



***We'll be There!:* American Spirituals, Black and White 1800-1900**

Supporting Material

Please feel free to return to us as needed

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Developed in the middle of the pandemic by Joel Cohen with Anne Azéma, premiered in Cambridge, MA 2021, toured in the fall of 2022, this program is now available for touring.

This project examines early American spiritual songbooks, both Black and White, and their related oral traditions, with an enlarged, intercultural perspective.

The tragic, enforced social and economic space between the White and minority communities in nineteenth century America could not, and did not, erase the common humanity of all who lived, breathed, and sang on this continent. Our goal is to bring into the light the elements that, via music and spiritual striving, have bound all of us together across the decades.

These two singing traditions, Black and White, are closely inter-related and interdependent. Considered together they form a magnificent body of uniquely American musical and poetic art, and a lasting testament to our nation's striving, despite generations of tragedy, injustice and strife, for redemption, transcendence, and wholeness.

A "spiritual," or spiritual song, utilizes the poetic imagery of Christian faith in conjunction with folk or folk-derived melodic materials. Spirituals exist in relation to, but often in contrast with, the more formalized hymn and anthem singing of Protestant Sunday hymn books. The most widely-known and circulated examples of American spirituals come from the African-American tradition. White spiritual singing, however, was very widespread in the nineteenth century and continues to this day. The two traditions are closely inter-related and interdependent.

Our concert is derived in large measure from original sources of the nineteenth century, as well as from oral traditions. Our performances trace the evolution of musical style, taste, and performance practice across several generations. Included are African-derived call-and-shout group songs, folk hymns derived from English and Celtic folklore, the deep connection of the African-American tradition to the experience of slavery, musical reminiscences, both white and black, of the Civil War, celebrations of freedom, and gospel melodies shared and shaped by both communities.

READINGS and OTHER SOURCES (see also virtual links at the bottom of this document):

Some of the **primary sources** utilized, African American and White, will include:

A Collection of Spiritual Songs and Hymns (1801) (AA) – see
<https://hymnary.org/hymnal/CSSH1801>

Jeremiah Ingalls' The Christian Harmony (Exeter, 1805) (W)

The Sacred Harp (many editions) (W, utilized by certain AA communities)

Sacred Melodies for Social Worship (New York, 1859) (W, AA influences)

The American Vocalist (Boston, 1858) (W)

The Revivalist (Troy, N. Y., 1868) (W, with AA influences)

A Collection of Revival Hymns and Plantation Melodies (Cincinnati, 1883) (AA)
Religious Folk Songs of the Negro (Hampton, 1909) (AA)

as well as:

- various 19th century instrumental collections; sheet music;
- archival sound recordings; media productions.

Other Sources and Readings:

William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, Lucy McKim Garrison, Eds, Slave Songs of the United States, Applewood Books, 1867

Thomas W. Talley: Negro Folk Rhymes (1922), Charles K. Wolfe, Ed., University of Tennessee Press, 1991

Peter Benes, Ed., New England Music, The Public Sphere, 1600-1900, Boston University, 1996

Howard W. Odum, and Guy B. Johnson, The Negro and his Songs, The University of North Carolina Press, 1925

George Pullen Jackson, collec. & ed., Spiritual Folk-Songs of Early America, J.J. Augustin, 1937, Dover Press, 1964

George Pullen Jackson, White and Negro Spirituals: Their Life Span and Kinship, J.J. Augustin, 1943

John W. Work, American Negro Songs, Dover, 1998

George Pullen Jackson, White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands (fasola folk), Dover 1933 and reprints

The African American Heritage Hymnal, GIA Publications, 2001

John Michael Spencer, Black Hymnody, University of Tennessee Press, 1992

Eileen Southern, The Music of Black Americans: A History, W.W.W. Norton Company, 1971, 1983

Articles and Other Secondary Sources:

Betty Hillmon and Edmund B Gaither, 'Three Hundred and Fifty Years of Black Presence in Boston': https://folklife-media.si.edu/docs/festival/program-book-articles/FESTBK1988_08.pdf

Capt. Eliphalet Grover's 'Boon Island Fiddle': The Folk Violin in New England, 1750-1850, Steven C. Mallory, in New England Music: The Public Sphere, 1600-1900, Dublin Seminar, 1996

The Jefferson Project:

<https://www.earlymusicville.org/the-jefferson-project.html>

The Boston Camerata in performance at MB 1800, New York City, October 2022 (excerpts):

<https://vimeo.com/764169317/9541e88a5a>

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THE BOSTON CAMERATA

The Boston Camerata preserves and reawakens human memory as expressed through the art of music. It accomplishes this mission through live, historically informed, professional performances; through study and research into musical sources of the past; through media projects; and through community outreach and musical education. We look to the past to better understand the present, to inform the future, and to encourage living human connection via the shared joy of great music.

