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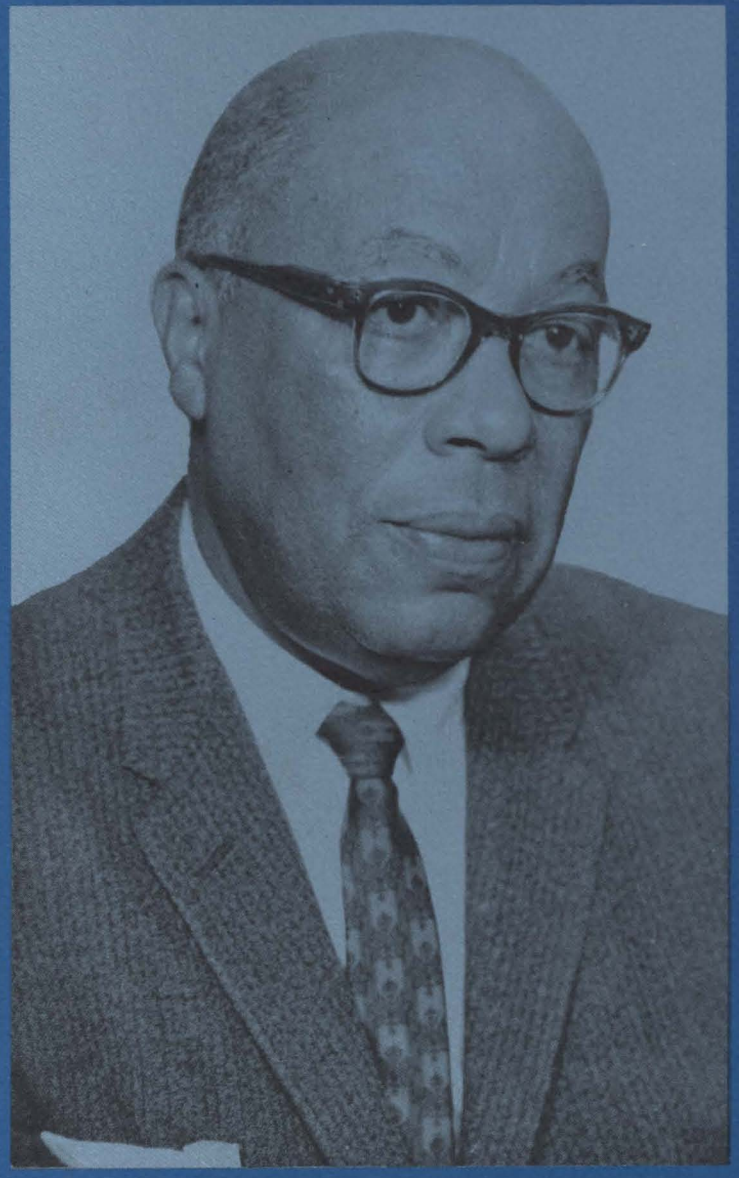
# AFRO-AMERICAN MUSIC A DEMONSTRATION RECORDING BY DR. WILLIS JAMES



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# AFRO-AMERICAN MUSIC

## A DEMONSTRATION RECORDING BY DR. WILLIS JAMES



RETURN TO ARCHIVE

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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# AFRO-AMERICAN MUSIC

by Dr. Willis James

SIDE I, Band 1

Negroes in America, U.S.A., came from the west coast of Africa, for the most part from a point south of the Sahara Desert and on to the Point, and inland about 150 miles, and in some cases not quite that far. But they had a great deal of cultural similarity, and they had also the opportunity to grow closer together as they functioned in America as slaves for awhile. I'm saying this to begin with because I want to let this set the stage for the next consideration, which is a word or two about the culture of these people in terms of music.

SIDE I, Band 2

The people who were brought here evidently were highly endowned musically, because we have reaped the benefits of that endowment in no small measure. But I would not say that they were exceptions to what was commonplace and what is commonplace in Africa to a large extent today. The African believes in rhythm as a musical entity, whereas in the Western culture, musicians use rhythm as an adjunct of melody, as an organizational force. But the African not only does this, but he uses rhythm as a complete aesthetic expression. For instance, in Africa we have several different types of drums which are capable in some cases of speech, and in some cases which bear peculiar hypnotic influences, and in some cases which we could say are particularly stimulating for dance, and in some cases where the drum is used almost with occult impact and high medicinal qualifications. The African is perhaps the world's greatest drummer. He has within him a kind of rhythmical feeling, which some say is innate and some say is acquired. This we will not argue. It is sufficient for our purpose to note that he has it, and that he uses it in a very singular way. The African drum is a very highly appreciated and in some cases almost worshiped musical instrument.

SIDE I, Band 3

In many cases the drums are named for the members of the family. The Nigerians have drums in a series. These names represent in some cases the father, the mother, the children, and in some cases onomatopoetic references, that is the drum sounds exactly like the name. Let me give you an instance. The Kerrikerri drum goes this way: The Tenanga goes: There's another one which I could combine with singing, and I'm going to improvise a drum here and sing the "Shongo," which is one of the great songs of African culture. It goes this way:

SIDE I, Band 4

These drums, having different sounds, are played in different rhythms, and these rhythms have what is known as periodicity. They are not played according to 1, 2, 3, 4 or any Western meter. They are played according to a certain rhythmic impulse which the African feels and which he employs and remembers and cultivates and combines, one with the other. For instance, I said to an African one day that the African played drums one on top of the other. He was horrified; "no, we don't, no, we don't." What I really meant was that he played his rhythms in different strata. That is, he had one rhythm which sounded to me as if it were a complex, a syncopated complex of three, and then he had another rhythm which seemed to me to be a syncopated complex of four, and then another one which was to me related to five. With these going on with independence, changing one from another, they built up a kind of rhythm that's heard nowhere else in the world. It is highly stimulating, it is highly complex, and it is at all times so used and so demonstrated that it becomes more intense the longer it goes. Whether this is due to the action of the players or whether this is due to the fascination of the listener, is hard for me to say. But this is what really happens, so much so that it's not uncommon to see people become possessed by this type of rhythm so that they sometimes fall prone and become absolutely insensible to their surroundings, or sometimes they fall down on the ground and become serpentine, or simply begin to speak and converse seemingly with unknown spirits. I've been told that very often some of them can suffer to have sharp instruments stuck in their bodies without wincing or giving any evidence of feeling pain whatsoever.

