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CHORAL JOURNAL

SEPTEMBER 2024

William L. Dawson

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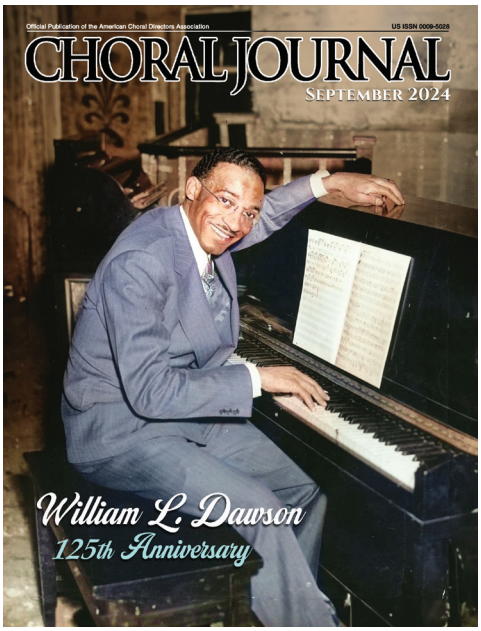

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ADVOCACY STATEMENT

The human spirit is elevated to a broader understanding of itself and its place in the world through the study of and participation in choral music. Singing in a choir produces more active and involved citizens. It affects self-worth in youth and adults. It builds connectivity throughout communities. Society benefits from the aesthetic beauty and community of singers created by choral programs within schools, houses of worship, and community organizations through involved citizenry, connectivity throughout communities, and feelings of personal self-worth. The American Choral Directors Association and its membership resolve to ensure the survival of choral programs for this and future generations by:

Actively voicing support for funding at local, state, and national levels of education and government; collaborating with local and national organizations to ensure the distribution of arts funding data and arts-related activism opportunities; advocating for full access to choral singing and inclusion of all singers in a choral program; and ensuring the distribution of advocacy statements and data regarding choral programs.

From the Executive Director

Robyn Hilger

As we stand on the threshold of a new school year and concert season, I am filled with immense excitement about all we've accomplished but may be even more excited about what is still to come. First, I will have served as your National Executive Director for three years as of September 15. I'm humbled to do this work with you every single day, and I thank you for the trust you have put in me and the support you have given me in this brief time. There's nothing I'd rather do than continue to figure out how ACDA can best serve you and to support the leaders who are doing this work on every level: National, Regional, and State.

Your choirs are not just a collection of voices; they are harmonious communities where each member brings their unique talent, passion, dedication, and self. Together, we create something extraordinary—a sound that resonates not only in the hearts of our audiences but also in our own lives.

Think back to the first time you felt the power of singing with others. That magical moment when individual voices melded into a single, powerful force. It is a feeling like no other, and it is a reminder of why we are here. Our journey this year will be filled with opportunities to experience that magic over and over again.

We have an exciting lineup of performances, workshops, and events planned for this year, including the 2025 National Conference in Dallas, Texas, in March 2025. This is a chance for us to showcase our hard work, to learn and grow as musicians, and to inspire others with our passion for choral music. But beyond the notes and rhythms, it is our sense of community that will make this year truly special. Let us support each other, celebrate each other's successes, and lift each other up when challenges arise. Remember, every great performance starts with dedication and preparation. Let us approach each rehearsal with focus and determination, knowing that every effort we put in now will pay off when we step onto the stage.

As we embark on this new journey, let us do so with open hearts and minds, ready to embrace the new experiences, friendships, and musical milestones that lie ahead. Together, we will make this year one of our best yet—a year filled with joy, growth, and unforgettable music.

Here's to new beginnings and the incredible journey ahead!

Robyn Hilger

From the **President**

David Fryling

It's the middle of July as I type, and I'm fresh off the first of two "Summer Sings" hosted by the eVoco Voice Collective, the community ensemble I direct. These events are a magical concentrated brew of everything that's fun and rewarding about being a conductor or singer in a choir. And the way they're stuck smack dab in the middle of this beautiful "leisure" season I wrote about a couple issues ago highlights three truths that I hope we all hold as self-evident:

Singing together is therapeutic. I bet most of you could quote a favorite study suggesting strong correlations between singing and various health benefits. When we sing, we fully enter the present moment. Psychologists call this "flow state," the benefits of which have been found to include "increased happiness, higher intrinsic motivation, greater creativity, and better emotional regulation."[1] Singing together allows space to express our emotions, be vulnerable with each other, and find affinity among strangers. It is a powerful form of group therapy that heals and rejuvenates.

Choir is community. Of course, singing in a choir is more than this. It is also where many of us (and our singers) find their deepest friendships, meet their life partners, and forge their own "found families." We sing to support each other, lift each other up, and create something extraordinary—music, yes, but also *community*—together.

People who listen to each other can work together. We all know that a musician's job is first and foremost to listen. I remember my primary music classes as a formative time of learning to simply listen: to pitches, to rhythm, to dynamics, and (most importantly) to each other. In the choir rehearsal, we deepen our journey of active listening together. What we gain in the process is empathy, understanding, and a sense of accomplishment in chasing truth and beauty.

As we leave summer behind us, hold space to be open to renewal and inspiration whenever it alights. As we meet and embrace our choir families in the months ahead, know that the lessons you impart, the encouragement you offer, and the love for music you instill in your singers have a far-reaching and positive ripple effect. Remember, what you do every day in your classrooms and rehearsal halls changes the world for good.

Here's to the year ahead: May the songs we sing resonate with harmony, joy, and light in our classrooms and concert halls, and throughout the world.

[1] https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-flow-2794768

From the **Editor**

Amanda Bumgarner

This *Choral Journal* focus issue on the life and work of William Dawson has been over a year in the making, and I am excited to finally share it with you. Thank you to Gwynne Brown, James Kinchen, and Mark Malone, who generously contributed their memories, insight, and time to this project amidst their own busy schedules. I also thank Merrin Guice Guill for working with Mark on the interview article; those who sent in choral reviews; and our book reviews editor, Gregory Pysh, for the Dawson book review. Below is a note from Marques Garrett, who is on the *Choral Journal* editorial board and initially suggested Dawson as a possible focus issue to celebrate the 125th anniversary of his birth in 1899. Marques was very helpful with content suggestions and curating the choral reviews. On behalf of all of these authors, I hope you enjoy this special focus issue and learn something you didn't know before about William L. Dawson.

From Marques L. A. Garrett

Marques L. A. Garrett

It was truly a pleasure to have served the *Choral Journal* beyond my regular editorial board member duties by helping to curate content for this special issue honoring the great musician William L. Dawson. While he is often referenced as it relates to his Negro spiritual arrangements, he was much more than that. His early experiences with instrumental groups and overall as an educator have impacted musicians for a century. His resilience in the midst of racism to become the first Black graduate of what is now the University of Missouri-Kansas City speaks volumes and is inspirational.

When R. Nathaniel Dett discussed other Black composers of his day, he frequently mentioned the work of Dawson. One of the earliest recordings of Dett's oratorio, *The Ordering of Moses*, was conducted by Dawson with the Talladega College Choir, the Mobile Symphony Orchestra, and John Work among other stellar soloists. Black conductors of their generation—especially those at Historically Black Colleges and Universities—regularly conducted each other's music when it may have fallen out of fashion in other circles.

The articles in this issue offer great detail into his life and music, while the choral reviews will hopefully introduce some of his songs to conductors who may be unfamiliar with his work. Thankfully, Neil A. Kjos Music Company has kept a large amount of Dawson's choral music in print. This allows new choirs to connect to this music, which not only helped to cement concert spiritual arrangements into the choral canon but has excited and mesmerized audiences for decades. I hope more people remember the great work of this influential man and are inspired to continue the scholarship of researching Dawson and those who succeeded him.

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Watch for updates and information on the 2025 National Conference webpage:
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William Dawson: An Introduction

MARK HUGH MALONE

Mr. Dawson and Me

What a privilege to interview William Dawson five times between 1979 and 1981, to write the seminal work on his life, and to share his educational influence. When I began doctoral studies in music education, I had already selected Dawson as my dissertation topic and wrote to ask if I could visit to gather information to write about him. In his response, Dawson invited me to his home in Tuskegee, Alabama, yet deflected the importance of the project by saying, "I don't know what you're going to write about!"[1]

During each day-long visit, I spent hours conversing with Dawson and feverishly writing notes, as he would not permit me to audio record our sessions. He stopped his sharing only briefly for us to sit down to a tasty lunch prepared by his wife, Cecile, before delving again into his memory and the personal archives housed in his home. Myriad copies of years of correspondence, historical artifacts, and other ephemera were a treasure-trove of documentation of the extraordinary and successful life of a performer, pedagogue, and composer.

Once the dissertation manuscript was complete, I asked Dawson to peruse the content, who then shared the work with his former teacher at Tuskegee Institute and subsequent colleague, Bess Bolden Walcott, not only for grammar suggestions, but historical accuracy. Walcott, who was hired out of Oberlin College in 1908 by Tuskegee Founder, Booker T. Washington, was ninety-five years old when I met her and earned her approval. Even then, the nonagenarian was still "at the top of her game."[2]

Mark Hugh Malone
Co-president, The Meistersingers of Mississippi
Author, *William Levi Dawson: American Music Educator* (University Press of Mississippi, 2023)

Photo courtesy of William Levi Dawson papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University. Used with permission.

