

ARCHIVE
EDITION

Lyric Suite

*a Collection of Spirituals
in Gospel Style*

Robert L. Morris



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Lyric Suite
a Collection of Spirituals
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by Robert L. Morris

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Foreword

The spiritual, as magnificent a heritage that any culture can claim, is to the African-American musician as the chorale is to Lutherans. The world came to know this body of music from the singing of the Jubilee Singers of Fisk University, a story superbly recounted by Andrew Ward in "Dark Midnight When I Rise" (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2000). It served as the basis for the piano elaborations of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor in the first days of the last century, at a time when most Black Americans rejected these "slave songs", looking toward a brighter future without that reminder.

In the second decade of this century, Harry T. Burleigh began setting the tunes, idealized as art songs, thus providing the vocal talents of the Harlem Renaissance—Marian Anderson, Roland Hayes, Paul Robeson—with ethnic repertoire for their recitals. Burleigh had been encouraged in this direction by his contact with Antonin Dvorak. The Czech master, resident in the 1890's at New York's National Conservatory of Music, knew that a national music must have national roots. From relatively raw materials, Schubert "elevated" the waltz, Chopin the *mazurka*, Dvorak the *furiant*. When it became evident to Americans that Dvorak had reference to the spirituals he admired so much from Burleigh's singing, few accepted his suggestion. These were, after all, melodies of a race deemed inferior at the time.

Perhaps it is that tradition, born in racism, that so often inescapably accepts the creation, but not the creator. Does that explain why the authorship of these settings is ignored, attributed to "traditional," or identified merely as an arrangement? Anyone who has examined the settings by John Work, William Dawson, Hall Johnson, Sir Michael Tippett, Charles Lloyd, or any of the many others who paid homage to this legacy, will know the extent of originality provided by the "arranger," an identification never given Bach's chorale preludes.

Dr. Morris has provided settings for five of these melodies, endowing each with his own highly sophisticated and idealized approach, joyously celebrating African-American musical culture. A literal performance, exactly as written, always seems to be improvised. After one presentation, a member of the audience came to me and asked how that Anglo pianist had possibly managed to learn gospel playing! I assured him that she had merely played what Dr. Morris had written.

Pictorialism is obvious in the first movement, with crisp handfuls of seventh chords delivered in additive rhythms. Slow blues is the environment of the second of the set, and how wonderful it is when the piano makes its entrance! The humor of the Black culture is represented in both the text and setting of the third song (and it should be mentioned that the culture is certainly filled with humor, but to regard its artifacts as only entertainment is a very shallow comprehension). The harmony used in the fourth movement of the suite renews the blues and the color enrichments variantly offered previously. The finale is cast as a "Juba", a traditional folk dance involving hand clapping and foot stomping, already known from the last movement of R. Nathaniel Dett's celebrated piano suite "In the Bottoms."

Now that "Lyric Suite" is at last available to the public, the repertoire has been augmented, and most splendidly so. Performers are urged to schedule it at the very end of recitals. It will be difficult to follow this with anything else.

Dominique-René DeLerma
Lawrence University

Notes From the Composer

Carolyn Smith-Meyer, a young, aspiring concert/operatic soprano, asked me to set a group of spirituals for a soon to be realized Scandinavian tour. Her one caveat was that the settings must not sound like Brahms.

There were many significant musical influences in my life while growing and working in Chicago in the late 1950's through the mid 1960's. Of particular importance were: 1) a growing knowledge of Margaret Bonds through her then recently heard and performed cantata, "The Ballad of the Brown King." 2) the chance to arrange choral music for Duke Ellington while "The Duke" was in Chicago working with a choir directed by Irving Bunton. And 3) I was especially inspired as I watched and learned from the imaginative young Alvin Ailey. These influences helped me set this work as a compendium of styles and genres heard during my formative years.

Here, in movement I, will be heard the "Dramatic Declamation" of the minister who takes a small amount of material and creates a wondrous, verbal structure by sheer delivery alone. In movement II—"Gospel Blues"—is the always and ever present blues influence heard in classic era Gospel music (1930-1960). Movement III—"Humoresque"—lifts up the humor, which balances the soul of people who live daily between depression and elation and gives them the ability to take a comic view of situations that could in reality be devastating. Movement IV—"Lament"—is the engaging and novel mixing of modes that gives a parting song a poignancy that makes it unforgettable. And the final movement V—"Juba"—is the sheer jubilation of the soul being wafted upward when enraptured by the spirit.

I completed the "Lyric Suite" while at Indiana University. The first complete performance was by Diane Lynch with the composer at the piano. The most well known initial performance was by Ruby Jones during the conference performances of the Black Music Committee at Indiana University in Bloomington.

Since its first hearings, this work has been heard on concerts and recitals nationally and internationally. This published edition obsoletes by final corrections all manuscript versions.

I am very pleased and proud to make this work available and hope that even more singers will explore and perform it.

Dr. Robert L. Morris

Robert L. Morris, conductor/ composer, is a native of Chicago, Illinois. He received training and degrees from DePaul University (Chicago, IL), Indiana University (Bloomington, IN) where he studied with the late Julius Hereford, and The University of Iowa (Iowa City). Before becoming the Director of choral activities at Macalester College, Morris directed the choral programs at Hampton University (VA), Winston-Salem State University (NC), and Jackson State University (MS). In each of these positions, his choirs received auditioned or honor invitations to the state, regional, and national conferences of the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA).