SIDE I, Band 5

The drums were brought to this country by Africans more in their minds and in their creative skills brought in any physical sense, because as I have described previously, it was impossible for them to bring anything but themselves. It is significant that they needed these drums so much that they recreated them when they arrived, and it is also significant that although the Africans that were brought here were perhaps brought on a rather indiscriminate basis, they were able to recreate the drums and were able also to recreate the skills which went into playing these drums, which goes to show that the idea of drum making and drum playing was rather widespread and was of great importance in Africa. The interesting thing is that as soon as they were able to do so, they did this very thing. They made the drums, and then they began to organize these cults around the drums, and they began to have the dances which were a part of the cults. Of course this was very strange and in many cases intimidating to the white man, so that he outlawed the drums, he forbade the use of the drums. But strangely enough, he could not destroy the great desire and impulse which these Africans had for playing drums. What happened was this. They transfered the drum playing to their hands and feet. I didn't realize this myself as a student and researcher for any number of years, until it came upon me suddenly. I was visiting a certain church, a holiness church, and I was fascinated by the different types of rhythms which I heard in the church. I had more or less heard them before and I had somewhat taken them for granted. But I began to listen and look about me, and I saw and I heard these different rhythms performed. Later, I had the opportunity of meeting a very interesting and highly musical woman in the Sea Islands. I met her rather recently at one of the Newport festivals. Her name is Miss Elizabeth Jones. Her group was using their hands and feet in this manner, but I noticed they were also getting very unusual sounds from their hands. I talked to her about this, and I watched the performers, and I found they were doing this. They were using their fingers for one tone quality which could be representative of a small drum, and then they were bringing these fingers down over the palm of the hand for another sound which you recognize as a larger and deeper drum. For the third effect, their hands were slightly cupped and clapped this way. They were using these in very fascinating order, and also using their feet in different rhythms. I said, well, there it is. There is African rhythm, which has never died, and there are the drums, which have never quite disappeared.

Let us go back a bit, to this drumming. The Africans who beat drums professionally do so for a livelihood, and they have high status in the African culture. They pass this skill on only, as I am told, to people who have great promise of maintaining the high caliber of performance that is needed on these drums. These drums also are kept from generation to generation and are in many cases enshrined, that is, a certain drum may have a relationship to a particular and special event, and it is hung up as a monument, as it were, and only certain gifted Africans may be permitted to have the honor of playing on this particular drum. This goes to show that the drum in this country was banned, but the effect for which it was used never died.

This question arises: why is it that the drum, after Negroes were liberated, never revived? If you go to Cuba you find African drums, if you go to Haiti you find African drums, if you go to Brazil you find African drums, but not in this country do you find any African drums or African drum types. We don't make those drums. Negroes in this country have not revived, never have revived, African drumming. But they never permitted the African rhythms

which were played on the drums to die. My feeling is that the punishment for playing African drums was so severe that it went neglected so long that perhaps the skill was lost, but the African rhythms survived. This demonstrates that the making of a drum certainly was not an instinctive process, but the use of the rhythms on the drums is something we will have to consider as being possibly an innate thing. I know there are many people who will say that that is not true, that African rhythms are learned like anything else. That may be true, but the evidence here is that the thing that was perpetuated out of circumstance, and the thing that was held and has been used consistently since, has been the rhythm and not the African drum in this country. It has been done so effectively that this African rhythm has effected almost all of the modern musical expression in this country. You can begin with old Negro spirituals and work songs and the shouts and so forth, and then you may go to the ragtime and jazz, and then you may bring it as far as modern jazz.

SIDE I, Band 6

That brings me to something else which is of a remarkable nature, that is, the new language which Negroes evolved in this country. How this came about is not for me to say. I really am not aware of all the things that went into it, when you consider how mixed many of the languages were among the slaves, and when you consider how these things were constantly shifting because slaves were sold from one plantation to another, and what was rather stabilized in this particular generation or in this particular year, was lost entirely when there was a big shake-up due to the fact that some more articulate or more powerful or more expressive personalities were taken away, sold to another plantation. But, if one wishes to be informed about the affect of language on Negro music and song, one needs to take just a few instances of songs themselves. But before we do that, let us take a few words. Let us take the word, for instance, "going," out of the European system, and see what has happened when Negroes finished with it. Take "I'm going to go," and let it run through the different variations. "I'm gon' go," etc. etc. (spoken) You hear all of those spoken by Negroes in the South in different areas, and sometimes many of them in the same area. You find a word like "here" commonly reduced to a single sound, but let me give you a few of the ways you hear it spoken among Negroes:
There are four different sounds of the word "here." You can see clearly that when you take all these different sounds which are not found in any language and blend them together, you have to say that you get a new one. It's more than dialect.

SIDE I, Band 7

Now how does this business affect the songs which Negroes made in this country? It enriched the tone quality, it enriched the dynamics, because it caused stresses to fall in places where stresses had not fallen before. Because of this, you have the singular rhythmic quality in Afro-American song that is so admirable and which is so compulsive. For instance, what would happen if you take a song like "I Ain't Gonna Study War No Mo'," which is familiar to you, and change it to "I'm Not Going To Study War No More"? You see, it has become ridiculous, the vitality has gone, and in fact the song itself half disappeared. That is something which is true throughout genuine Afro-American music, and yet I know many people today who are composers of music, African music or American music, who say that the dialect should be taken out of it, and when they get through with it the dialect has disappeared. One of our great writers, James Weldon Johnson, said that dialect has only two stops: pathos and humor. I have to differ with Mr. Johnson because of what I said previously. I think that if you will look at it in these dimensions you will see that it would be impossible to have Afro-American music as it exists today without the fact of the new language which Negroes brought to it, which cultivated a new type of dynamics in song, a new type of voice power, and by all means, a singularity in figure of speech which makes Negro music what it is.

SIDE I, Band 8

Now I want to go back again and say a word or two about the rhythm and bring these two together, the word and the rhythm. Whereas the African maintained the African rhythms by the use of his hands and feet, he was confronted with a new proposition when he had to use a new language, based on what he found here and what he brought and what he understood from it, what he made out of the two. In doing this, he did something which I think is not altogether unique because you do find it in cases of some Scotch music and some Irish music; but the way the Negro did it, I think, was a little bit more dynamic and a little bit more, shall we say, piquant. He would add syllables in order to carry out certain feelings which he had within himself but did not exist within the language which he was using at the moment. So you have him taking a world like "hallelujah" and leaving off the "hallelu hallelu hallelu." If he said "hallelujah" it brought him to a point of rest, but as long as he said "hallelu hallelu hallelu," it kept him in motivation and so he would simply take off the last syllable. Or sometimes he would throw in a syllable which did not exist. "I ain't a-gonna." "I got to crowd up in that kingdom". "I got to crowd up into that kingdom." "Ainta-thata good news," quite different from saying "Ain't that good news," which gives it a kind of spice and movement which the language did not itself provide. Now these are simply suggestions which can be amplified by the interests of the listener. If he cares to follow this through it is possible to find many instances of this type of thing, showing that the African used what he had and what he found and what he made out of these two to create new and different types of music.

SIDE II, Band 1

I would like now to go into a melodic phase. There again let us refer to what I said before in terms of African origins. As you remember, I laid a premise based on West Africa and when I want to make comparisons and have illustrations, I won't hesitate to go back and come forward again. I hope you understand why I've done this, going back and forth, that is, to try to keep unity between what was and what did happen.