My association with William Dawson continued off and on through 1986 when I met him at various events and appearances, specifically ACDA conferences. Following his death in 1990, I intended to publish my dissertation, but a teaching career of over forty years always seemed to get in the way. However, after spending the past five years engaged in archival research, the first volume dedicated solely to the accomplishments of this iconic American composer is finally in print as of March 2023. The following introduction to William Dawson's life and work comes primarily from that book, *William Levi Dawson: American Music Educator* (University Press of Mississippi).

1899-1930: Birth and Life

Born in Anniston, Alabama, on September 26, 1899, just three months prior to the start of the twentieth century, William Dawson entered a world that immediately captured his ears, his attention, and his ambition. Dawson emulated the people in his world, desiring to build skills to be a carpenter, a brakeman on a train, a brick mason…nothing escaped his vision. In my interviews with him, he spoke often of his desire to "be something."[3]

Mostly, he was enthralled with music and musicians, causing Dawson to realize he wanted to become a musician. His search for not only a basic education but also a music education locally was quite a challenge. And, his father believed that hard work—not education—would enable his son to be successful in a world that segregated African Americans from white folks, did not offer equal opportunities for those of his race, and subjected Black men and women to Jim Crow laws.

When Dawson heard of the work of Booker T. Washington, who built an elementary and secondary school in Tuskegee, Alabama, he vowed to go there. Indeed, at age thirteen, Dawson rode the train right onto the Tuskegee campus, took advantage of the myriad music-making opportunities, and was mentored by Washington, who took a strong interest in the young man.[4]

Following graduation from Tuskegee in 1921, Dawson accepted the position of band director at Kansas Vocational College in Topeka for one year, then took the job as music director at Lincoln High School in Kansas City, Missouri. While continuing to teach at Lincoln High School, Dawson did not forsake his personal quest to complete a bachelor's degree in music. Seeking to enroll at the Horner Institute of Fine Arts in Kansas City, the registrar informed him that the school's policy did not allow African Americans to attend classes. Dawson responded that he wished to study, not attend classes, and as such, Dawson was allowed to study alone with many faculty members, only after the school had closed for the day. At commencement in 1925, William Dawson was not allowed to sit with the graduating class but was relegated to the balcony. Even when the attendees erupted in tumultuous applause following the performance of his composition, *Trio in A for violin, cello, and piano*, Dawson was not allowed to stand and acknowledge the acclaim.[5]

In the spring of 1925, the Lincoln High School Choir was invited to sing at the Music Supervisors Convention in Kansas City, and music publishers swarmed Dawson following the impressive performance of several of the spirituals he arranged. In late 1925, the H. T. FitzSimons Company of Chicago published Dawson's first choral piece, *King Jesus is A-Listening*, which was quickly followed by, *Talk About A Child That Do Love Jesus,* and *My Lord, What A Mourning*.[6]

After resigning from Lincoln High School in 1925, Dawson left Kansas City to study with Adolph Weidig in pursuit of a master's degree in composition from the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago. Prior to the completion of his degree, Dawson met pianist Cornella Lampton; they fell in love and soon married. Cornella, who was the first woman to earn a music degree at Howard University, was in Chicago continuing her piano study with Percy Grainger. Tragically, after a year of marriage, Cornella died from complications following an appendectomy. Dawson set the lyrics of the Elizabeth Barrett Browning poem, "Out in the Fields," to music in memory of Cornella.[7]

With his master's degree in hand, Dawson remained in Chicago, a city that seemed to bustle with the far-reaching effects of the Harlem Renaissance. Immersed in musical pursuits, he worked for two music publishers, conducted a church choir, continued study with composers of note in the "Windy City," played first trombone in the Chicago Civic Orchestra, played trombone with Charlie "Doc" Cook's Doctors of Syn-

Photo 1. The Tuskegee Choir at Carnegie Hall, February 8, 1933. Tuskegee University Archives, Tuskegee University. Used with permission.

copation jazz ensemble, and amassed a choir and band in August 1929 to audition to win a spot as the Black performance group for the 1933 Chicago World's Fair. His ensembles were chosen to perform at the fair.[8]

1930-1955: Faculty Member at Tuskegee

The president of Tuskegee Institute, Dr. Robert Moton, summoned Dawson back to his alma mater in 1930 to become the director of the school of music as a part of Tuskegee's expansion into a four-year college. Dawson was much revered and highly sought after by the college; his salary at Tuskegee was second only to the president.[9]

Much like the Jubilee Singers at Fisk University, he wasted no time in putting Tuskegee on the map with his incredible Tuskegee Choir, who sang Dawson's own arrangements. By using the music created by enslaved African Americans as the basis for his inspiration, Dawson harmonized and utilized compositional techniques in crafting exciting choral arrangements that thrilled and wowed audiences and music critics alike. Within two years, Dawson succeeded in securing a spot on the program of the Grand Opening of Radio City Music Hall in NYC in 1932-33.

Imagine taking 110 singers via train to New York to spend a month in the midst of the Great Depression that overtook the nation. While there, the Tuskegee Choir sang a birthday concert for incoming president Franklin Delano Roosevelt at his residence and secured a date to perform in Carnegie Hall (Photo 1). On the way back to Alabama, the choir sang for outgoing president Herbert Hoover in the White House.[10]

Once back in Tuskegee, Dawson put the finishing touches on his extended work, *Negro Folk Symphony*. Intent on making certain the world knew that a Black man had composed a symphony, Dawson included the word Negro in the title. As long as I knew him, he used and defended "Negro" as the appropriate word to refer to members of his race. He noted that this was a common word across all the romance languages used to name African Americans, and as such, he would not use "Black," "Afro-American," or "African American."

World-renowned conductor Leopold Stokowski of the internationally famous Philadelphia Orchestra chose Dawson's symphony for premiere in November 1934 in both Philadelphia and at Carnegie Hall

in NYC (Photo 2). During the performance, the audience broke with custom and applauded between movements. At the conclusion of the symphony, the standing ovation continued so long that Stokowski ran off stage and dragged Dawson back to acknowledge the response. Marvelous acclaim by critics was followed by an avalanche of cards, letters, and telegrams received by Dawson from concertgoers and from many across the nation who listened via radio.[11]

Stokowski later recorded the *Negro Folk Symphony* with the American Symphony Orchestra. Recently, there has been a resurgence in the performance of Dawson's only extended work. The ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra recorded the symphony in 2020, and the Boston Symphony performed Dawson's orchestral composition during concerts March 9-11, 2023. And, the Chicago Civic Orchestra, of which Dawson was an alumnus, performed the masterpiece January 7-8, 2024.

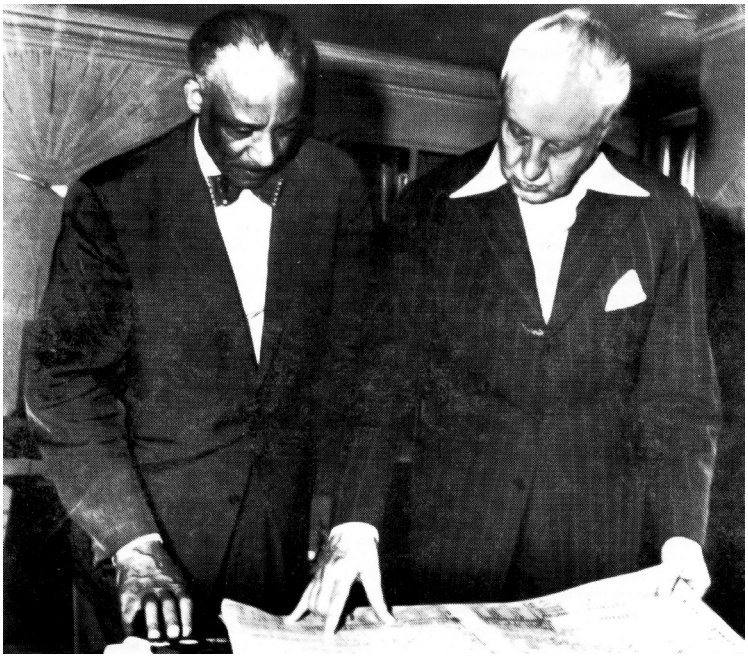

Photo 2. Dawson and Stokowski peruse the score of Dawson's only extended work, Negro Folk Symphony. Used with permission.