The Boston Camerata occupies a unique place in the densely populated universe of European and American early music ensembles. Camerata's distinguished rank stems partly from its longevity: founded in 1954, when the field of endeavor was in its infancy, as an adjunct to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts' musical instruments collection, Camerata is now one of the longest-lived groups to be vigorously functioning up to the present day.

But length of service by itself is not sufficient to account for Camerata's preeminence, nor are its numerous distinctions including the American Critics' Circle Award, grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, residencies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of Tennessee, and the Grand Prix du Disque. The Boston Camerata has achieved its eminence in large part because of its willingness to approach, with consistent success, many kinds of historical repertoires from many centuries, from the early Middle Ages to the nineteenth century, and from many places and cultures, stretching from the Middle East to early New England, with numerous intermediate stops in Renaissance and Baroque Europe and Latin America. Directed from 1969 to 2008 by Joel Cohen, and from 2008 to the present day by Anne Azéma, the Boston Camerata has continued to create, over more than a half-century of activity, a large number of concert and recorded productions. These typically combine scholarship, much of it original, with high performance standards maintained by a distinguished roster of outstanding vocal soloists and instrumentalists. Camerata's productions regularly combine dramatic flair with a humane, overarching perspective on the role music has played in (wo)mankind's search for meaning and fulfillment. Camerata's signature approach, as embodied in its touring, pedagogy, and media projects, has won the ensemble many listeners and followers on five continents as the ensemble presents new projects while maintaining in active repertoire many of its historic achievements. Camerata's diary in recent seasons has reflected intense activity. *Borrowed Light*, a music and dance production in collaboration with the Tero Saarinen Company of Helsinki, Finland, toured extensively, with over eighty performances from 2004 to 2015 in the United States (Brooklyn Academy, Jacob's Pillow Festival), Europe, (France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Scandinavia, Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Australasia (Australia and New Zealand)). The film of this production has been broadcast over twenty times on European cable television in 2018, 2019, and 2020. The ensemble has appeared in concert at the Théâtre de la Ville, Paris (2015), the Alcântara Festival in Brasil (2016), The Metropolitan Museum The Cloisters (2017), Rockefeller Chapel Chicago (2018), La Philharmonie de Paris (2018), St Mark's Cathedral Seattle (2020). Anne Azéma's innovative staged productions include *The Night's Tale*, narrating a medieval tournament in France, which was first presented in France and Luxembourg (2007), then performed in Boston to great acclaim (2016), with further touring in 2017 and 2018 (Switzerland, Holland, France), and in the US in 2020. Azéma's reimagining of the *Play of Daniel* (premiered in 2014) is by now an integral part of the Camerata's public face to the world. Further tours of *Daniel* took place in North America (Canada and the US Midwest) in late 2014, continuing in 2017, 2018, early 2020. In late 2020, in the midst of the pandemic, Azéma's trailblazing, made-for-streaming production of Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* earned international attention as it was viewed by music lovers on five continents. This production will tour live in the US in the Spring of 2023. Collaborations with local choirs (both children and adults) and with young professionals-in-training in both Europe and the United States continue to be a distinctive feature of the company (2016–2022 touring seasons). Two new media projects were released in 2019: *Treasures of Devotion: European Spiritual Song ca. 1500* (Music & Arts – Naxos); and *Free America! Early Songs of Resistance and Rebellion*, which renews a collaboration of the ensemble with Harmonia Mundi. After the success of *Dido & Aeneas: An Opera for Distanced Lovers* in late 2020, Camerata has produced seven more performances for streaming worldwide. A new Harmonia Mundi project, *A Medieval Christmas – Hodie Christus Natus Est*, was issued in 2021.

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