The Western African speaks with a high type of resonance. He speaks more to the front of his mouth and when he sings he sings that way. His voice is beautiful, but it's not as opulent as the Western voice, and I very frequently have found that African students who come to us find a difficulty getting adjusted to the sounds which they hear the students making in song. They frequently tell me it's too loud, and they frequently tell me, "We don't sing that way at home." They say, "We sing this way," and they begin to use this high powerful resonance. You hear it when they talk. They say, "How do you do today?" whereas the Negro who has been in America in the South has by practice and by necessity let his voice go back, so he speaks more with a relaxed and more resonant sound. Consequently, he sings that way, because the way one speaks, one finally sings. The Appalachian man talks with a high nasality and when he sings, he sings that way. He will pronounce a word like "na" for "now," and the Afro-American will sing "now," and he will soften this up by not sticking his tongue out of his mouth. He doesn't like the idea of having to say "this" and "that" and "those" and "them". He simply uses his resonator and his articulator as best he can in terms of resonance and convenience. To him what is perhaps more melodious is not saying it is so to those of us who are, shall I say, erudite. To him it is much plainer and much better when he says "them" and "this." When you look at a person saying those two things, you will find there's a great practicality in that. I'm not advocating that we return or encourage our students in the use of what we call incorrect English. I'm saying this by way of explanation and analysis; I'm not being suggestive here. But the thing that I am concerned with is the knowing of why Negro music has the peculiar kind of resonance and warmth and rhythm and flowing continuity which it has, because Negro music took all the bumps and all the rocks, you might say, out of it, which they found in the European stage and reduced it to that which is mellow and beautiful. If you look in other languages -- you look in the German language -- you'll find that the Germans will say "the" and "them" and "this" in their legitimate language. The sound itself is not bad, it's only incorrect in relationship to the certain speech mores which they have.

SIDE II, Band 2

Now these songs that Negroes made in this country are in many different divisions. I'm going to start out with the simplest of sounds which one makes in song, and that is the cry. When a baby cries, literally the baby is singing. He's inarticulate, he doesn't have a well-developed tune, but he's prolonging his vocal sounds, he's giving them cadence, he's giving them color, and he certainly is very often giving dynamics. We realize that this in itself is not speech, but it has the qualities of melody in it, but not the qualities of speech, which would be of course the use of actual words contained within the melodic flow. But the fact that the cry itself arises from a baby is of great importance to us, because it shows that the emotions of the person and sounds which the emotions bring forth are really one. That is really the reason, I suppose, that a baby is not really alive

until it cries. Therefore, the cry is life itself, and it remains that way until one is dead. If one uses his voice, and uses his voice without guile, he will always demonstrate his most basic feelings and his most honest emotions.

If you don't believe that, let a man who is perhaps slipping into a house at night and does not want to be announced or discovered, then suddenly step on a tack, and he will become honest before he realizes it. He will say, "Here I am" in no uncertain terms. Or, if we're all sitting in a room and someone yells, "Fire," we at this moment have no guarantee how we will behave, but one thing is certain: most of the people present will make sounds. What the sounds will be will spring up out of the unrehearsed emotions. Anger in a dog or a cat will manifest itself instantly in the sound of a voice.

Without prolonging this, I would like to say that the cry as it exists in human beings, whether it is a laugh which is a cry or whether it is a plaintive sound which people make all alone or whether it is the exultation one hears at a football game or baseball game or parade, is perhaps the most honest vocal expression which we are capable of, and it can be relied upon in many cases where speech cannot be, because sometimes speech is contrived but a spontaneous cry is never forced; it is always expressive of what is there in the individual at the moment which caused its existence.

This cry is what the Negroes in the South have made famous for many years but have not, perhaps, been noted for it in the truest sense. In order to appreciate this, one only has to go into one of the rural areas and spend the night and hear some of the sounds from people who are walking long distances, which caused them to be perhaps nostalgic; or listen to some of the more gifted vendors on the street and hear what they say in terms of what they're selling. Listen to a football game if you've been in the South played by Negro teams and supported by Negro student bodies. I was a bandmaster for many years during my college teaching, and I was always fascinated as I stood in front of the band down front and watched the student body cheering, yelling, or crying -- as you wish to call it. I would contrast this with what happened at some of the radio games that I witnessed by sitting in my livingroom on some Saturdays and hearing some of the Big Ten or Little Threes (or whatever they happened to be) play games. It was most fascinating to me to hear the preciseness with which they would cheer or yell quite spontaneously. It was always rather matter-of-fact, you know. They would say "Hip hip hip hooray, ha, ha, ha." But my students didn't quite settle for that. They had much more warmth, they would sort of have this sort of thing: See, I'm not using names now because I don't want to involve institutions, but they would call the name of a school, for instance, and begin to rock on the stands back and forth, and chant that, and the cheerleaders would take it up, and then the bass drummer, without any suggestion from me, would begin to beat a counter-rhythm against it. Then some of the boys in the band would lift up their horns and begin to play certain kinds of sounds which I had not taught them, but which were entirely appropriate. It made a very spontaneous musical creation there which was very different and which was very stimulating to anybody who heard it, and I think it has gone unnoticed and unnoted, but it's a very, to me, important thing, because it shows that even in the most unrelated situations, Negroes have used this kind of creativity. I remember too a certain sergeant who used to have a group of soldiers in charge at Atlanta University during World War Two, and I used to like to hear him drill them. The lieutenant used to drill them once in awhile, but this particular sergeant always fascinated me because he could bring to his commands a kind of musical expression and rhythmic quality that you didn't hear elsewhere. He would always say "At-ten-tu-ion, for-ward mar-ch." In that framework, you began to hear music, you began to hear a kind of expression of beauty which was a little different from "Attention! fo'ward march!" I think the men who worked under him felt the type of inspiration which perhaps could only be achieved at that point and at that time by that particular relationship.

SIDE II, Band 3

Now these cries I have found exist in about five different orders, and I have tried to put them in this order to give them a little clarity and to bring them into a better musical and useful relationship. Let us take the plain cry. By plain cry I mean to say that the song of the cry is almost entirely undecorated and that the notes and the words coincide, except perhaps in very rare instances. It is an essentially plain and undecorated musical expression.

Here's one that was very prominent on my street several years ago in Atlanta. A man used to sell Jelloco Coal, good coal it was supposed to have been. He thought it was and he sold it with great pride. The words went this way:

I got Jelly-co Coal,
I got Jelly-co Coal,
If you wanna make your biscuits higher,
Put my Jelly-co on your fire.
I got Jelly-co Coal,
I got Jelly-co Coal.
This coal come from way down in the ground,
And ain't you glad you got a man like me
bringin' it 'round,
I got coal, Jelly-co Coal.