Ever multitasking, while tidying-up the score of his symphony Dawson commenced a long-distance courtship of Cecile De Mae Nicholson, a faculty member at Morris Brown College in Atlanta. The couple originally met in Kansas City, reconnected several years later, and eventually married in September 1935.[12]

During Dawson's twenty-five years as director of the Tuskegee Choir, the singers were heard over NBC, CBS, and ABC radio networks from coast to coast. From 1952 to 1955 the Tuskegee Choir sang on television several times, most notably the Ed Sullivan Show. The choir sometimes used pictures taken in the Tuskegee Chapel as a part of advertisement for the choir's radio appearances. One iconic ad for a performance via radio during a broadcast of the Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy Show from the Tower Theatre in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1950 featured the choir seated in the chancel in front of the stained-glass windows that portrayed the history of African American music through spirituals. While the original chapel burned in 1957, the stained-glass window was reconstructed from the original specifications and can be viewed today in the modern structure on campus.[13]

Fulfilling a lifelong dream, Dawson traveled to West Africa from December 1952 through February 1953 to experience African music firsthand (Photo 3). While en route to Africa, he stopped in London to hear the Vienna Philharmonic, as well as in Paris to meet Nadia Boulanger and her pupil Howard Swanson. Once in Africa and armed with the first portable reel-to-reel tape recorder, Dawson recorded rhythmic and melodic examples of traditional folk music, which still exist and have recently been digitized. Upon return to Tuskegee, he revised portions of the *Negro Folk Symphony* to provide rhythmic motives he believed more authentically represented his "missing link" to Africa.[14] Following a storied career of conducting, teaching, and composing, William Dawson retired from Tuskegee Institute in 1955 after twenty-five years of service to his alma mater.

1956-1989: Dawson in Retirement

Dawson's own thoughts and research on the subject of Negro Folk Songs appeared in an article in the March 1955 issue of *Etude*. Titled, "Interpretation of the Religious Folk Songs of the American Negro," the essay encompasses the history and growth of this music and discusses supposed oddities in the lyrics. Dawson

Photo 3. Dawson in Africa experiencing African folk music for the first time and recording examples using the first portable reel-to-reel tape recorder, 1953. William Levi Dawson papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University. Used with permission.

offered an explanation for the language of the enslaved:

> It is a mistake to think that the dialect of the Negro is only a crude attempt to pronounce Anglo-Saxon words. Careful examination will reveal that instead, it is an instinctive modification of their harsh and guttural sounds to satisfy his preference for soft and euphonious vocables characteristic of his native African speech. Instead of the diphthongal "I," he uses "ah"; for the sharp aspirated "th" in "thee," he uses "de"; for the final "th" in "with," he says, "wid."[15]

Dawson insisted that those enslaved in America suffered inhuman treatment, yet not a word of hate emerged from the Negro Folk Songs. Rather, the enslaved felt a oneness with Jesus Christ, who bore no malice toward His persecutors.

In 1956, Dawson was invited by the U.S. State Department to travel to Spain as a cultural emissary to conduct his own compositions. The spirituals were to be merged in concert with the music of Spanish Renaissance composer Tomas Luis de Victoria at the behest of Spain's cultural minister. Dawson's personal host while in Spain, Antonio Gonzales de la Peña, admitted that leaders of the church as well as choir members in the projected choral workshop locations were skeptical at first about inviting Dawson. Whether the reluctance was due to working with a Black man or attempting to perform African American music in ancient cathedrals was unclear. Yet, in his final report, Peña referred to William Dawson as an ambassador who would take the beautiful Iberian music back to share in America and claimed he left an ineffable mark on the hearts of Spaniards.[16]

Dawson remained in demand as a guest conductor for choirs and orchestras for over forty-five years following his retirement from Tuskegee. As early as 1939, well before he left employment at the Institute, Dawson began accepting invitations to serve as guest conductor for his own works. Yet, a re-designed, retired Dawson rocketed into importance in 1956 as a highly desired conductor for choral festivals, speaking engagements, and choral clinics/workshops both domestically and internationally.[17]

In 1986, at my invitation, Dawson appeared as headliner for the first-ever state conference of the Mississippi Chapter of the American Choral Directors Association at the University of Mississippi in Oxford, during which I served as his chauffeur and escort. It was a moving moment when he was introduced with the honor and dignity he deserved, which was in direct

contrast to the guarded reception he and his students bore when he brought the Tuskegee Choir to Mississippi in 1936, fifty years prior. Because it was the law at that time, the flyer announcing the concert included a clause at the bottom indicating that the balcony was reserved for "Negroes."[18]

1990: Dawson Passes Away at 90

Tuskegee University hosted a marvelous ninetieth birthday party September 24, 1989, two days before his actual birthdate. Dawson personally signed copies of the program at the event, during which invited guests and Tuskegeeans paid tribute to him through the reading of scripture, singing of hymns, renditions of his spirituals, and honors from state and national officials.

ACDA continued to recognize William Dawson as a gifted and celebrated composer with a post-birthday celebration at the Southern Division Convention a year later in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1990. My article, "William Dawson and the Tuskegee Choir," appeared in the March 1990 issue of the *Choral Journal*, which coincided with the salute to Dawson "for his excellent achievements in choral music."[19]

Less than two months following the convention tribute, Dawson passed away on May 2, 1990. He had fulfilled a wish in his early childhood to "be something!" The song *There is a Balm in Gilead* seems to sum up William Dawson's response to life with the words: "Sometimes I feel discouraged, And think my work's in vain, But then the Holy Spirit, Revives my soul again."

There is More to Learn about William Dawson

An important goal of the first published volume celebrating the accomplishments of this remarkable African American composer and Alabama native is that the rest of the "good news" about the life and work of William Levi Dawson has yet to be discerned. His extensive collection of papers and ephemera can be found in the Rose Archives at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. In addition, other sources can also be discovered in the Tuskegee University Archives, the University of Missouri-Kansas City Archives, as well as the Missouri Valley Collection of the Kansas City Public Library. CJ

NOTES

[1] Mark Hugh Malone, *William Levi Dawson: American Music Educator* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2023), 3.
[2] Ibid., 4.
[3] Ibid., 9.
[4] Ibid., 14-16.
[5] Ibid., 25-32.
[6] Ibid., 27-28, 133-134.
[7] Ibid., 32-33.
[8] Ibid., 33-36.
[9] Ibid., 40-41.
[10] Ibid., 55-60.
[11] Ibid., 93-101.
[12] Ibid., 61.
[13] Ibid., 61-73.
[14] Ibid., 101-108.
[15] William L. Dawson, "Interpretations of the Religious Folk Songs of the American Negro," *Etude*, March 1955, 11.
[16] Malone, *William Levi Dawson*, 121-123.
[17] Ibid., 120-130.
[18] Ibid., 129.
[19] Mark Hugh Malone, "William Dawson and the Tuskegee Choir," *Choral Journal*, March 1990, 17-20.

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William Dawson: An Interview with Mark Malone

MERRIN GUICE GILL

What originally drew you to want to research William Levi Dawson? Did you have personal experience with Black music and musicians?

As a member of the choir at Hialeah High School (HHS), a suburb of Miami, Florida, I had rich experiences singing arrangements and settings of African American spirituals. William Dawson's works were my favorite. As a junior, I was selected for an honor choir and was absolutely enthralled with the clinician, Jester Hairston.

Despite the concerted efforts of many to achieve racial equality in America, the results of the Civil Rights Movement and subsequent legislation in 1964 and 1968 were slow to take effect. As such, the Dade County, Florida, public schools were still racially segregated in the late 1960s. As a senior in high school, public school faculties were finally integrated in February 1970, but not the students. Despite the fact of continued supposed "separate but equal" schools, I and my peers in the HHS choir frequently heard the segregated/all-African American Miami Northwestern High School Choir and greatly admired the repertoire of spirituals the ensemble performed under the direction of their charismatic and talented conductor.

Considering the intellectual and socio-political landscape of the 1970s, did you find that your curiosity about this Black American composer was welcome by your committee, and was it treated with the same enthusiasm as other composer studies?

My mentor at Florida State University during my master's degree was Dr. Colleen Jean Kirk, who later became my major professor during doctoral studies. Colleen Kirk was one of the thirty-five founding members of ACDA in 1959 and eventually served as national president from 1981 to 1983. Dr. Kirk knew of the creative accomplishments of William Dawson and encouraged my interest. She also knew that I had been accepted into the doctoral program in choral music education and that an in-depth study of William Dawson would not only provide much-needed information about this important musician, but would be of high quality as a dissertation topic.

Under her aegis, I contacted Dawson and an initial interview was confirmed in January of 1979. The focus of this first investigation was to reveal the impact of Dawson's life and work and was my choice for a required project to complete the master's degree in music education. The master's project on Dawson af-

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forded me an invaluable primary resource from which I later forged a dissertation prospectus. Once doctoral course work and comprehensive examinations were completed, my committee enthusiastically embraced Dawson as a worthy dissertation topic that, when completed, would make a huge contribution to the field of choral music education.

In your book, *William Levi Dawson: American Music Educator*, you mention that Dawson consciously understood in the 1930s that there was a "complete disregard for the 14th Amendment that granted full citizenship to the formerly enslaved and promised equal protection under the law."[1] Could you explain how this might have informed his compositional choices and his educational style?

More than thirty years before William Dawson was born, the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States was ratified in 1868, giving full citizenship to those recently enslaved and assured equal treatment through lawful protection. Yet from birth, Dawson continued to face inequalities and blatant discrimination as an African American. Public schools for Black children did not exist in his hometown of Anniston, Alabama; members of the Ku Klux Klan wreaked havoc and terror to keep Black people "in their place"; and though persons of color technically had the right to vote, Jim Crow laws left African Americans disenfranchised. Once at Tuskegee Institute, one of the early Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Dawson thrived in what could be considered a semi-safe environment. Ventures out into the world at large, however, brought harassment from white people, refusals to allow lodging in hotels, outright confrontation from officials regarding entering buildings through the front door, and barring admission to colleges due to the color of his skin.

