calvary [song]. Soundcloud.
<https://soundcloud.com/tyonce-3/calvary-arr-marietta-simpson-and-evelyn-simpson-curenton>.
- Simpson-Curenton, E. (2014). *Go tell it on the mountain* (Ser. African American Choral Music Series). GIA Publications, Inc.
- Simpson-Curenton, E. (2012). *In Christ* (Ser. African American Church Music Series). GIA Publications, Inc.
- Simpson-Curenton, E. (2006). *African American Music for the Classical Singer: Spirituals and Hymns* (Vol. 1). [Album]. E. C. Curenton.
- Simpson-Curenton, E. (2004). *Lord, how come me here?* [Song]. *The Spirituals Database*. <http://spirituals-database.com/omeka/items/show/6005>.
- Simpson-Curenton, E. (2001). *Amazing Grace* (Ser. African American Church Music Series). GIA Publication, Inc.
- Simpson-Curenton, E., Cuddy, K., & East, R. (2000). *Do you believe/ certainly Lord*. GIA.
- Southern, E. (1983). *The music of Black Americans: A history*, 2nd ed. Norton & Company
- Stevens, D. (1960). A history of song. In *A history of song*. W.W. Norton, p. 260.
- Strauss, R. (1898). *Vier letzte Lieder*. EMI.
- Quakers (Society of Friends): The Abolition of Slavery Project. (n.d.).
http://abolition.e2bn.org/people_21.html.
- Taylor, J. (2019, June 27). History of Hymns: They'll know we are Christians by our love. Discipleship Ministries. <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/history-of-hymns-theyll-know-we-are-christians-by-our-love>.
- Terry, M. T. (2000). *African-American organ music anthology*. MorningStar Music Publishers of St. Louis.
- Turina, J. (1951). *Poema en forma de canciones, Op. 19*. Uniòn Musical Española. doi:https://ks.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/3/3f/IMSLP113267-PMLP231180-Poema_en_forma_de_canciones.pdf.
- Turina, J. (2011). *Poema en forma de canciones*. On Josquin Turina Songs [CD]. Naxos.
- Vysotsky, S. (2021, January 14). *What – or who – is antifa?* The Conversation.
<https://theconversation.com/what-or-who-is-antifa-140147>.
- Walker-Hill, H. (2007). *From Spirituals to symphonies: African-American women composers and their music*. University of Chicago Press.
- White, D., Simmons, M. R., & Wagner, J. (2004). *That black reef*. Southern Illinois University Press.
- White, D., Simmons, M. R., & Wagner, J. (2004). *Velvet shoes: Soprano or tenor*. Southern Illinois University Press.

- Wikipedia contributors. (2021, January 31). Up Above My Head. In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 00:22, May 11, 2021, from https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Up_Above_My_Head&oldid=1004003100.
- Wikipedia contributors. (2021, April 28). His eye is on the sparrow. In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved May 6, 2021, from https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=His_Eye_Is_on_the_Sparrow&oldid=1020280074.
- Wikipedia contributors. (2021, January 21). They'll know we are Christians. In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved April 9, 2021, from https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=They%27ll_Know_We_Are_Christians&oldid=1001802114.
- Wikipedia contributors. (2020, April 12). Cynthia Biggs. In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved May 9, 2021, from https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cynthia_Biggs&oldid=950516904.
- Williams, N. E. (2001). *African American heritage hymnal*. R. J. Batastini & D. Carpenter, Eds. GIA Publications.
- William Grant Still. Retrieved May 27, 2021, from <https://artsongalliance.org/composers/william-grant-still>

Vita

Iris E. Fordjour-Hankins

Born: Pontiac, Michigan

Education

- *DMA Voice Performance*, (expected) 2021
University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY
- *M.A. Music Education*, 2008
Boston University, Detroit, MI
- *Teacher Certification, JX, K-12 endorsement*, 1994
Wayne State University, Detroit, MI
- *B.A. Music Performance (Piano)*, 1991
Oakwood University, Huntsville, AL

Voice and Teaching Achievements

- Teacher of the Year, Valley Conservatory, 2021
- Alltech Vocal Scholarship Second Place Winner, 2013
- Music Teacher of the Year Nomination, 2005, 2006, 2010

Teaching Experiences

Oakwood University, July 2016 - Present

- *Associate Professor of Voice*

Valley Conservatory, July 2017 - Present

- *Voice Teacher*

Ars Nova School of the Arts, July 2018-2021

- *Voice Teacher*
- *Associate Professor of Voice*

University of Kentucky, September 2013-2015

- *Graduate Teaching Assistant*

Detroit Public School Music Education, Pre-K-12, 1994-2011

- *Vocal Music Teacher* -

Minister of Music, Burns Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Detroit, MI, 01/1999-06/20`32011

Solo Performance Highlights

- Opera Huntsville Juneteenth Celebration “I Am Moses the Liberator” (Okoye) Huntsville, AL 2021
- Lecture Recital, Lexington, KY 2021
- Chamber Recital, Huntsville, AL 2021
- “Ariadne” in Strauss’ *Ariadne of Naxos*, Huntsville, AL 2019
- Solo Recital, Moulton, AL 2018
- Solo Recital, Kingston, Jamaica 2017
- Favored Soprano of arranger, Dr. Andrew Marshall
- Amahl and the Night Visitors (Mother), Lexington KY, 2015
- Alltech 20th-Year Celebration, Beijing, China, 2014
- Messiah, Shiloh Baptist Church, Washington, D.C., 2014 & 2015
- William T. Cunningham Memorial Choir National Tour, 2012 & 2013
- Mozart Requiem K. 626, Cross of Christ Lutheran Church, Bloomfield Hills, MI 2013
- Fountain of Beauty (première), Assumption Grotto Catholic Church, Detroit, MI, 2013