Now it went something like this. I'm not saying I can do it exactly as he did it, but I think I can approximate it for you. /Performs cry/

In this cry, you have heard what is commonly referred to as microtones, which are sounds smaller than those which we ordinarily have in Western music, which would be whole steps and half steps. These steps sometimes run as low as one-eighth steps and they are almost entirely independent of any scale which we know. You simply hear them and feel them realizing that you have come into a relationship with some very small tone change in pitch and rhythm, but not necessarily anything which affects the general melodic movement. You have this most generally at the ends of phrases in Afro-American music and also in African music. It is perhaps this bond which brings African music and Afro-American music closest together.

I think you're beginning to hear something of what I've been trying to say in terms of language, dynamics, and coloration which goes on when you combine them with melody. Now another one is from a fishmonger that I knew in Jacksonville, Florida. In this case he uses the super-plural in all his cases. He speaks of "shrimpses" and "crabses" and "fishes." He says this, "I got shrimpses, I got crabses, I got fishes, I got all these for ya'allses." His name was Jerry Meyer. He had a fish market in Jacksonville, and he was famous for this cry and many others. I've chosen it because you see here again the type of new language. He goes this way. He starts again "I got." Now this man is in Jacksonville and the other man is in Atlanta, but both men begin their cries with "I got," which shows a certain pride and similarity. /Performs cry/ Much more spoken than the other, not quite so musical, but again where words are joined to a simple musical phrase.

SIDE II, Band 4

Now here is one that is more complex. This is a florid cry. I call it a florid cry because it moves about in melody a bit more than the other two, even more than "I got coal." "I got coal" moves somewhat, but this moves much more.

I'm goin' to Alabamy,
You all know, Lord;
For to see my mammy, Lord.
When I hit Mobile in the mornin', Lord,
Won't that time be sweet,
I'm goin' to put my money
in my ma's workin' hand,
And pretty little shoes on her feet.
I'm goin' to Alabamy,
You all know,
For to see my mammy, Lord.

Another one which is a florid cry and which is joined, like the other, to words:

Cabin boy, cabin boy,
Cabin boy, you hear me callin' you;
Cabin boy, cabin boy,
Captin' callin' . . .
Why you hidin',
'bout your business,
Workin' head of me.
Cabin boy, cabin boy,
Cabin boy, you hear me callin' you,
Cabin boy, cabin boy.

That particular song (which is more a song than a cry) I think I should tell you that I heard that in short form. I heard it this way:

Cabin boy, cabin boy,
Cabin boy.

SIDE II, Band 5

There's a one word song that comes from Georgia and it's a cry. It has a wordless prelude and a Georgia refrain, very short. But it's coloratura. /Performs cry/

SIDE II, Band 6

Now for the last one, I want to sing a coloratura cry that has no words to it at all. As you recall, I think this is the most genuine of all cries, when the cry itself is all that's done and no words are attached to it. The cry becomes the complete expression, because in that case it's not limited by text or by any assignment from man. It looms as its own being and image, and conveys to the person who hears it anything that can be conveyed by that sound, so that the listener also becomes a part of the cry in terms of creating something for himself. /Performs wordless cry/

In trying to reproduce these cries, I have desperately avoided trying to sing belcanto or give a European tone. I've tried to give the Afro-American tone quality to them, because without that they would be as you know, dead. They have to have that plaintive and almost pure emotional factor. That is, the emotions have to be turned loose, and you have to let the emotions weight the cry with the burden of meaning so that the cry will sound of itself. Now, the other way around, if you try to make the cry into a set musical sound and take the words and fit them in there as is frequently done when one sings a ballad or an operatic aria, then you get into difficulties. But I want to relate these things to this business of Western music because Western music has become the criteria for artistic meaning in our lives and in our world. So I did something here which I think you realize already. I borrowed terms from classical music, from operatic traditions, I have said "coloratura" and I used "florid," these terms which musicians use in relationship to different kinds of musical expressivity. I think you find that they fit exactly into the nature and quality of these songs which were made by untutored and unlettered and untrained Afro-Americans, which shows not only the value of the songs themselves, but more important I think demonstrates the fact that human emotional need and human honesty (in terms of expression) is again where we find it in all circumstances. I'm not making a plea for the song, because I think the songs and the cries make a plea for themselves, if anybody will listen to them.

MUSICAL EXAMPLES

SIDE III, Bands 1 and 2 Wordless Cries

SIDE III, Band 3

Hey Rufus, hey boy,
Where in the world you been, so long.
Hey buddy, hey boy,
Well, I been in the jungle,
I goin' there no more.
Well, I been in the jungle,
Ain't goin' there no more.
Hey Rufus, hey boy.

SIDE III, Band 4 Prayer Meeting

SIDE III, Band 5 "See God's Ark" -- Moving Star Hall Singers

SIDE III, Band 6

The music which you have just heard is certainly in some sense familiar to you. Even though you perhaps haven't heard it before, it must sound familiar because it is based on cries, and it draws its individuality and its general characteristics from the music of the cries and the nature of the cries. In fact, it is a cry itself, but only in song form. It is a cry which has a text. If you listen to it carefully you will find that it is a series of cries strung together based on a given idea which is expressed in the text.

SIDE III, Band 7

Now what is the blues? How did the name come into existence? There are many theories about that, none of which can be proved, but everyone knows today what the blues means, and that's the important thing. It means sadness, disappointment, disillusionment. But also, strangely enough, in many cases it also means a certain kind of painful happiness, because it has proven to be one of the most popular forms of music so it must bring some joy to the people who seek it out so diligently. I can remember seeing Negroes particularly dancing in ecstatic fashion to blues. In fact, when I was a boy the chief delight in the ballroom was a good band, a good piano player issuing out the blues for people to dance to.

The blues in many respects is akin to religious song in its devoutness. It is one of the most devout music to ever exist that you can find on earth. By that I mean it is one of the most believing musical utterances it is possible to find. Since it is based so strongly upon the cry, and since I said that the cry itself is the genesis of song, you can see that the blues indeed and the cry are almost one, and that all Negro music as you listen to it will have this feeling of the cry. I think that's due to the fact that the Negro experienced a different kind of painful existence in this country which became so powerfully a part of him that it was evidenced in everything that he did. If you listen to the old folk preachers and listen to the deacons who pray, you get a strong feeling of the blues. In fact, nearly all of the old song segments and nearly all of the old prayers which were based on great imagery of great sincerity, were fashioned first on the cry and then related in measure to the cadences of the blues. Spirituals themselves, to the much surprisement of people, also are highly influenced by blues. But, to be strictly definitive, a blues is a song of trouble or hardship which does not go into the area of religion for deliverance. It's a song which speaks of trouble but has a kind of earthly optimism about it which says that "I know the sun's gonna shine in my backdoor some day." "I've been down so long that down don't bother me." "If you don't like my peaches, don't shake my tree; stay out of my orchard, let my peaches be." "I ain't got nothin' but lots of time, but 'long as I got that, I can always get a dime."