Having learned of composer Antonin Dvořák as a student at Tuskegee, and through his association with African American composer Harry T. Burleigh, which began in 1921, Dawson emulated the Bohemian (Czech) composer. The early admiration of Dvořák soon led to a feeling of oneness with the composer for his rise to international success through composing music in a Nationalistic style, taking direct inspiration from the indigenous folk music of the Czech people. Boldly, Dvořák overcame the dominance of Germanic music in Czechoslovakia to musically refute the prevailing notion of the insignificance of Czech folk music. Dawson felt empowered to replicate Dvořák's example by not only deriving inspiration from the organic melodic material of his own race, but quoting it exactly, and extending its importance through his own compositional ideas.

Dawson saw a direct parallel to the path trod by Dvořák with his own struggles for racial and social uplift in America. William Dawson's compositional choices and his educational style were a direct reflection of his alignment with the experiences and accomplishments of Antonin Dvořák in order to overcome "second-class citizenship."

William Dawson composed various genres including choral/symphonic works, solo art song, and other concerted compositions. What do you think drew him to primarily focus on the "Negro Spiritual" as his dominant form of composition?

Hildred Roach, Lawrence Jackson, and others have commented on the dearth of instrumental compositions following the successful premiere of the *Negro Folk Symphony* in 1934. After presenting lecture/recitals across America during the 2022-2024 academic years, I am amazed that so many voice instructors and other music professors are unaware of Dawson's vocal solo compositions.

Explanations for Dawson's compositional concentration on "Negro spirituals" include first, that since The Tuskegee Choir was the premier performance group under Dawson's direction at Tuskegee Institute from 1930 to 1955, his compositional efforts seemed geared to establish and continue the national reputation of the choir. Second, Dawson's choir at Lincoln High School, the Tuskegee Choir, and performances of his choral opus that Dawson chose for all-state and special event choirs throughout America and abroad led to his continued national and international fame.

Being a musical ambassador from the U.S. State Department and the performance by the Philadelphia Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski are highly impressive accomplishments. Did you get a sense of how he ranked these achievements in surveyance of his career?

In terms of the ranking of the premiere of his symphony and the three months he spent in Spain as a music ambassador, each represents a different thrust of Dawson's musical output. I got the sense from Dawson that each was considered important milestones to be treasured. Yet, the impressive impact of the *Negro Folk Symphony* that shared Dawson's compositional creativity through multiple live performances by the orchestra considered the best in the world at that time (and via radio from coast to coast) was a stunning achievement that was difficult to surpass.

Dawson, originally from Alabama, lived in Kansas, Missouri, and Chicago. Did he remark whether these separate regions differed as it related to the Black experience, racism, or musical opportunities?

Following graduation from Tuskegee Institute in 1921, Dawson accepted the position of band director at Kansas Vocational College in Topeka. While in the capital city, he sought to enroll in music study at Washburn College. The school registrar was reluctant to admit a Black student and asked him to pass a special exam as a matriculation requirement. Yet, the dean of music at the college, Henry Stearns, allowed Dawson to take composition classes and experiment with playing stringed instruments. Dawson was allowed to join the musician's union in Kansas.

While living in Kansas City, Missouri, Dawson encountered many challenges due to his race but experienced many opportunities to make music. Dawson took the position of music director at Lincoln High School and established instrumental music programs in elementary schools. Seeking to enroll at the Horner Institute of Fine Arts, the registrar quoted segregation laws to deny admission. Yet, Dawson's avid interest in studying music permitted him to enter the school through the grace and compassion of Regina Hall, one of the music faculty. Dawson's admission to Horner Institute meant that he could receive one-on-one instruction from faculty only after the school closed for the day. William Dawson was confronted by Muehlebach Hotel officials for entering through the front door and was told to exit and enter through the back door.

Upon asking to audition for a position in the band that performed in one of the parks in Kansas City, Dawson was told he would have to join the musician's union. After he joined the union, the conductor still hesitated. It was only after Dawson sat in the horn section during a rehearsal and demonstrated his performance skills that the director relented and allowed him to rehearse and perform with the band.

Dawson was not allowed to sit with his graduating class due to his race and was remanded to the balcony, as if he were still under the aegis of an enslaver. Following a commencement performance of his composition *Trio in A for violin, 'cello, and piano*, Dawson was not allowed to stand and acknowledge the acclaim.

In Chicago, Dawson had myriad opportunities but did encounter some difficulties. He worked for two music publishers, conducted a church choir, played first trombone in the Chicago Civic Orchestra as the only African American in the ensemble. He endured open hostility from some performers, others did not speak to him, and there were those who completely ignored him. All of the white bands that auditioned in 1929 for a performance spot in the 1933 Chicago World's Fair had access to the same select group of instrumentalists, yet Dawson had to amass his own performers to contend for the opportunity to present a concert at the Fair. His sixty-piece band and a chorus of twenty voices won a spot to present a concert as the World's Fair's Black performing ensemble.

How was Dawson's work as an educator an outgrowth and continued legacy of his own education at Tuskegee? Did he reference the significance of the influences of H. T. Burleigh and others educators at Tuskegee?

First and foremost, the influence of Booker Taliaferro Washington made an impact on the life of young William Dawson, who embraced the Washingtonian philosophy as a driving force in his response to racial

William Levi Dawson papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University. Used with permission. Date unknown.

discrimination, unequal opportunities, and confirming his worth as an individual. Further, music mentoring from choir director Jennie Cheatham Lee and director of bands Captain Frank L. Drye provided pedagogical models for success, demands for performance excellence, and a rich background of repertoire.

Dawson's travel with the Tuskegee Quintette along the Redpath Chautauqua Circuit afforded the young musician contact with national political and social reform figures, as well as composers such as H. T. Burleigh. Boldly, William Dawson shared his own compositional manuscript with Burleigh for critique and guidance. Burleigh's sage advice led to the first significant publication for Dawson in 1923: a vocal solo setting of Paul Laurence Dunbar's poem, "A Negro Love Song," titled *Jump Back Honey, Jump Back*.

Prior to graduation from the Institute, the entire Tuskegee faculty considered each potential student before confirming eligibility for commencement. The professors contemplated the existence of the "Tuskegee Spirit" in every pupil that would shine the light of wisdom on the world. Of course, it did not require lengthy scrutiny for the Tuskegee faculty to confirm Dawson's ability to illuminate the world with his ambition, personality, and talent.

It appears that Dawson never sought employment outside of the Historically Black College and University system. Was this a conscious decision? Did he ever mention his loyalty to Tuskegee or the education of Black students?

Despite a temperamental nature in his early years at the college, during which he would get mad regard-

ing an issue and take the train to Chicago, William Dawson was forever loyal to Tuskegee. In those early days, President Robert Russa Moton would have to follow Dawson to Illinois and persuade the composer to return. Having initiated his tenure at the college at the outset of the Great Depression, the challenges of maintaining enrollment in degree programs within the School of Music were greatly challenging, yet disappointing to the composer.

Ultimately, however, William Dawson was committed to the students and the music program at Tuskegee, remaining in the position for twenty-five years. Tributes to Dawson abound from former students, especially from nationally known author Ralph Ellison, attesting to Dawson's imposing presence as a pedagogue and conductor. Yet, faculty and former students revealed their understanding of his deep love for them in exacting excellence in performance and providing an example for success in the world at large.

Dawson did spend a year in residence as conductor of the choir at Fisk University, marking his only full-time employment outside of Tuskegee. In demand as a choral clinician and conductor of all-state choirs nationwide, Dawson traveled extensively but remained a resident in the town of Tuskegee and kept a post office box on the Tuskegee campus until his death.

Dawson believed that his work as a Black man in a white-dominated and unequal world would prove eventually to lead to "social change leading to racial equality."[2] Were you able to ascertain how Dawson felt about the American pursuit for equality toward the end of his life in the 1990s? In addition, how much did Dawson consider what he accomplished as movement toward a more equal and just society?

Following the example of his mentor, Booker T. Washington, William Dawson was a strong believer in attempting to work within established protocols or restraints to achieve social change that would eventually lead to equality of the races. Never one to aggressively or overtly challenge barriers for African Americans, he often stood quietly unmoving in response to blatant racial discrimination or would use a soft answer to quell micro-aggression aimed at Black people.

While serving as music director at Lincoln High School in Kansas City, William Dawson met and befriended art instructor Aaron Douglas. The two became fast friends that lasted a lifetime and were sounding boards for the struggles encountered by people of color. Douglas was already a reader of *Crisis*, the publication of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and greatly encouraged Dawson to take into account social, economic, and artistic challenges for people of color. Finding a friend of the same cultural background began to lift Douglas from his perceived prison of isolation as a Black artist, which inspired him to depart Missouri for Harlem in 1925. This time is considered by many to be among the most productive years of the Harlem Renaissance. Douglas's influential leadership and creativity would guide many to proclaim him to be the Father of African American Art.

