
Negro Spirituals: Sacred Heritage and Cultural Treasure

Sabbath and Sunday services in Black churches are a time to feed the soul of worshippers with standard hymns, instrumental preludes or processions, chants, sung responses, gospel anthems and stirring solos. In most places of worship the organ, piano, drums and other instruments help make a joyful sound unto the Lord. In some of our churches metered hymns are still “raised”, “lined” or “shaped” with no instrument but the voice. A backdrop to this particular brand of musical ministry and spirituality is the tradition of singing Negro spirituals. Our ancestors in faith created this music to reflect upon the myriad feelings that welled up as they experienced the conditions of slavery. They did so by combining rhythmic patterns and melodic tunes brought from Africa with images and stories found in the Christian scriptures of the masters’ religion to fashion a new musical expression. The resulting Negro spirituals are the taproot of what is known as Black sacred music. As pictures from our sacred past they tell the story of the African presence in America, and remind us of a great God who helped us overcome adversity, thrive amidst hardship, and rise to prominence despite the perils of life. ***Negro spirituals are central to the history of Black religious expression in an American context.***

There is an evident, uninterrupted line from the earliest spirituals (camp songs and shouts) to contemporary gospel and Christian soul. Along the way, the arranged Negro spiritual has arisen, characterized by great sophistication in pitch, harmonization, cadence, and modulation. The well-sung spiritual is both beautiful and moving -- a culturally religious event for singers and hearers alike. And this cultural treasure belongs in a particular way to our churches. No liturgical season is complete without some exposure to the genre. No churchgoer should be deprived of being fed by it. ***For Black churches in particular, the repertoire of Negro spirituals represents a historical legacy and treasure whose value may have been forgotten for a time. A commitment to the 2nd Sabbath/Sunday Spirituals program is one easy way to remedy the oversight.***

The 2nd Sabbath/Sunday Spirituals Program

The “Negro Spiritual” Scholarship Foundation is working to secure the place of spirituals in our worship life while offering both educational and performance resources to member congregations. Our 2nd Sabbath/Sunday Spirituals program is very simple: **Liturgical music planners at our member churches should include one Negro spiritual or more in the order of service on the second Sabbath or Sunday of each month, provided the scriptural references or liturgical themes make it appropriate to do so.** We can assist you by supplying lists of titles and arrangements for solo and ensemble singing, by sharing information and suggestions about music that is appropriate for special times and occasions, by holding workshops with your musicians, or even making a visit to your congregation on occasion.

Enroll Now!!

Church:

Pastor:

Minister of Music:

Mailing Address:

Telephone:

Facsimile:

E-Address:

Enroll us for one of the following:

- 1 Year Membership @ \$100
 5 Years Membership @ \$400

Payment Information:

- VISA (+ 3% service fee) MASTERCARD
 AMERICAN EXPRESS (+ 3% service fee)

Name on Card:

Account #:

Expiration Date:

Signature:

Membership Cost:

Pay **\$100 for a year's renewable membership**, or **\$400 for five years of membership**. Proceeds provide for the **Pastors' Purse** which grants cash awards to all of the high-school students who reach a final round of our GRADY-RAYAM PRIZE vocal competition. Remaining proceeds will allow the **"Negro Spiritual" Scholarship Foundation** to present touring concerts and workshops in your region, using lead churches as venues.

Membership Benefits:

Listing on 2nd Sabbath/Sunday Roll of Honor
"Songs of Blessing" membership certificate suitable for framing
Quarterly newsletter sent to each member of your music ministry
College scholarship incentive program with UNCF schools
Scheduled performance during worship service or in concert at your church
Continuing education about Negro spirituals

Send Completed Information To:

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