So you see there is a kind of spritely optimism and a kind of self-sufficiency which is born with the blues. I believe that the blues perhaps are derived from people who are less religious, less spiritual, less church-going people, perhaps, rather than people who were more devout, because the person who is church-centered would say, "I believe that the Lord is goin' give me a better day. I believe that there is a better time coming for me which is termed 'salvation.'" Or the song says, "When I get up in heaven I'm goin' sing and shout and nobody can turn me out." Or, "There ain't no grave can hold ma body down, on the day when the first trumpet sound I know I'm gonna get up outta the ground."

So you see the two speak of the same thing with different attitudes and different results. Then there's a thing in the world which is known as love, you know, and it's difficult to find many Negro love songs which speak of love in the strictly high poetic sense. That's understandable, because the economic conditions under which Negroes lived made it very difficult to have an establishment that was on a very firm footing, so that love to a Negro in many cases meant hardship, trouble, disappointment. So many of the songs are based on the hardship which comes from having a love affair.

Without defining the blues as such in strict definition, I think if you feel what the blues happen to be at this point, that you will be better situated than if you had merely a glib definition which might not stand up too well after all. So let us not try to be too definitive, and be perhaps tolerantly understanding in regard to what the blues may be.

SIDE III, Band 8

Now then the blues lead into the religious area. I've spoken about the religious songs. I recited some verse from the blues, some text, and that's the great difference any way. I think that the thing to do now would be to transfer our attention to religious music. Many people feel that at this point the Negro has made his greatest and most lasting contribution to musical literature. This is something too which may be debated. Some eminent musicians may feel differently, looking at it in terms of shared musical values. I would not dare say that perhaps this is not the noblest portion of song creativity. It has a right to be because it deals with the exalted part of man's existence, and having that as the bedrock, it certainly could go ahead into areas of inspiration which perhaps other forms of music would not.

The spiritual, so-called, is a religious song which comes largely from the scriptures. If you listen to Negro spirituals almost invariably you will find them directly or in paraphrase or in some relationship to the Scriptures. That's because Negroes learned what they know about religion by hearing ministers preach, and they preached and sang. Consequently, in many cases the purveyor of a spiritual was a man who preached and a man who sang and lead the audience in singing. One spiritual that I want to call to

your attention is based upon just three notes. It's called "Guide My Feet." Most African music is pentatonic; this music is tritonic. It goes this way:

Guide my feet while I run this race, (3 times)
For I don't want to run this race in vain.

You see it has do la, do me, do do la, and that's about all you have, do, la, and me, those three tones, which makes it almost unbelievably beautiful when you consider the completeness of it and the fact that it's based on just three tones. But you see it's very Biblical because it reiterates what Paul said, "Let us ..." and so forth.

Now, there's another song which you don't find literally in the Bible, and it's almost truly African in its attitude. That's called "Ain't But Me One."

My mother is gone,
Ain't but me one; (3 times)
Oh Lord, ain't but me one.

You see, you have the constant refrain there "Ain't but me one," very African. You find so many African songs of that nature. But the interesting thing about this song is not only that, but the language. If you notice, "Ain't but me one." Most people would say, "Just me," but "me" emphasizing with "one." The nature of this song is not entirely religious, because it's a dirge. It's a song of sorrow, a lament, and yet at the end it is "oh Lord, ain't but me one," so that it becomes a beseeching song at the same time it is a very stirring bewailment.

Now here's another very much akin to it. It's called "In the Lord."

In the Lord, in the Lord,
My soul's been anchored in the Lord. (2 times)
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.

You see there again the constant refrain of "My soul's been anchored in the Lord, in the Lord." But this song is entirely religious.

The remarkable thing about these songs to me is that they're so simply wrought and yet so powerful in expression, and yet so different from anything you'll find in European hymnbooks. You don't find anything like this in any hymnbook that you might pick up and look through. Try it some time and see how lucky you may be. These songs are very primitive ones, and yet you may say they are primitive without reflecting upon the word.

Here's another song which is much more involved than either one of these rhythmically. This song calls more heavily on its African ancestry. See if you can find out as I go along where the accents come in terms of repetition in the phrase "Good News."

Well, it come this mornin',
Good news; (repeat)
Go tell everybody, good news,
Good news, my Lord, good news.

Well you see, there's a "Good News" before and there's a "Good News" which comes after, and a "Good News" that comes on the beat, and that's about all the places that "Good News" can possibly come -- before the beat, on the beat, after the beat. Think of what ingenuity it took to fashion that kind of a situation rhythmically into a song in that short space of time.

I'm beginning to show you now how the African influences have yet survived in our Afro-American music. To make it perhaps a little bit more dramatic, I want to call your attention to a song which is more than a song; it's a sermon, a song-sermon, simply because it tells a whole Gospel situation and preaches a piece of religious conviction through song. It has to do with the story of Jesus when he was a boy in the Temple.

My God is a rock in a weary land,
Weary land, weary land.
My God is a rock in a weary land, (repeat 4
Shelter in the time of storm. lines)

Oh, looka yonder at Mary, and Joseph,
And the young child named Jesus
On the way to Jerusalem
To pay their poor taxes;
Went back for to find him,
The young child, King Jesus,
Went to find him in the temple
With the lawyers and the doctors
Asked the question to one another;
Then He called to the lawyer,
Said "Lawyer, oh lawyer,
Can you plead some sentence,"
He said, "No sir."
Oh Lord, asked a question
You can't answer.

He turned to the doctor,
Said, "Doctor, oh doctor,
Can you heal these sin-sick souls, sir?"
Oh no, asked a question,
"Would you care to answer?"

Then he turned to the judge,
Said, "Judge, oh Judge,
You's a judge,
State what kind of judge, sir,
Can you judge these righteous souls, sir,
Oh no, oh no, that's the question,
You care to answer?"

My God is a rock in a weary land,
Weary land, weary land,
My God is a rock in a weary land,
Shelter in the time of storm.

Now that's a song which conveys conviction, doctrine, belief, and a great deal of local belief. The doctor is a state and county doctor, a complete transposition from the time of Jesus to the present; the lawyer is a state and county lawyer; the judge is a state and county judge, bringing it precisely up to the moment for him and yet not one whit destroying his ultimate belief in what he's talking about. To him, this is real, because the most powerful doctor he has known in his life is the state and county doctor, because he can go to him without money and get cured. The lawyer, state and county lawyer; state and county judge. So he naturally calls on these for his support in his belief. That's what's behind most of the wonderful stories that you find in the religious songs. They are so immediate and they are so direct, because they come out of the existence of the people.