While William Dawson chose a different path that eventually led him to spend most of his life in Tuskegee, Alabama, Rae Linda Brown, David Yarbrough, and others proclaimed that though he worked from a satellite location, Dawson's life and work reflected adherence to the ideals of the Harlem Renaissance. The Reawakening afforded African American writers and artists a means to clearly define themselves devoid of the extreme caricature attached to their race. Among the goals expressed were: achieving social justice, building a sense of racial pride, encouraging the creative self-expression of African Americans, and a focus on intellectualism. William Dawson's life and work clearly emphasized each of these ideals in pursuit of equality for African Americans.

Achieving Social Justice

Perhaps the goal of reaching racial equality and a manifestation of the Fourteenth Amendment could be termed a "Black Lives Matter" message from the flowering of artistic output during the Harlem Renaissance. Dawson believed in utilizing organic African American melodic material and extending its significance and influence, or as Kyler says, "to struggle for equality through nonviolent intransigence and artistic means."[3] The spirituals, or "Negro Folk Songs" as Dawson preferred (as it aligned him with Antonin Dvořák), afforded Dawson recognition and acceptance

as a gifted composer, both in his native country and internationally.

Building a Sense of Racial Pride

In purposely choosing to include the term "Negro" in two of his instrumental compositions, *Negro Folk Symphony* and *A Negro Work Song*, Dawson wanted to ensure the world knew that a Black man had written symphonic works. In following the footsteps of Dvořák, Dawson chose to set the folk melodies and motifs of those enslaved in America during the antebellum period in the form of vocal solos and four-part choral pieces, to embellish, preserve, and celebrate their significance. Again, eschewing the label "spirituals" and preferring "Negro Folk Songs," Dawson asserted pride in his race.

Encouraging the Creative Expression of African Americans

In contrast to Antonin Dvořák, who was inspired by the folk music of his country, William Dawson sought to directly quote the folk music of African Americans in his choral and instrumental works. Especially evidenced in his choral settings, Dawson went further to invoke his extensive study of music to harmonize and use compositional techniques to extend the significance of the original vocal themes fashioned by enslaved Africans in America. Indeed, some of his choral works are creative concert adaptations of organic material that are more like new compositions. Thus, William Dawson often listed himself as composer.

Focus on Intellectualism

In my interviews with Dawson, he spoke often of his desire to "be something." To that end, he set out to achieve a music education by matriculating at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama to earn an elementary and secondary education. Determined to continue to learn, Dawson persisted in the face of racial discrimination and segregation laws to be admitted for study to complete a bachelor's degree in music. Further study led him to hone his compositional skills and achieve the status as a master of music. Forged with his education and experience Dawson returned to Tuskegee for twenty-five years to develop artistic and life skills in students and assist them in their journey to reach self-actualization.

For over half a century following retirement from Tuskegee, Dawson accepted invitations to serve as guest conductor for choirs/orchestras, headliner for music events, keynote speaker in myriad venues, and special guest for interviews via radio and television. His commitment to lifelong learning was a topic he eagerly shared and a quest he encouraged everyone to adopt.

Conclusion

None of his struggles for equality dampened William Dawson's determination to succeed. He viewed any roadblocks as mere minor setbacks and endeavored to find a way around, over, or under to get beyond any difficulty or challenge. When asked late in life if the barriers to matriculation was a discouragement, Dawson replied, "You don't let that disturb you—you have a goal."[4]

William Dawson's life and work is a testament to his efforts to achieve equality through the example of his mentor, Booker T. Washington. He was extremely proud of all his musical accomplishments and implicitly delighted by his work toward a more equal and just society. However, he was not effusively specific, nor boastful of the strides he made toward racial and social uplift. CJ

NOTES

[1] Mark Hugh Malone, *William Levi Dawson: American Music Educator* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2023), 23.

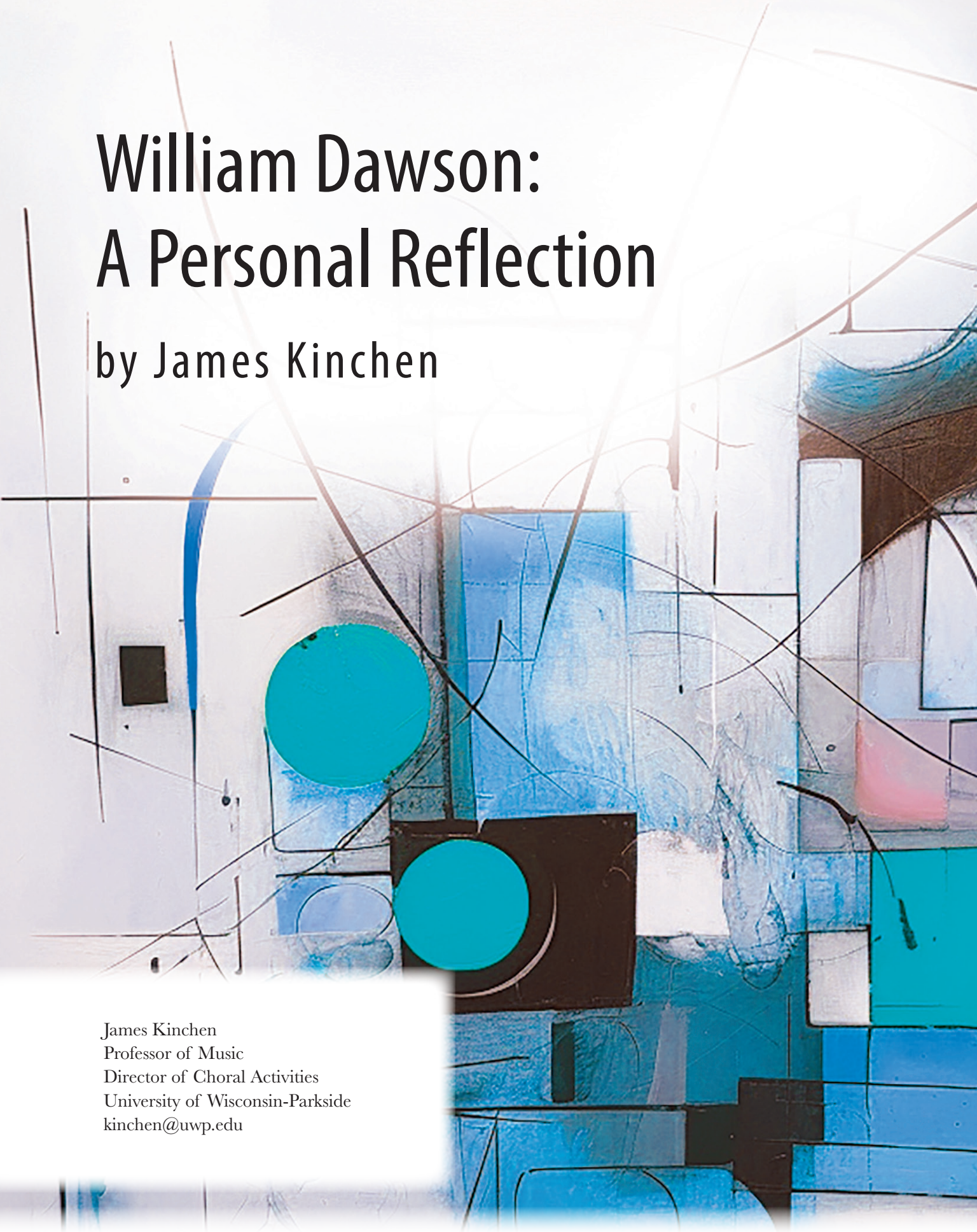
[2] Ibid.

[3] Carolyn Kyler, "Dawn in Harlem: Exploring the Origins of the Harlem Renaissance Through Image and Text," *Critical Insights: Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Grey House Publishing/Salem Press 2015), 5.

[4] Mark Hugh Malone, *William Levi Dawson,* 32.

William Dawson: A Personal Reflection

by James Kinchen



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The Recording that Changed Everything

One summer while I was in college, I worked at the Jacksonville office of the Army Corps of Engineers. Jim Jones, a senior draftsman, wanted to learn something about each of the summer workers. When I told him that I was majoring in music, his eyes lit up! "Do you know of Arthur Prysock?" A blank stare and slow shake of the head accompanied my negative response. Clearly disappointed, he extended a lifeline. "How about Billy Eckstein?" Again, I was clueless. "And you are a music major?" he asked incredulously. "What are they teaching you?"

A few days passed, and I came near his drafting table again. He beckoned. "Have you ever heard of William Dawson?" Now my eyes lit up. "Yes!" I responded. Mr. Jones smiled. We sang Dawson's *King Jesus Is A-listening* in my junior high school choir. When I wanted to sing a solo for our festival competition as a tenth grader, I chose his *Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley*. My high school choir sang *There is a Balm in Gilead* and *Mary Had a Baby*. I heard other choirs do *Soon-Ah Will Be Done*, and one local college choir could not leave the stage before singing *Ezekiel Saw De Wheel*, which always brought down the house.

Then Mr. Jones's expression turned more serious. "Have you ever heard the Tuskegee Institute Choir sing?" No, I hadn't, though I knew they had made a record.

Then, *the* question: "Would you like to hear a recording of them?"