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I. Dramatic Declamation

Robert L. Morris

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 54$

Voice

Slowly, tempo ad libitum

Brisk, steady $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 54$

Piano

p

f

8^{va}

8^{vb}

5

f

O Ma - ry! O Mar - tha! O Ma - ry! Ring dem bells!

sharp, bell-like throughout

8^{va}

8^{vb}

9

O Ma - ry! O Mar - tha! O Ma - ry!

8^{va}

8^{vb}

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darkly, dramatically

mp

12

Ring dem bells! O Ma - ry!

15

O Mar - tha! O - Ma - ry!

19

O Mar - tha! I hear arch - an - gels a -

22

rock - in' Je - ru - la - lem, I hear arch - an - gels a - ring - in' dem bells!

p

I hear arch - an - gels a -

p *f* *p* *mp*

8vb

28

rock-in' Je - ru - sa - lem, I hear arch - an - gels a - ring-in' dem bells! I

mp *f* *mp* *f*

Insistently

8vb ...1 8vb 8vb

31

mp cresc.

hear arch - an - gels a - rock-in' Je - ru - sa - lem, I hear arch - an - gels a -

p cresc.

8vb ...1 8vb 8vb 8vb

34

f

ring - in' dem bells! Mm -

f *p* *f*

8vb

37 *mp* *p*
 List - en to the Lamb! _ Rock-in' Je - ru - sa - lem!

40 *mf* *f* *mp*
 List-en to the Lamb! _ Ring-in' dem bells! List - en to the Lamb! _

43 *p* *mf* *p*
 Rock-in' Je - ru - sa - lem! List-en to the Lamb! _ Ring-in' dem bells!

46 *pp*
 O Ma - ry! O Mar - tha!

II. Gospel Blues

Robert L. Morris

ad libitum

Voice

I'm so glad that trou-ble doan' las' al - ways! I'm so

Piano

6

glad that trou-ble doan' las' al - ways! (Lord!) I'm so glad,

11

trou-ble doan' las' al - ways! O my Lord, O my Lord! What shall I

24

What will you do when death comes creep-in' in your room? _____

LH LH LH LH

28

Oh _____ What _____ will you do, when

RH RH

3

31

death comes creep - in' in your room? O my

3 3

33

Lord, O my Lord! What shall I do?

36

simile

38

pp *cresc.* *f*

I'm so glad, I got my religion in time!

III. Humoresque

Robert L. Morris

as if telling a story

♩ = c. 80-84

Voice

Piano

f

Oh, I

5 *mf*

met my bro-ther the o-ther day _ he took me by the hand, but jes' as

mf

9 *cresc.* *mf*

soon as ev-er'n my back was turn'd _ he scan-a - da-liz' _ my name! Do you

mf

8vb

13 *p* with biting anger

call that re-li-gion? No! No! _ 'Call that re-li-gion? No!

f *p* *pp*

8vb

17

No! No! _ 'Call that re - li - gion?

f

8vb

19 *almost spoken*

No! No! He scan - a - da - liz' _ my

8vb

22

name!

f *decesc.* *p*

'Met my sis-ter the o-ther day, _ she took me by the hand, But jes' as

soon as ev-er'n my back was turn'd, _ she scan-a - da-liz' _ my

name! Do you call that re-li-gion? No! No! _ 'Call that re-li-gion?

No! No! _ 'Call that re - li - gion? No! No! she

IV. Lament

Traditional

Robert L. Morris

Very slowly *p*

Voice

Oh, — this may be my last time.

Very slowly *pp*

Piano

8vb

5

This may be my las' time, chil - drun, This may be my las' time _

9

p

May be my las' time, I doan' know! _____

8vb

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12

Oh, — this may be my last time. — This may be my

8^{va}

16

las' time, chil - drun,' — This may be my las' time — May be my las' time,

8^{va}

20

I doan' know! — I went in the val-ley an' I did-n' go to stay,

8^{va}

f

23 *mp* *f*

May be my las' time _____ My

25

soul got so hap - py, I stay'd all day! _____

f *p*

28 *p*

I doan' know _____ Ef - 'n this may be my

p

30

last time. _____ This may be my las' time, chil - drun, _____

V. Juba: Ev'rytime I Feel the Spirit!

Robert L. Morris

♩ = 108

Piano

f

3 Ev - 'ry

5 time I _____ feel th' spir - it _____ mov - ing

7 in - a my heart, I will pray! Ev - 'ry -

The image shows a musical score for a piano accompaniment. It consists of four systems of music. The first system is the beginning, with a tempo marking of quarter note = 108. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The piano part features a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and moving lines in both hands. The second system starts at measure 3 and includes the vocal line 'Ev - 'ry'. The third system starts at measure 5 and includes the vocal line 'time I _____ feel th' spir - it _____ mov - ing'. The fourth system starts at measure 7 and includes the vocal line 'in - a my heart, I will pray! Ev - 'ry -'. A large orange watermark 'SAMPLE' is overlaid diagonally across the entire page.

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9

time I _____ feel th' spir - it _____ mov - ing

11

in - a my heart, I will pray!

13

mf
Up - on th' moun - tun my Lord

15

spoke From His mouth came fi - yu an'

17 *p*
smoke! Jer - don riv - er, _____ chil - ly and

19
cold Chill th' bod - y, but not the

21
soul! Oh, Ev - 'ry -

24
time I _____ feel th' spir - it _____ mov - ing

26

in - a my heart, I will pray! ev - 'ry -

28

time I _____ feel th' spir - it _____ mov - ing

30

in - a my heart, I will pray! Look'd all a -

33

round me, _____ Look'd so fine Ask'd my