These were almost lost. These songs were rather strange to the white missionaries who came down to the South to establish the schools. What these people did of course was what most people would do. They accepted the songs which were most familiar to them and which they understood more completely and which had a musical idiom that was not so strange for them. Then they encouraged the Negroes to sing particularly songs like "Swing low, sweet chariot," and Lord, I want to be a Christian," and those types of things, which are very beautiful songs but songs which are not necessarily as strongly influenced by Negro traditions as the songs which are not so well known. Take this one, for instance, which deals with a situation which is common in every neighborhood and in every church.

We have people in our country,
In our churches and in our homes.
I can't straighten 'em,
You can't straighten 'em,
Don't know how to straighten 'em,
Got to let God straighten 'em,
Said He's gonna straighten 'em
When He comes, when He comes,
God's gonna straighten 'em,
When He comes.
Said He's gonna straighten 'em
When He comes,
Lord, He's gonna straighten 'em
When He comes.
I know He's gonna straighten 'em
When He comes,
My God's a-gonna straighten 'em
When He comes.

We have liars in our country,
In our churches and in our homes.
I can't straighten 'em,
You can't straighten 'em,
Don't know how to straighten 'em,
Got to let God straighten 'em,
Said He's gonna straighten 'em
When He comes, when He comes,

God's gonna straighten 'em
When He comes.
God's gonna straighten 'em
When He comes,
Said He's gonna straighten 'em
When He comes.
Lord, He's gonna straighten 'em
When He comes,
My God, He's gonna straighten 'em
When He comes.

The song has tremendous power and appropriateness in it, almost for any situation, and it also has a quality of great variety and great repetition.

SIDE IV, Band 1

Now let us take into consideration another factor. A jubilee song is one that gives us great joy and a song that has in it a great deal of rhythm and suggests hand clapping and foot tapping. Take a song like "Good News, the Chariot's Comin'."

Good news, the chariot's comin,' (3 times)
Don't want it leavin' me behind.
(repeat chorus)

In that song there's nothing but resounding joy and a belief that the chariot is coming and will take the person to heaven or to glory where he won't have any more difficulties and problems. Many people have somewhat ridiculed the idea that Negroes were always singing about heaven, and that Negroes were always saying "You may have all this world, but give me Jesus." But there is one thing they forgot to include: the Negro never said "right now," he always said "when I die." He never was anxious to depart the world at this moment. Much like the lady who said to me one day, "Son, I want to go to heaven, but I ain't gonna go knockin' on the door."

SIDE IV, Band 2

Now we turn to another very important phase of Negro song life, and that is the work song. As he sang to lighten his spiritual burdens, he also sang to lighten his physical burdens, which were considerable. He was brought here to work and he was given tasks which were in many cases superhuman. But he had the ability to look at his work objectively in many cases and to sing about it. But it is my belief that he didn't come into a full realization of work song making as we understand it today until he was really free. I think the work songs came into existence mainly when Negroes were given opportunity to work on roads, highways particularly, and to participate in work on a little different basis from what they had normally been accustomed to. This is not to say that Negroes did not sing work songs during slavery, because they did. One particular song which came out of slavery is "Captain Look-a Yonder Where the Sun Done Gone." Another one is "I Woke Up This Mornin' to the Blowin' of the Horn, (and I'll be so glad when the day is gone,)" because Negroes were sent to the fields in slavery by the horn and they were called in by the bell. The statement arose many times of going by the horn and coming by the bell. In fact, one song goes a little farther than that and says, "I've been goin' by the horn and comin' by the bell so long, that I'll be glad to leave here even if I land in hell."

The idea behind the work song of course is not only to ease the labor, but to give joy to the singer. They are perhaps second only to the spirituals in great rhythm and drive. One of the most unusual ones that I've come across in my efforts to collect these songs has been one in 5/4 rhythm. Usually songs of this nature are in 4 beats, but here is one in 5, which proves again the ability of the Negro to take and use complicated rhythms in the most unsuspecting and unsuspected places. You see 5/4 and listen how this song was used. A " tamp " is a great steel weight, flat surfaced, on a steel pole, and before the day of steam rollers, Negroes took these tamps and tamped the ground in different areas, to make it firm for building, make it firm for roads, press broken rock into the earth, and so forth. When I was a boy in Pensacola they were putting down brick roads in the city, and to do this they had to tamp the soft sand to make it hard and firm for the brick. Negroes used to take these tamps and dance around them in a sort of a jerking motion and sing as they danced. Here's one of the songs that they sang, and most of the children around learned to sing it because it was so infectious.

Go tell the captain to come here
and shake my hand,
Like a friend, Lord, shake my hand.

Now see if you can feel the movement of the tamps. I think that perhaps you can hear this.

Go tell the captain come here;
Shake my hand, oh, (3 times)
Go tell the captain come here
Shake my hand, oh,
Like a friend, oh, shake my hand.

Now that's a very complicated song, and if you unravel that one in terms of the falling of the tamp and the movement of the feet which you do not see or hear in this situation, and the 5/4 movement of the voice, you have almost what I referred to at the outset to those African drums playing in different meters and different styles. The tamp is going in one meter, the voice is going in another meter, and the feet are going up and down in another meter. That's the wonderful manifestation there again of the ability of Negroes to go back into their past and bring forward these things which have never died in a form which is at once familiar and entrancing and yet strange, strangely beautiful. I am very fond of that song and I will sing it over again mostly for my own enjoyment, because it involves the whole personality, I think.

SIDE IV, Band 3

In the days when they had steamboats on the river, Negroes were used to load these boats before they had steam cranes to lift the loads and drop them into the ships. Negroes used to load the ships with cotton. The cotton was not tightly baled, and in order to make the ships sea-worthy, Negroes had to go down into the holds of the ships and take what they called "jack screws" and jack the cotton until it was tight enough to stay in position so that when the ship moved about at sea it would not shift. In order to do this, men stood in those hot holds all day long, as they said "screwing the cotton." Even in this situation there was some fun. But the greatest fun came from the cotton dance that they did on top of the cotton. Here again you have a complex rhythm. The men -- one man giving, another man taking. That is, as the screw came to him he pushed it forward; the man on the other side took it and pulled it. At the same time they were dancing up and down on the cotton, packing it. The song that they sang most for this, according to a friend of mine, was "Oh Jump for Joy." It goes this way:

Oh jump for joy,
Jump for joy,
In the mornin'
Jump for joy.
In the mornin' (3 times)
Jump for joy.

As they sang that, they would jump up and down in rhythm, a kind of an off-beat rhythm, to that melody. Then one would say

Go to the corner, hurry back (3 times)
Bring me some good old oil for the jack. (twice)

Now oil for the jack was not exactly oil; it was whiskey. If they took a drink of whiskey they felt more encouraged to pull the jack. So they called it "oil for the jack" -- you see the figure.

