Black Music

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that was important was that a singing slave was likely to produce more.

Frederick Douglass noted that, "Slaves are generally expected to sing as well as to work. A silent slave is not liked by masters or overseers... This may account for the almost constant singing heard in the southern states."

He's refuted the philosophy erroneously held by many that the singing indicated contentment. Hundreds of documented slave revolts and thousands of runaways also bear witness to this.

The apologist historian U.B. Phillips painted plantation life as idyllic as did the movie Gone With The Wind. Phillips stated:

The plantation was pageant and variety show in alternation ... the bonfire in the quarter with contests in clogs, cakewalks, and charlestons whose fascinations were as yet undiscovered by the great world; the work songs in solo and refrain ...

The "solo" part that Phillips mentioned was sung by a leader who was an important, if not the important member of the field hands; and, as such, often commanded a higher price on the market.

Because the mood of the workers and the work to be done dictated the timing and rhythm of the music, the leader had to intuitively determine what to sing. Reminiscent of the bards in far-off Africa, he improvised and created lyrics and melodies as needed.

So, too, were messages disseminated in this fashion. Whenever Harriet Tubman was in the area, a special song was sung:

Dark and thorny is de pathway
Where de pilgrim makes his ways;
But beyond dis vale of sorrow
Lie de fields of endless days

Specifics, as to meeting places and departure time, might be extemporaneous verses added to work, secular or religious songs to alert potential runaways.

Other songs that served to inform listeners that there was an escape plot being planned were: Steal Away to Jesus; Oh, Sinner, You'd Better Get Ready; Good News, de Chariot's Coming; and I Hear from Heaven To-Day. Follow the Drinking Gourd alluded to the Big Dipper Constellation as a way of traveling north.

Although both slave and freeman had been exposed to white church music, it often was too stilted or unsatisfactory to express their needs. Noticing the dichotomy between the master's Sunday piety and his godless manners from Monday to Saturday, the southern Black was even more attuned to a need for music and rhetoric that not only nourished his soul, but also helped to dispel the malaise of slavery.

Richard Allen of Philadelphia (1760-1831), who is chiefly noted for organizing and heading the first congregation of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was acutely aware of this. He collected hymns that he felt would appeal to his Black congregation. Printed by John Ormrod in 1801, it was entitled: A Collection of Spiritual Songs and Hymns Selected from Various Authors by Richard Allen, African Minister.

Because Allen's counterpart in the South at that time had little or no access to a hymnal for his "congregation," it may be assumed that he or his lead singer was the composer of many religious songs.

It should be noted that long before white men entered Africa as slavers, explorers, or missionaries, there was a widespread belief in a Supreme Being, and each village had its "minister" or priest. This allowed for an easier transferrance in the New Land, not the admonitions or forces of the white master.

Here, in the States, ministers enjoyed the same leadership role as did those priests in Africa. This helps to explain why many insurrections were instigated or led by religious men. Two of the more (in) famous were Nat Turner and Denmark Vesey.

Thus, out of the merger of the slaves' songs from Africa and their experiences in the New Land, came a form of music about which much has been written: The Spiritual.

Recognized as a form of communal communication, this music has served to bind a people as does all folk music; for folk music is a music that reflects the tastes and feelings of a community rather than individual emotions.

The spiritual's close relationship between the singer (slave) and Jesus might be explained by their commonality: both had been "buked (rebuked) and scorned," tortured in some manner, and forced to accept unjust, heavy punishment. This is why He is the diety most often mentioned in the spiritual. He was deemed most sympathetic to their plight.

John Lovell, Jr., in his definitive book on Afro-American spirituals, Black Song: The Forge and the Flame wrote that this music "...blended the experiences and poetic imaginations of one folk group and created songs for the human heart." He further states that the "purposes" of the spiritual are:

1. To give the community a true, valid and useful song
2. To keep the community invigorated
3. To inspire the uninspired individual
4. To enable the group to face its problems
5. To stir each member to personal solutions and to a sense of belonging in the midst of a confusing and terrifying world
6. To provide a code language for emergency use

Recognizing the inherent danger for torment that the slaves' religious services (or any form of assemblage) and the singing of spirituals presented, they were banned in some areas of the South as early as the 1830's. Most particularly did the Black Methodists come under fire, for they had acquired considerable strength and were thought to be behind the Vesey plot.

So too were drums prohibited due to the fear that they would be used as a means of communicating information. To circumvent this, meetings had to be held in the woods at night, or in a secure building with guards posted. Singing was done into a glass or pot filled with water to absorb the sound. Whatever the inconveniences were, they were not enough to prevent the need from being fulfilled.

As has been observed throughout this article, music had been one of the primary forces in a slave's life. As the century progresses, more documentation became available.

