

SPIRITUALS
A MULTIDISCIPLINARY BIBLIOGRAPHY
FOR RESEARCH AND PERFORMANCE

by

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Co-published by

 **Music Library Association**

and

 **A-R Editions, Inc.**
Middleton, Wisconsin

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PREFACE

SCOPE

Hall Johnson, arranger of numerous spirituals and a luminary on the repertoire, once told a singer, “Put down the paper. The slaves who originally sang these songs certainly didn’t have any.”¹ Nonetheless, bibliographies, published on paper, have facilitated access to this repertoire and served as vehicles for its preservation and stewardship, and I am in service of the spirituals, their creators, and those who write about them. This book is intended as a guide to writings about spirituals for performers, researchers, teachers, and Christian educators in the areas of music, literature, religion and African American history. I have tried to satisfy the needs of all who study spirituals, from many diverse perspectives. In an effort to standardize language, “African American” and “European American” are used throughout the abstracts instead of “black,” “white,” or other variants of these terms. I have not changed the language or punctuation in titles, but I have revised and occasionally abridged authors’ abstracts.

Eileen Southern’s and Josephine Wright’s *African-American Traditions in Song, Sermon, Tale, and Dance, 1600s–1920*² provides annotations to early sources on African American artistic culture. My work continues the chronology of their work. For the most part, this book contains citations to books, dissertations, and articles in journals and books. The scope is limited to English-language sources published primarily in the United States that focus on African American spirituals in the United States, but there are some exceptions. I have included a few items published prior to 1920 as well as a small handful of items published outside the United States. Like most information and research guides, this one is selective and incomplete. The last items were entered in January 2014.

Chapter 13 lists the sources I consulted in compiling the bibliography. Additionally, I mined the bibliographies of items being added to the database. I have been fortunate in having in hand, or in digital format, nearly every item included, but some items that I thought were potentially very important were unavailable for review. Those items are listed in chapter 12. This bibliography was compiled using EndNote.

¹ Quoted in Charles Hobson, “Hall Johnson: Preserver of Negro Spirituals,” *Crisis* 73, no. 9 (1966): 482. (See item 537 below.)

² Eileen Southern and Josephine Wright, *African-American Traditions in Song, Sermon, Tale, and Dance, 1600s–1920: An Annotated Bibliography of Literature, Collections, and Artworks* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990). (See item 12 below.)

ORGANIZATION

The book is divided into thirteen chapters, arranged by broad subject. Chapter 1 contains reference works, such as bibliographies, dictionaries, and encyclopedias. Chapter 2 covers traditional spirituals, religion, and culture. Chapter 3 consists of historical studies and surveys. Chapter 4 offers information on how spirituals are used in other types of music, including art music, church music, and popular song. Chapter 5 covers composers who use spirituals in their music. Chapter 6 discusses the work of those who perform spirituals, including college and university groups as well as individual performers. Geographical studies, ranging from single-state studies to cross-cultural surveys, are covered in Chapter 7. Chapter 8 is about the exegesis or the meaning of the spirituals, Christian education, Bible studies, and liberation theology. Chapter 9 concerns the use and influence of spirituals in literature, political discourse, and the Harlem Renaissance. Chapter 10 is primarily on the pedagogical use of spirituals. This covers teaching in the broad sense: voice instructors teaching spirituals in the studio, and teachers teaching children about spirituals in the classroom. Issues of dialect and performance practice are also included in this chapter. Chapter 11 lists anthologies of spirituals that contain both historical information on the spirituals and the music itself. Chapter 12 is a brief listing of items not available for review. Chapter 13 lists the indexes used in researching this book. Some ideas and concepts flow across a variety of chapters, and this is reflected in the subject index.

Following the body of the book is an appendix of scriptural references, compiled by T. L. Collins, that allows searching from scripture to spiritual title and vice versa. In some cases, multiple references are listed for an individual song.

There are four indexes, by author, title, spiritual title, and subject. The spiritual title index includes references to specific spirituals in the writings (chapters 1–10) as well as in the anthologies of spirituals that contain historical information (chapter 11). Because spiritual titles can appear under various spellings and wordings, the spiritual title index uses the form of title established in my book, *An Index to African American Spirituals for the Solo Voice*.³ As one might expect, with songs that originate in an oral tradition there are considerable inconsistencies in the identification of some spirituals. For example, “Down by the Riverside” frequently has the first line of text, “We’ll wait ‘til Jesus comes” but is also known by the text, “When Jesus the Lord was here below.” As a result, the user may need to search under multiple forms in order to complete a comprehensive search for information on a title.

Compiling this book required widely diverse skill sets. Given the book’s interdisciplinary nature—covering the disciplines of African American studies, music, American history, religion, and American literature, and requiring bibliographic management skills—I acknowledge that my skills are not equally strong across all those areas. I see this as a collective endeavor, with this

³ Kathleen A. Abromeit, *An Index to African-American Spirituals for the Solo Voice* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1999). (See item 26 below.)