My heart was beating faster! "Yes, sir!" I replied.

"My wife attended Tuskegee and sang under Dawson. She has a recording of the choir. I will need to think about whether or not to let you borrow it." I assured him that if he did, I promised to take care of it. He decided to take the chance. He handed it to me, and without the hint of a smile, he said, "This is one of the original recordings. You can't buy it anymore. I believe I can trust you. Take it home tonight, listen to it, and bring it back tomorrow in the same shape it's in now. If anything happens to this recording, I will have to leave home!"

William Levi Dawson was a giant. To actually hear his choir sing his music was a thrill and absolutely epiphanic for me, a young aspiring choral musician! What I heard—the timbre, the phrasings, the deep conviction that permeated their singing, how they sang artfully at the intersection of a universal choralism and yet with proud and undisguised ethnic identity—all fascinated me. I returned the recording to Mr. Jones the next day unscathed. But what I had heard changed me in a way that would last a lifetime.

Meeting William Dawson

I was so excited to attend my first ACDA National Convention in 1979, now a young choral professor at Winston-Salem State University. We were in Kansas City, and I was thrilled to find my still-new mentor, Eugene Thamon Simpson, there. Simpson was a master choral artist and consummate musician who became the first person of color to conduct a Florida All-State Choir. He then organized and led the Committee for Ethnic Music and Minority Concerns when ACDA instituted its Repertoire and Standards Committee structure, back at a time when the organization was anything but inclusive and embracing of diversity. He and I were walking together. "There's Bill Dawson! Let's go over and say hello." My eyes stretched. *The* William Dawson!

At nearly eighty years old, Dawson was still strong, sturdy, energetic, and sharp as a tack, though a little shorter than I had expected him to be. I summoned up all the courage I had. "Dr. Dawson, I would like to ask you a question about *Ain'-a That Good News*," I blurted out. With the candor that I was soon to learn was his norm, he replied, "Well, I'm on my way to a session and don't have time to talk now, but you can come by my room tonight and I will try to answer your question. And bring a score!" Now my head was swimming! I asked his room number. And what time? "Oh, about midnight." Midnight? But that's what he said.

Ain'-a That Good News was a very rhythmic and extremely effective Dawson setting. We had always known it as a single piece of musical energy, each verse set as a variation, which moved unimpeded from start through a short coda to its conclusion, except for a final *ritardando* and *fermata* near the very end. His recent revision had now inserted a slow verse before returning to tempo. I wondered why.

So, a few minutes before midnight, I stood nervously but poised to knock on his hotel door. I knocked. I waited. No answer. I knocked again. And waited. "He is asleep by now," I thought. "I will not knock again, lest I awaken him and irritate him." Sadly, I walked away toward the elevator. I pressed the call button, and when the doors opened, out stepped William Dawson! He invited me into his room to have a seat and show him the passage that I was wondering about. Then he explained his reasoning and started softly singing the recently added passage. I was soon moving to the beat and patting my foot in time, soaking in the moment.

Then, without warning, like a bolt of lightning on a cloudless day, he exploded, "What are you doing?" He pointed his index finger at me, the most accusative index finger I had ever experienced except for that of my father. "Patting my foot," I managed to mutter.

"Why?" he demanded to know.

Completely nonplused, I responded, "Keeping time."

"Is that how you keep time? Is that what they taught you in school? You keep time inside!" he said, thumping on his chest. Then he looked at his watch and announced, "It's getting late!"

I was being thrown out of William Dawson's room! I was 6'1" when I walked in, but I might have been half

Photo 1. March 1985; ACDA National Conference; Salt Lake City. Left to Right: Arthur Evans, South Carolina State University; Eugene T. Simpson, Rowan University; William L. Dawson; James Kinchen, Winston-Salem State University. Photo provided by Emory University Special Collections. Used with permission.

that tall on my way out.

There were subsequent opportunities for memories with Dawson. Dawson the musician hardly ever missed a beat, but I once saw Dawson skip! He attended the 1985 National at Salt Lake City, and there he, Arthur Evans of South Carolina State University, Gene Simpson of what is now Rowan University, and I hung out together (Photo 1). Walking down the street next to him one day, I thought I saw him take a skip. A bit later, it happened again! He noticed my puzzlement and realized that I was eager for an explanation. From marching drills in his youth at Tuskegee, he explained, he literally had keeping in step so deeply ingrained that he could not walk side-by-side with anyone without matching their step. Later reflection on this moment made me marvel. He was walking with three vigorous men who ranged from thirty years to fifty years his junior, and here he was in his mid-eighties, matching our strides down the street.

Dawson in Residency

I sat on the Winston-Salem State University Lyceum Committee, the group that oversaw large event cultural programming for the campus. Mr. Harry Pickard, who chaired the committee and, as savvy as he was crusty, would sometimes ask me as the youngster on the committee, "Mr. Kinchen, do you have any ideas?" Now, in the fall of 1985, I had an idea. As proud as Dawson was of his choral oeuvre, his *Negro Folk Symphony*, premiered

under the baton of legendary conductor Leopold Stokowski, gave him special delight. Sadly, it was not programmed so often fifty years later. Pickard approved right away. We would bring the Winston-Salem Symphony, playing far better than its budget suggested it should, to campus, but would leverage our institutional resources to feature a work by an African American composer on this HBCU campus.

Pickard dispatched me to ask Dawson if he would consider doing a residency and being consultant to orchestra music director Peter Perret. Then, Pickard asked me if I would like to have Dawson come into one of my choral rehearsals and work with my singers as part of his visit. You have no idea how many times I pinched myself as William Dawson stood in my choir room and worked with my choir on *Lit'l' Boy Chile*, *In His Care-O*, and *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*. His *Symphony* was wonderfully played and received with appreciation at the concert.

I chaired Local Arrangements for the 1988 ACDA Southern Division Conference in Winston-Salem. Dawson called me and asked me to arrange his lodging. We even got a chance to enjoy a meal: Dawson; his former Tuskegee student, Daniel Webster Andrews, Jr.; a local choral leader and member of my committee; and myself. Sharing the evening meal with Dawson also meant sharing a couple of end-of-day rituals: his "vice" of ordering a single scoop of vanilla ice cream and his enlisting the aid of friends to put drops of glaucoma-control medication in his eyes. Dawson led the general session of that convention in the singing his setting of *Every time I feel the Spirit*.

Tribute Performance

This great man, now about to complete his ninth decade of life, deserved special recognition from ACDA, and, especially, the region of ACDA where he had done so much of his work—the region from which the songs of its enslaved sons and daughters caught his attention as a youngster and became so central to his creativity and choral artistry. I proposed a special session to honor Dawson at the next conference two years hence! What could be more appropriate than for him to hear a large choir of students from HBCUs from across the South, schools not unlike his beloved Tuskegee, singing his own African American folksong settings? Southern Division leadership happily embraced the idea and gave the green light.

Later in September of that same year, my office phone rang. "Hello, Kinchen," I said in my customary greeting.

"Dawson," came the reply.

I was a bit confused. "I'm sorry. You must have the wrong number. There is no Dawson here!"

"*This* is Dawson," the caller responded. I was speechless! He continued: "I'm here at the Holiday Inn. I just called Dan Andrews [his former student] and now, I'm calling you. I want you birds to come over here and see me!" Dawson explained that he had been to Raleigh, a couple of hours east of us, to testify at a copyright infringement trial. He was now on his way back to Alabama—*driving*—and thought he should stop for the night.

Once I hung up, I collected myself and called Dan to confirm that this was not some sort of prank. We had dinner with Dawson, and when the server brought a bowl of vanilla ice cream (he had asked for a scoop), the disciplined man that he was, Dawson had a couple of spoonsful and left the rest! We went back to his hotel room and continued to talk. Then without warning and unrelated to any particular prompt, Dawson started singing the refrain of his iconic *Soon-Ah Will Be Done*, gently conducting it in duple meter from his chair as he sang.

I last saw Dawson a year and a half later in Birmingham, site of the 1990 Southern Division Conference. I had left the division to accept an appointment at University of Wisconsin-Parkside. My esteemed colleague, Robert L. Morris, had taken on leadership of the Dawson tribute that I had proposed, and with Bob's usual deep care for "getting it right" and attention to detail, had brought my idea to wonderful fruition. Dan Andrews had made the trip from North Carolina. When we saw Dawson, we were both happy to see him but shocked at his appearance. He had been a very agile and mobile man. Now he had a cane and was much slower, almost fragile. We soon learned why.

Dawson's wife, Cecile, had been facing health challenges, but Dawson saw himself being able to take care of her. However, one day she took a fall in their home, and he was unable to get her up. The episode itself was

disheartening, but all the more was the realization that he could not take care of his beloved wife of some fifty-five years in the way that she needed. He had to send her to an assisted-living facility. Dawson was showing the physical effects of this deep demoralization.

The three of us shared lunch, then sat together in the audience that day as he heard this superb choir of singers from several institutions under the masterful direction of Brazeal Dennard, whose eponymous Detroit-based chorale was one of the earliest African American choirs to sing for an ACDA National Convention, perform a generous and representative program of Dawson's iconic music. He was genuinely appreciative. I was at once moved and proud in a way that I cannot put into words. That was March. A couple of months later, Dawson passed away. I had been the catalyst for this tribute concert, almost surely the last performance of Dawson's music that he heard in his legendary and richly fecund lifetime. And I got to sit next to him as he listened to it!