In the South during the earlier decades, entertainment for slaves on the plantation was chiefly offered by individual instrumentalists (mostly fiddlers or banjoists) with the group joining in with singing, dancing, or "patting."

The latter was a method where the feet were tapped, as well as the thighs and shoulders, but the hands in an intricate and precise syncopated rhythm. (More recently, it is known as "hambooning").

However, in New Orleans, there was a section of the city called Congo Square (since renamed Beauregard Square). Here, on Sundays or holy days, whites, who were tourists or locals, came to watch the "wildest dancing."

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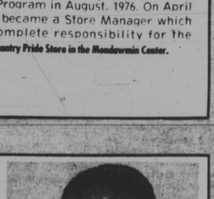
Pantry Pride Is An Equal Opportunity Employer

Pantry Pride

Eugene Rolls was employed in 1971 as a full time Grocery Clerk, he was promoted to Grocery Manager in February, 1975. Mr. Rolls was selected for the Store Manager Training Program in August, 1976. On April 1, 1977 he became a Store Manager which entails complete responsibility for the operations of Pantry Pride Store in the Mondawmin Center.



Jim Knight started working for Pantry Pride in 1959 as a part time porter, he was promoted in 1961 to a Grocery Clerk, in 1963 Mr. Knight was given responsibility of the Grocery Department on the night shift as a Grocery Night Captain. He became a Grocery Manager in 1971, and a Store Manager Trainee in 1972. Jim Knight was promoted to Store Manager in 1973 and has managed two (2) of the Pantry Pride Stores. Presently store manager in our new Carrollton Store.

Herman Johnson was hired by Food Fair Inc. on May 12, 1980 as a store manager and underwent a period of orientation and relief work for vacations etc. until November 24, 1980 when he was named store manager in the Edmondson Village Shopping Center, where he had been relieving for several months.

EDWARD BROWN was hired by Food Fair Inc. as a part-time cashier in July 1968 at Franklintown and Franklin Sts. Early in 1969 he was transferred to Pantry Pride No. 46 in the Edmondson Village Shopping Center, working there as a part-time cashier and grocery clerk. Approximately 3 years later he was transferred to Mondawmin and trained as a part-time office clerk. In 1974 he was given full-time status with the company. He worked at Mondawmin until he was promoted to front - end manager in Westminster, Md. He worked in Westminster until he joined the store manager's training program in January 1978. His store manager's training was completed in November 1978 and he was given his first store in Landover Shopping Center.

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So give us a call at Eastern. Or call your Travel Agent. And visit someone you love.

EASTERN
WE HAVE TO EARN OUR WINGS EVERY DAY

Black Music

(Continued from Page 32)

The slaves would congregate by tribes to form circles where they would perform a dance or "shuffle" that was peculiar to West Africa.

Hours would go by with any who fell from exhaustion quickly replaced by another. Of course, the chief instrument, similar to the banjar or banjo was made from a calabash. The instrumentalists were within the ring. Incessant chanting and the exciting music ... according to an 1808 report, created a state of frenzy within the participants.

This same report stated that, at sundown "...the city patrols show themselves with their cutlasses, and the crowds immediately disperse." "Accordingly," Langston Hughes mused, "some musicologists believe that jazz was born before sunset in Congo Square. Certainly the basic beat was there all day long."

Such entertainment for slaves was chiefly limited to the exotic city of New Orleans, with its largest Black population in any American city; for one-third of its inhabitants, about 12,000 were Black. It also had a peculiar caste system based upon color and status: free or slave.

The free people (creoles of color as they were known) and free Blacks of unmixed parentage, indulged in more sophisticated or genteel pursuits. Perhaps to clearly delineate their status, they eschewed the more African-inspired music for the European variety.

In almost every household there was a piano, and some member(s) was able to acquit himself well enough to entertain family and friends. Voice lessons were also taken to indulge the petted young ladies of these middle-class creoles.

At the white balls, opera houses and theaters, sections were often set aside for the blacks, and they were almost always filled, to capacity.

So seriously did many music lovers and accomplished instrumentalists view their music that the Negro Philharmonic Society was formed with over 100 members.

It served a double purpose; the one just stated, and it prevented those who truly found racial discrimination distasteful, from having to attend segregated performances at the white theaters. In addition to performing at concerts in their own building, the Society acted as booking agents for visiting performers.

Some of the members also formed the basis for the orchestra for the Theatre de la Renaissance which was for "free coloreds."

Several residents of the "Paris of the South" as New Orleans was called, achieved recognition beyond their city.

Picayune Butler was a virtuoso banjoist whose career began in the 1820's and was known along the entire length of "The River," as the Mississippi was affectionately known.