SIDE IV, Band 4

Now, in modern days the Union in that particular area was looked upon as one of the great benefactions, because in many cases the men felt that they had been taken advantage of in terms of employment. This song rose out of this feeling. I used to go down to the Union office sometimes and listen to those men sing this song. They would sing it before every meeting.

All I want is Union, Lord; (repeat)
Union make me happy, oh Lord; (repeat)
Union is my friend, oh Lord; (repeat)
All I want is Union, oh Lord. (repeat)

The leader would sing "All I want is Union," and all the men with low basses and low tenors would come in in unison "oh Lord." It would make goosepimples rise on you to hear them sing it and look at their faces and note their great belief. So I list it here as a song almost of religious nature, while at the same time a song of secular nature, and I think at least it could go any dimension as well as the other. But the remarkable thing about this particular song is that it's based upon an idea which sets it apart from most other Negro folk music, in that it expresses an idea founded in Union against the things which have bothered him. This is rather unusual. I think, in Negro folk music. It hasn't

been a music which has expressed their feelings exactly in this manner. This is the only song I know in the whole area of Negro folklore that deals with the idea of a Union. I know many have resented the conditions under which they have worked. Take a song like "Me and My Buddy," or "My Old Boss Man, Always Got His Mouth Up In My Face/And You Know Darn Well That's Out Of Place" -- things like that do express a certain type of resentment, but they do not express the kind of idea which is expressed in this one song.

SIDE IV, Band 5

Now I've spoken to you about absolute Negro music, and I wish to say a word or two about music which is not necessarily absolutely Negro but which Negroes have had a profound effect upon. And that is certain hymns which have come out of the white church which have been absolutely transformed by having gone through this treatment which I've spoken about in terms of rhythm and the musical feeling which is expressed, in the cry, the coloratura cry, the plain cry, and others. Take the hymn, for instance, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" when it is sung in the old meter form.

What a friend we have in Jesus. . .

Well, you know the song. That's the way it is sung in the European tradition and as you will hear it sung in most white churches. Negroes have taken it and opened it up somewhat, given it more space so that they could inject their feelings of personality into it, and produced another song from it which is easily identifiable with the old one, but which is certainly more expansive emotionally. It goes this way:

What a friend we have in Jesus. . .

A piece of music which is not Negro can pass through the spiritual and language and melodic qualities and properties of the Negro and be modified or maybe more than modified, be completely re-organized and remade, so that they are no less a product of Negro creativity than the absolute spiritual or the absolute worksong. This is something which is relevant at this time because a great deal of this kind of thing is happening in the area of gospel music and with the Freedom Movement as well, where songs which are traditionally different from Negro musical manifestations and expressions have been so treated by the Negro that they have become almost as uniquely Negro as songs which he created outright. Some purists say that if a song is not absolutely the product of the Negro spirit and mind, it is not the kind of song that ought to be included in his productivity. I am not one of those, because if you go back into the whole area of Afro-American music, it's not possible to tell always how much the Negro did change a particular song, and how much he created another song. But if you are cognizant regarding Negro music or Afro-American music, if you please, you can tell quickly whether or not the stamp of his musical genius has been placed upon it. In this day and time I think more and more to give consideration to this particular situation.

SIDE IV, Band 6

Jazz today is one of the most interesting forms of musical expression in this country. Just a few years ago jazz was looked down upon as almost unspeakable music. Now jazz has become perhaps one of the more respected forms of American music.

Of course we know that jazz is the direct descendent of ragtime, and we know that ragtime is a product of the Negroes' experiences with musical instruments of European origin. We know also that for many years during slavery and for some time after, Negroes played rather esoteric instruments from jaw-bones in keys to the beating of bones to the fashioning of boxes, gourds, bottles, and whatever else would give off pitches of sound. We also know that these instruments in general have disappeared, but what is not generally known is that during slavery, many Negroes were set apart as instrumentalists to play for the entertainment of the white man, and that they were taught in many cases by white people to play the fiddle, the mandolin, the guitar, the fife and the drum. When certain occasions came about where mirth and fun was desired, they could furnish the music. Particularly was this true in areas on the coast where European culture first arrived and where it was most densely populated. These Negroes were the first purveyors and creators of what became known as ragtime. I'm not going into the mention of names which are highly identified with ragtime, such as people who are more well known like Scott Joplin and Turpin and so forth. The purpose here is to state a principle. These people who played the instruments laid the foundations for the Negroes' movement into the area of instrumental music, which in turn brought about the organization of the old Negro marching bands and the Negro social bands and then finally the old jazz bands and the piano bands which were a piano, a drum, and sometimes a violin or trumpet, but in many cases just a piano with a drum accompaniment. These were called piano bands, in some places parlor bands. In any case, they were the antecedents of the bands which we know now as jazz bands.

What did they play? They played the songs which they knew. It's important to realize that they played songs, because the songs which they knew invariably were highly influenced by the cries and by the blues, and if you listen to jazz today you will find that if you remove the feeling of the Negro folk cry, if you take away the subtleties of rhythm which are characteristic of African music and Afro-American music, if you take away the peculiar nostalgia and joy and sorrow intermingled, that you won't have what you normally would call jazz. Because jazz, no matter how happy it sounds, is also a rather melancholy and sad music, even when it is most vigorously delivered. In order to come to that conclusion, some of us may have to re-listen and reorganize our attitudes towards it, but that is a very true statement.

This brings us to the present. There is not enough time to discuss jazz, nor should there be at this moment a desire to undertake the discussion of jazz, because jazz is a whole subject unto itself. But this consideration of things that have been told and demonstrated will go a long way to causing us to have a better understanding of the music, its relationship to those who made it, and more importantly, the relationship of those who made it to those with whom they lived.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Dr. Willis James was a native of Montgomery, Alabama, and grew up in Florida. He began collecting Afro-American ethnic music while still a child and this became the major work of his life. He spent most of his life in the South, teaching and collecting. In 1948 and for the five years following, he produced a series of traditional music festivals in Fort Valley, Georgia, which reflected his belief that the folklorist should not only collect traditional music, but play an important role in seeing that the music is preserved.

During the course of his career, he was a recording fellow for the Music Archive of the Library of Congress; lecturer at the Newport Jazz Festivals, Newport Folk Festivals, Tanglewood Roundtables, Lenox Jazz School, and at the Festival of Arts in Lagos, Nigeria, in 1961. He was a member of the Advisory Board of the Institute of Jazz, and of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. He is the author of Stars in the Element, a study of Afro-American music and its development, which will be published in the near future by Random House under the auspices of the Institute of the Black World.

At the time of his death in December of 1967, he was Chairman of the Department of Music at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia.