There is one more performance of Dawson's music that I feel compelled to mention—a concert that took place a year after his passing, but one that I believe he attended in spirit! And it took place before arguably the world's most important assemblage of choral artists. I was honored beyond words, then as National R&R (formerly R&S) Chair for Ethnic Music & Minority Concerns, to preside over a tribute session at the 1991 National Convention at Phoenix, Arizona, that honored William Dawson's contributions to our art and community. Three fine choirs sang a large body of Dawson's choral settings: Jackson State University, directed by Bob Morris; Morris Brown College, under the direction of Glenn Halsey; and the Chamber Singers of Glassboro State, now Rowan, led by Gene Simpson.

At his 1925 graduation ceremony at Horner Institute, Dawson had been rendered invisible. He had written a trio for violin, cello, and piano that had been selected for its premiere performance that day, but he had been consigned to "colored" seating in the balcony and, so, was not allowed to take a bow or receive the audience's generous applause. On this day, William Dawson, absent in body but present in spirit, was the recipient of this richly deserved accolade from ACDA!

A Link to the Past, A Story for the Future

A century and a quarter after his birth, does William Levi Dawson still matter? Does his music, his creative, meticulously crafted presentations of the songs that he was able as a boy to hear community elders, once chattel bondsmen, and the children of the formerly enslaved sing, still matter? Emphatically, "Yes!" His forebears—and my own—were brought to the "New World" as uncompensated laborers, and worse, as human property. It was on the backs of their forced labor that colonies flourished and new nations were founded. Much was taken from those people to gain their submission. But their music and what it meant to them and how it functioned for them within the context of their own West African cultures could not be wrested from them. It was that music—music that at once flowed from their lives while providing accompaniment for it—that expressed their faith, fears, frolics, frustrations, futility, and, yes, their furtive yearnings for freedom. To the extent that logic served at all, their music helped them to make sense of life in a space that most of us could never imagine having to navigate.

Dawson's settings, built on the foundations of the Fisk Jubilee Singers some half a century earlier, helped these noble songs move from cotton field and cabin row to concert stage, while never losing the authenticity, or the hermeneutical or spiritual essence of the music of his ancestors, or casting it in a way that was the least bit disrespectful. His music is a rare and irreplaceable link to an important past, one which, unfortunate resistance to DEI initiatives in present times notwithstanding, is our shared past as citizens of this country, one which we all must know and own.

In the Anniston of Dawson's boyhood, most African Americans were former bondservants or their children. Conversely, most of the white townspeople had only known a world in which life was largely powered and enabled by black servitude, and in which they were, thus, strongly energized and motivated to hold on to that race-based privilege, keep black people in their "place," and maintain this status quo by any means necessary. Dawson would face those cogent forces, though often disguised or moderated, his entire life. But he learned how to navigate them in ways that allowed his own artistry to flourish and have huge impact. And

with consummate dignity!

He wrote a symphony when it was conventional wisdom that such creativity was beyond the composer of color and heard that work premiered by one of America's great orchestras under the baton of one of the premier maestros of the age. His fabled Tuskegee Choir performed for two U. S. presidents and, in that pre-television era, sang for national radio broadcasts. What lessons this giant can offer about martialing the resources of personhood and achievement and determination to refuse to accept a place in the margins to which others want to relegate you.

Dawson matters because he at once honored and elevated the song of the captive laborer. Literary legend James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938) lionized these swarthy musicians and their songs:

> O black and unknown bards of long ago,
> How came your lips to touch the sacred fire?
> How, in your darkness, did you come to know
> The power and beauty of the minstrel's lyre?...
> Heart of what slave poured out such melody
> As "Steal away to Jesus"? On its strains
> His spirit must have nightly floated free,
> Though still about his hands he felt his chains.[1]

Look closely at Dawson's work. The slave transformed bitter bondage into song. Dawson transformed that coarse but earnest musical cloth into the finest works of art, often bringing to the service of his work his "orchestral" sensibilities. What audacious imagination and uncommon creativity to transform a repetitive pentatonic melody of limited compass into that celebrated pièce de resistance, *Ezekiel Saw De Wheel!* And certainly, composers and arrangers of this genre in the years since Dawson have been, as they should, influenced by more contemporary and current stylistic elements and cultural values. But Dawson's music, steeped in Romantic values of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, still speaks legitimately and with profound authenticity to singers and listeners alike.

Choirs still want to sing, and audiences still want to hear Dawson's music. His music attracts choral musicians of all ages and stages. One fond memory of mine is of being asked during the height of the pandemic by a dear and esteemed colleague to come to his suburban, not very diverse high school and work with his very fine choir. I found them in the auditorium, with several empty seats between each singer, very appreciative for the opportunity to still sing.

Together we worked the "Introit and Kyrie" from Mozart's *Requiem* and Dawson's *Ezekiel Saw De Wheel*. The kids loved the Dawson! His folk settings have real appeal. And it is lasting appeal. Even the "simpler" pieces are no guzzle of empty calories! Dawson's works have an enduring place in the choral canon. He respected this music in the deepest way and respected the "Black and Unknown Bards" who first made it. As a boy his heart was touched, spirit moved when he heard these songs. He knew their story, a story that many elders in his community could recount firsthand. He knew the deep place from which they came—and which they were capable of reaching. Perhaps he wondered with Johnson:

> What merely living clod, what captive thing,
> Could up toward God through all its darkness grope,
> And find within its deadened heart to sing
> These songs of sorrow, love and faith, and hope?
>
> How did it catch that subtle undertone,
> That note in music heard not with the ears?
> How sound the elusive reed so seldom blown,
> Which stirs the soul or melts the heart to tears.[2]

It was a mystery that William Dawson honored with all his heart and soul! CJ

NOTES

1 James Weldon Johnson, ed., *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, 1922.

2 Ibid.

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William L. Dawson's Legacy of Care

Gwynne Kuhner Brown

Gwynne Kuhner Brown
Professor of Music
University of Puget Sound
Author, *William L. Dawson*
(University of Illinois Press, 2024)

It's surprising what a close, personal relationship I have with William L. Dawson, considering that he passed away almost twenty years before I first learned about him. The music he created, the material evidence of his life, and conversations with those who knew him have enabled me not only to write a book about Mr. Dawson, but to gain a vivid sense of him as a fellow musician, educator, and human being.

Other contributors to this issue of *Choral Journal* have firsthand experience with the man himself. My own relationship with him, however personal it may feel, is that of scholar to subject. When I daydream about what it would be like to meet him, I imagine feeling awestruck and more than a little intimidated. Would he like me? Would he approve of my work? I suspect he would appreciate the time and effort I've spent documenting his remarkable life and career. I hope he would forgive the inevitable blind spots of this white Gen-X musicologist. I'm certain he would be polite—and that once we got to know each other a bit better, he would tell me exactly what he thought of my book.

Dawson was a tough customer, renowned for his uncompromisingly high standards. During his quarter century on the faculty of Alabama's Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University), one of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), he acquired a reputation for demanding and delivering excellence. The intensity of his drive enabled him to raise the Tuskegee Institute Choir to national acclaim, to educate and inspire generations of students, and to create the impeccable arrangements of spirituals that choirs around the world continue to sing and savor.[1]

The strict discipline that Dawson lived by and imposed on others is an important part of his story. Less obvious but equally important is that he was an extraordinarily caring musician, educator, and person. His genius, evident in his musical accomplishments, is equally apparent in the generosity and creativity with which he supported others. Today, when many of our students require more support than ever, Dawson offers an inspiring example of how care can coexist along with an unwavering commitment to excellence (Photo 1 on the next page).

