



Lyrics of the Afro-American Spiritual: A Documentary Collection (The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Black Music)

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Under the rubric spirituals are subsumed sorrow songs, jubilee songs, shout songs, chants, homilies, mantras, affirmations, and collective, personal, and historical allegories. Their lyrics tell an impassioned story of an embattled people, while presenting a theology of salvation; in general, they encompass crucial aspects of the Afro-American world view. This research collection contains lyrics of 978 spirituals, including some variants, culled from numerous anthologies and collections. Codes are provided to guide the researcher to an original source with musical notations. The songs are organized in nine thematic categories as follows: lyrics of sorrow, alienation, and desolation; consolation and faith; resistance and defiance; deliverance; jubilation and triumph; judgment and reckoning; regeneration; spiritual progress; and transcendence.

Each thematic section is prefaced by an interpretive statement, and the volume introduction discusses the historical background and analyzes the basic poetics of the spirituals with regard to structure, prosody, and figures of speech. Selective bibliographies of song collections and historical and theoretical works are included as well. The lyrics are indexed by title and by first line, and a general index provides access to topics, themes, persons, and places. The spirituals are pervasive in Afro-American life, and this collection will be a basic resource for researchers in all aspects of Afro-American culture, religion, and history, and useful, as well, for musicologists.

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