## WILLIS JAMES TAPES

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Band 1 | African Background | 00:58 |
| Band 2 | Rhythm and African Drums | 2:17 |
| Band 3 | Kinds of African Drums<br>1. "Shongo" | 2:03 |
| Band 4 | Periodicity and effects of Rhythm | 2:30 |
| Band 5 | Africanisms in America<br>Starts very low - ends with unfinished sentence. | 7:57 |
| Band 6 | Afro-American Speech | 3:07 |
| Band 7 | Speech and Song | 2:30 |
| Band 8 | Speech and Rhythm | 2:43 |

Total Time Tape 1 -- 22:45

## TAPE 2

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Band 1 | Speech and Melody | 5:08 |
| Band 2 | The Cry | 8:17 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Band 3 | The Plain Cry | 5:37 |
| | 1. "Coalman's Cry" | |
| | 2. "Fishmonger's Cry: | |
| Band 4 | Florid Cry | 3:11 |
| | 1. "Going to Alabammy" | |
| | 2. "Cabin Boy" | |
| Band 5 | Coloratura Cry | 00:38 |
| Band 6 | Wordless Cry | 3:40 |

Total Time Tape 2 -- 25:51

TAPE 3
Examples of 'Cries'

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Bands 1 & 2 | Wordless Cries | 1:01 |
| Band 3 | Florid Cry | 00:41 |
| Band 4 | Prayer Meeting | 1:51 |
| Band 5 | "See God's Ark" (Moving Star Hall Singers) | 2:03 |

End of Examples

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Band 6 | The Cry, concluded | 00:52 |
| Band 7 | The Blues | 6:38 |
| Band 8 | Religious Music | 13:32 |
| | 1. "Guide My Feet" | |
| | 2. "Ain't But Me One" | |
| | 3. "My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord" | |
| | 4. "Good News" | |
| | 5. "My God is a Rock in a Weary Land" | |
| | 6. "God's A-Gonna Straighten 'em (When He Comes)" | |

Total Time Tape Three -- 25:22

TAPE 4

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Band 1 | Jubilee Song | 1:45 |
| | 1. "Good News" (Chariot's Comin')" | |
| Band 2 | Work Song | 6:00 |
| | 1. "Go Tell the Captain" | |
| Band 3 | "Jump for Joy" (Cotton-Screwing Song) | 2:40 |
| Band 4 | "All I Want is Union" | 3:14 |
| Band 5 | Negro Music from White Sources | 4:57 |
| | 1. "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" (White) | |
| | 2. "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" (Negro) | |
| Band 6 | Jazz | 6:14 |

Total Time Tape 4 -- 24:10

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

This bibliography has been prepared to guide the student of Afro-American music to a few books of general interest. Because so much has been written about Afro-American music, this list could not begin to be comprehensive. More complete bibliographies are found in the works listed below.


Abrahams, Roger, Deep Down in the Jungle...Negro Narrative Folklore from the Streets of Philadelphia. Folklore Associates, Hatboro, Pennsylvania, 1965. One of the first to examine Negro folklore as it is in the urban ghetto and also, one of the first books to relate the folklore to the environment of the people.

Allen, W. F. and others, Slave Songs of the United States. Peter Smith, New York, 1951. First published in 1867, this was the first collection of Afro-American songs.

Courlander, Harold. Negro Songs from Alabama. New York, Oak Publications, 1963. Transcriptions taken from field recordings. Many religious songs and 'cries' included.

Johnson, James Weldon and J. Rosamond, The Book of American Negro Spirituals (two vols. in one.) Viking Press, New York, 1940. A collection of religious songs with piano accompaniment. Introduction excellent.

Krehbiel, Henry Edward, Afro-American Folksongs. Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., New York, (revised) 1965. One of the few books to analyze the music in reference to its African roots. Important.

Lomax, John A. and Alan, Our Singing Country (out of print). Ludlow Publishing Co., New York, 1941.

Lomax, John A. and Alan, American Ballads and Folk Songs. MacMillan, New York, 1934.

Lomax, Alan, Folk Songs of North America. Doubleday, New York, 1960. Each of the Lomax books contains many important songs of Afro-Americans and excellent transcriptions. The introductory material in Folk Songs of North America is quite informative and useful.

Parrish, Lydia, Slave Songs of the Georgia Sea Islands. Folklore Associates, Hatboro, Pennsylvania, 1965. Although paternalistic in tone, this book contains too much useful information to be wholly ignored.

Work, John W., American Negro Songs. Howell, Soskin and Co., New York, 1940. A collection of songs with excellent introduction.


## DISCOGRAPHY

It is, of course, quite impossible to list here all recordings of Afro-American music. The ones that are listed are limited to those that reflect the voice more than any particular instrument. Thus, the blues is only touched on here. But on the records listed below you will be able to hear examples of all of the things mentioned by Dr. James.

FOLKWAYS

| | |
|---|---|
| RF 5 | Introduction to Gospel Song |
| RF 202x | The Rural Blues (revised) |
| FA 2038 | Spirituals sung by Dock Reed and Vera Hall |
| FA 2467 | Son House and J. D. Short (blues - Mississippi) |
| FA 2651, 2652, 2653 | Music from the South, (vols. 2-4) Songs of Horace Sprott |
| FA 2654, 2655, 2656 | Music from the South (vols, 5-7) |
| FJ 2801 | Jazz, Vol. 1 (work songs, hollers, church music) |
| FS 3822 | Lightnin' Hopkins - Texas blues |
| FE 4417 | Negro Folk Music of Alabama (secular) |
| FE 4418 | Negro Folk Music of Alabama (religious) |
| FE 4500 | Negro Music of Africa and America |
| FE 4502 | African & Afro-American Drums |
| FC 7654 | Negro Folk Rhythms |
| FE 4472 | Negro Folk Music of Alabama (songs, tales) |
| FE 4473 | Negro Folk Music of Alabama (religious) |
| FE 4474 | Negro Folk Music of Alabama (ring games, etc.) |
| FE 4475 | Negro Prison Camp Work Songs |
| FS 3641 | Moving Star Hall Singers |

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS RECORDINGS

| | |
|---|---|
| AAFS L3 | Afro-American Spirituals, Work Songs, and Ballads |
| AFS L4 | Afro-American Blues and Game Songs |
| AAFS L8 | Negro Work Songs and Calls |
| AAFS L10 | Negro Religious Songs and Services |
| AFS L59 | Negro Blues and Hollers |

PRESTIGE

| | |
|---|---|
| INT 25001 | Georgia Sea Islands, Vol. 1 |
| INT 25002 | Georgia Sea Islands, Vol. 2 |
| INT 25005 | Deep South...Sacred and Sinful |
| INT 25010 | Yazoo Delta Blues & Spirituals |

ATLANTIC

| | |
|---|---|
| 1348 | Roots of the Blues |
| 1351 | Negro Church Music |

COLUMBIA

| | |
|---|---|
| CL 1654 | Robert Johnson/King of the Delta Blues Singers |

UNITED ARTISTS

| | |
|---|---|
| UAL 4027 | Blues in the Mississippi Night |

LITHO IN U.S.A