He acquired such consumate skill that he was invited to became a participant in a competition in New York City in 1837. Contemporary writers reported that had he not broken two strings during the contest, he would have been declared the winner. Even so, despite this handicap, he acquitted himself admirably on the required sets of schotische, reel, waltz, polka and jig.

It is alleged that he was the composer of many of the songs that white minstrels performed on stage. So popular was he, that an anonymous minstrel (white) wrote a song in his honor: Picayune Butler's Come to Town for inclusion in a published collection of songs of the minstrels in 1858.

A common form of advertising wares was for street vendors to go through residential sections of town calling out the various attributes of their product and encouraging potential customers with original verses to their recognizable "theme song."

Signor Conmeali was such a vendor. Reputed to have a wide vocal range, and enjoying tremendous popularity, his given name is unknown, but his stage name was obviously adopted from his vocation.

He was saved from anonymity because he was the first black to perform on the stage of a white theater anywhere in the United States. The event took place at the St. Charles Theater in New Orleans in 1837.

Opening his program with his own song, Fresh Corn Meal, he followed that with popular songs of the day. So enthralled were his audiences by his voice, and presence, that upon his death, it has been said that the entire city mourned him.

As noted earlier, classicists were an important thread in the fabric of music that cloaked the free black in New Orleans, and the Negro Philharmonic Society was the weaver.

Richard Lambert, along with Constantine Debarque, became a permanent director of the Society in the 1830's. Lambert was a violinist of note, and a music teacher.

He sired four sons and two daughters. The four sons became professional musicians; both daughters played the piano, and one became a music teacher.

Lucien Lambert, the eldest son, early indicated the seriousness with which he viewed music, for he would practice on the piano for six or more hours daily. This dedication enabled him to achieve laudatory recognition as a pianist by the cognoscenti of New Orleans; and he soon outpaced local instructors.

The decision was made that he should pursue further study in Paris. Upon completion of his studies in Europe, he returned to his native city, only to find the color bar intolerable. He then settled in Brazil where he became involved with piano manufacture.

As a composer, he was quite prolific; Etude Mazurka, La Juive, and Au Clair de la Lune (with variations) being three of the more familiar.

Sidney Lambert, the second son, also composed for and played the piano. His major contribution was a manual for piano instruction which achieved for him an award of merit from the King of Portugal. He, too, went to Paris where he remained as an instructor of music.

The younger Lambert sons remained in New Orleans and became associated with the St. Bernard's Brass Band.

JAMES A. BLAND

HARRY T. BURLEIGH

JAMES WELDON JOHNSON

Edmund Dede (1829-1903) studied the clarinet as a child under Debarque. He switched to the violin under Gayici, the white director of the St. Charles Theater Orchestra. As he matured, Dede supported himself as a cigar maker and lived frugally until he could go to Paris in 1857 on his savings to continue his studies.

He remained in France, married a Frenchwoman, and became the director of the orchestra of L'Aleozar in Bordeaux. Several of his more notable compositions are: Le Sement de L'Arabe, Vaillant Bele Rose Quadrille and Le Palmier Overture.

Samuel Snaer (1883-?) was most noted as a pianist, but performed as well on the cello and violin. He taught both violin and piano and was the organist for St. Mary's R. C. Church. Snaer was a productive composer of both secular and religious music, with an overture for full orchestra (Graziella) and a solemn Mass to his credit.

In addition, the musician-composer wrote instrumental pieces, vocal and instrumental compositions, Polka, Mazurkas, Quadrilles, and Waltzes.

E.V. McCarty (1821-?) received his first piano lesson under Professor J. Norres in New Orleans. An unnamed patron felt that McCarty's skills merited further study in Paris where he became friendly with the Hon. Pierre Soule who intervened to get him admitted to the Imperial Conservatoire, even though he was over age. He studied harmony, composition and achieved some distinction in vocal music.

He also became a dramatist and was awarded the lead in the play Antony by Alexander Dumas. McCarty remained in Paris.

In addition to individual achievements in musicianship, the fascination for parades and brass bands was shared by all of the citizens of New Orleans. Blacks had their own brass bands and a high degree of proficiency was achieved by the instrumentalists, for private study was often pursued by the band members.

Other areas of the South found entertainer-musicians often working in obscure anonymity. Most documentation of the time indicated that free Blacks performed or listened to recreational music within the confines of their own homes. The churches were a bastion for gatherings, as has been noted, and often provided a focus for social gatherings. Taverns and street-corners in urban areas gave the itinerant musician a place to perform.

In the rural area, the slave fiddler or banjoist, as noted, would provide instrumental music in his Jubilees.

Solomon Northrup, in his book Twelve Years As A Slave, clearly articulated how slaves had a determination to make some sense of an insensate degradation through music.

Born free in Saratoga Springs, New York, he became well-known in the area for his expertise in fiddling. Working during the summers at the United States Hotel, a resort in his home town, he became an itinerant fiddler during the winter months, playing with "pick up" dance bands and earnings as much as three dollars a night.

Lured to Washington, D.C. by a promise of a well paying engagement plus expenses, Northrup was kidnapped and taken to a plantation in Louisiana where he became the property of Edwin Epps and acquired the new name of Platt Epps.

During this period, his mistress encouraged Epps to buy Platt a violin so that he could entertain the family. When it was discovered that he really did possess considerable skill, Epps hired out his slave to play at other plantations.

Playing his violin was the only balm that Northrup had during his bondage.

Poetically, he wrote:

It was my companion the friend of my bosom, triumphing loudly when I was joyful, and uttering its soft, melodius consolation when I was sad... it would sing me a song of peace

Freedom was gained by the reverse process of having friendly help to return North.

If Northrup's reper-

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Cultural Arts Program Gallery 409 present Two Exhibitions

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Quilts by Joyce and Elizabeth Scott

In commemoration of Black History Month 1981

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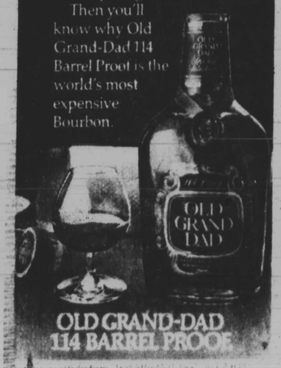

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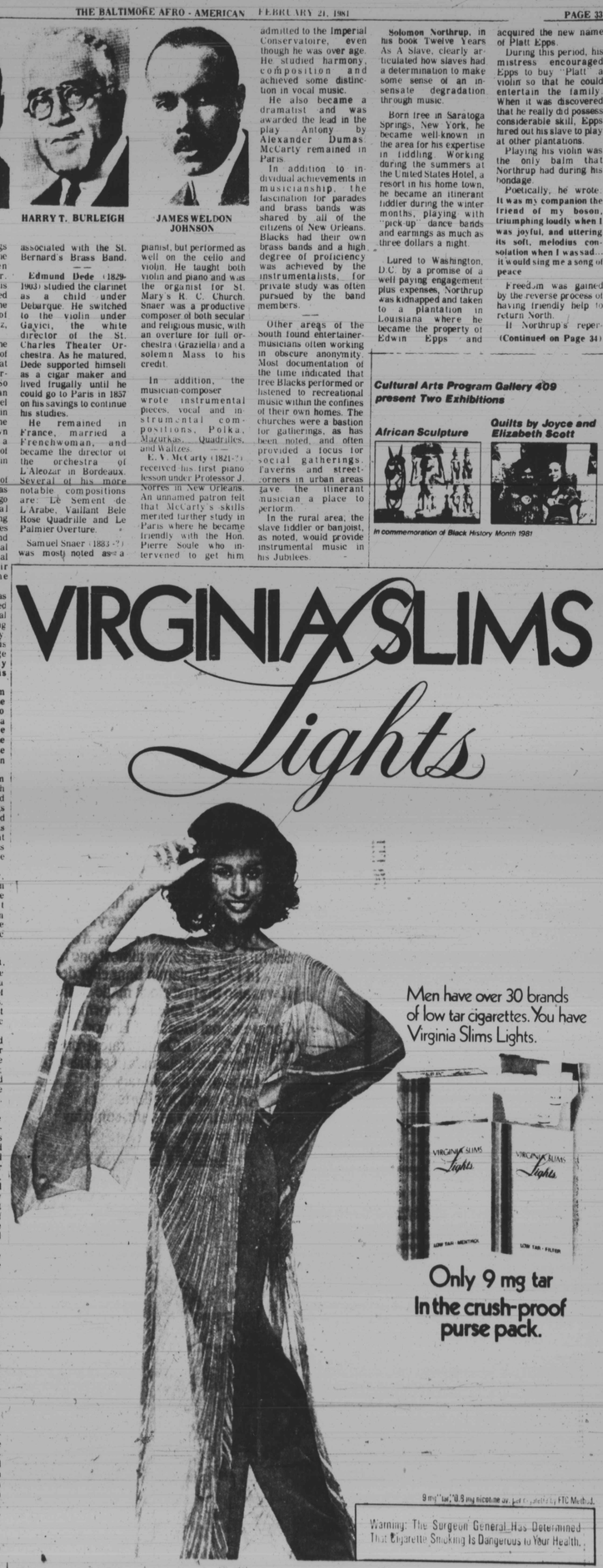

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