The Taskmaster

Generations of students who sang in the famous Tuskegee Institute Choir between 1930 and 1955 remembered Dawson's strictness and high expectations. Clyde Owen Jackson, a Tuskegee alumnus who sang under Dawson in the late 1940s and went on to a long and varied career, recalled that "the choir rehearsed six days a week for one hour Monday through Friday (from 6 p.m. until 7 p.m.) and every Sunday morning one hour before the 11 a.m. service."[2] In preparation for a performance, Dawson added additional rehearsals, sometimes requiring students to miss other classes. He locked the door against anyone arriving late and was known to hurl objects (chalk, books, his baton) at choir members who failed to pay rapt attention. He singled out those who sang their part incorrectly, making them stand and repeat a phrase until it was right. Choir members' reminiscences include words such as "stickler," "severe," and "taskmaster." Said one, "He did not permit any foolishness."[3]

Surely the prestige of the Tuskegee Institute Choir was an incentive for some to join. In 1931, Dawson had hardly hung up his coat before the quality of his choir attracted the attention of Samuel "Roxy" Rothafel. The New York impresario hired Dawson and his choir to perform in the weeks of star-studded concerts that celebrated Radio City Music Hall's opening in 1932-33, bringing national attention to Tuskegee. Over the years the choir performed on radio and television, at Carnegie Hall and the White House, and on an award-winning Westminster Hi-Fi LP. The choir's prestige was further amplified by the national celebrity as a composer Dawson briefly enjoyed in 1934, when his *Negro Folk Symphony* received a highly acclaimed premiere by Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra.[4]

The Tuskegee Institute Choir sustained its high profile under Dawson because it was consistently excellent. It was particularly famous for remarkable performances of spirituals that combined the strengths of any well-trained American college choir with a deep sensitivity to the meaning of the original folk songs. As a reviewer in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, a Black weekly, wrote:

> It was like a message from another world. The full import of every word was borne on the wings of song, in perfect diction and, ranging from the most delicate [pianissimo] to a full forte, the tones were [i]ndescribably beautiful. This did not represent the spiritual in the rough as sung originally in the cornfields. It was a refined product, in the choral form and a truly artistic rendition; yet the characteristic emotional quality of the singing of the Negroes was not lost. It had that breath of life which makes music complete.[5]

White reviewers sometimes complained that Dawson's choir did not fulfill their expectations of Black performers. This desire for apparent spontaneity and unfettered emotion—unreasonable to expect of any college choir—was shaped by movies like *The Green Pastures* (1936), and by the persuasive simulations of folk music-making provided by professional Black choirs led by Hall Johnson, Eva Jessye, and others.[6] Even these unsatisfied critics tended to applaud the Tuskegee Institute Choir's "tonal unity" and "excellent balance."[7]

Photo 1. William Levi Dawson papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University. Used with permission. Date unknown.

They also routinely singled out Dawson's direction. Wrote one, "The outstanding impression left… was that of the extraordinary discipline of the large group. Mr. Dawson evidently has the gift of drilling a choir into a nearly perfect mechanical unit."[8] Most reviewers cast the ensemble's unity in a positive light. The 1955 LP, for example, led one to write, "Virility rather than sweetness characterizes the composite quality of the ensemble; but its high precision is reflected in close shading and pliancy as well as in crispness of attacks and releases."[9]

The distinctive quality of the choir's performances sprang from Dawson's approach in rehearsals, which could also have been characterized as emphasizing "virility rather than sweetness." However, Dawson was not bound by this problematic gendered dichotomy.[10] Listening to the LP, the choir's support of the tenor soloist on *There Is a Balm in Gilead* is generous, sensitive, and moving—anything but mechanical. The skill, spirit, and versatility audible on every track of the album testify to the choir's high morale and eagerness to excel.[11] The several choir members David Lee Johnson interviewed for his 1987 dissertation confirm this impression. According to one alumna from the 1930s, "The entire choir was very close and felt close to Mr. Dawson all through my years at Tuskegee." A graduate from twenty years later concurred: "The choir had a deep respect and love for Mr. Dawson, and they want-

ed to do their part to maintain the best."[12]

Dawson's care for his students extended beyond music. He was especially sensitive to the needs of those who lacked money, giving them advice about finding affordable clothing and maintaining a personal budget. He even pulled strings to enable at least one student to afford enrollment at Tuskegee. According to Elinor Hastings Foster:

> I had to be out of school for a quarter in 1935. My family was large, with three sisters in school. When I went to pay the tuition for that year, I found I only had enough for two quarters. So I decided to let my sisters go and I would stay out for a quarter. Nobody knew the reason why I wasn't in school. Mr. Dawson was passing by one day and asked my father, "Why isn't your daughter in school this quarter?" My father told him we did not have the money this quarter, but I would be back next quarter. The next day Mr. Dawson called my father and said, "She can go to school this quarter! Send her on up here!" I know Mr. Dawson made some kind of financial arrangements for me to go to school, but we have never talked about it.[13]

As the oldest of seven children born to parents of limited means, Dawson empathized. He worked to support the educational, social, and financial needs of students like Foster, and did so with discretion and respect.

To understand Dawson the educator, it helps to appreciate how Tuskegee Institute shaped him as a student. Founded in 1881 under the leadership of Booker T. Washington, Tuskegee was unusual among HBCUs for putting African Americans in top leadership positions from the beginning. It lifted up Black achievement by celebrating the academic and professional accomplishments of its faculty. It paid tribute to Black history and culture, requiring the singing of spirituals at meals, assemblies, and chapel services. Like its model, Hampton Institute, Tuskegee initially emphasized practical skills and careers that could quickly be put to use for the benefit of Black communities. For many years every student was required to work on campus, making enrollment accessible to all students regardless of their ability to pay. In other words, it was a school that took seriously the distinctive backgrounds and needs of its students. These factors enabled the thirteen-year-old Dawson to enroll, persist, and thrive. By his graduation at twenty-one, Tuskegee had instilled in him the self-confidence and sense of mission that would fuel his storied career.

While welcoming and affirming, the Institute was also uncompromising. It subjected Dawson and his fellow students to a strict discipline that included daily room inspections, a rigid daily schedule from morning to night, and an exacting code of personal conduct. Washington and other authority figures regularly gave speeches exhorting students to live virtuous and productive lives. Dawson's older roommates held him to account, scolding him when his efforts were "not good enough for Tuskegee."[14] Finding himself capable of excelling in such an environment, he won the esteem of teachers and classmates alike. He always remembered his rigorous Tuskegee experience with affection and pride.

Returning to his alma mater as a faculty member in 1930, Dawson amplified the twin components of support and discipline that had shaped his own Tuskegee experience—components that were (and remain) essential in music education. Although the Institute stopped offering music majors in 1937, Dawson was able to sustain his top-notch choir because he welcomed every interested student to join, then required them to rise to his demands. For a quarter century, hundreds of students chose to spend hours every week in the choir rehearsal room with Dawson, trusting that beneath his chalk-throwing exterior lay a caring heart and an unshakeable belief in their potential for excellence.

The Composer

Dawson's creative and original choral arrangements of spirituals, particularly those from the 1930s and '40s, set the standard for the choral spiritual genre. These works accomplish three important tasks at once: they preserve the heritage of the African American religious folk songs created during slavery, provide rich opportunities for the musical and vocal development of ama-

teur singers, and succeed in performance. Pieces like *Ain'-a That Good News* and *Ev'ry Time I Feel the Spirit* are so familiar today that we can take their high quality for granted and forget how groundbreaking they were. As Vernon Huff has written, Dawson's spiritual arrangements "completely transformed the genre."[15]

These pieces are wide-ranging in their appeal and popularity, but Dawson created most of them with a very specific community in mind: his students, almost all of whom were Black. His first published arrangements, including *King Jesus Is A-Listening* and *I Couldn't Hear Nobody Pray* (H.T. FitzSimons, 1925 and 1926), were written for his choir members at Lincoln High School in Kansas City, Missouri. The majority of his most famous choral works, of course, were composed for the Tuskegee Institute Choir. Dawson's artistic engagement with the folk songs of his enslaved ancestors is a powerful sign of commitment to his race—as was his decision in 1930 to leave behind a flourishing career in Chicago and join the Tuskegee faculty.

Exactly like the folk songs upon which they were based, Dawson's pedagogically attuned choral works met the needs of the community that sang them. He gave students two or more generations removed from slavery a way of engaging positively with their forebears' experiences, spirituality, and artistry. Through Dawson's music, young African American singers encountered and embodied music that proved the value and beauty of their cultural heritage. The high standard of excellence Dawson upheld in rehearsals, and his own stature as one of the most accomplished Black musicians of his generation, showed that spirituals were worthy of the same respect as European classics, which the Tuskegee choir also sang.

The energy Dawson expended on arranging and performing African American religious folk songs reflects his care for his students' spiritual, psychological, and political wellbeing. Wonderfully, the music itself also provides abundant evidence of his care. On the most basic level, his arrangements typically provide both accessibility and challenge, setting young singers up for success while building their skills. Dynamics and articulations are notated with great specificity, developing students' musicality and attention to detail. Dawson's mastery of polyphony ensures that every vocal part is interesting and rewarding to sing. The melodies are memorable, the harmonies interesting and well-voiced, the rhythms satisfying. In short, these would be model works for high school and college choir no matter what genre of music they belonged to.

The fact that they are spirituals, however, makes Dawson's arrangements a profound demonstration of sensitivity to his Black students' needs. For example, he approaches dialect differently from one piece to another, sometimes using exclusively Standard American English (*There Is a Balm in Gilead*), sometimes including elements of African American Vernacular English (*Soon Ah Will Be Done*). He never turns a folk song's "ain't" or "a-turnin'" into more formal language that would render it stiff and awkward, and he carefully writes each text to yield the right pronunciation (*I Wan' To Be Ready*). In his published essay on the meaning and performance of spirituals, Dawson emphasizes that the distinctive speech patterns of the enslaved resulted from their preference for the "soft and euphonious vocables of [their] native African speech" over the "harsh and guttural sounds" of English.[16] Respect for the aesthetic agency of the songs' creators is evident in Dawson's own careful choices about his song texts, rejecting the thoughtless, derogatory linguistic caricatures that were commonly found in mass media depictions of African Americans.

Counteracting racist stereotypes was part of the labor done by touring HBCU choirs all the way back to the Fisk Jubilee Singers in 1871. With their formal attire, restrained bearing, and polished performances, these choirs consciously performed what should have been a self-evident fact: that Blackness could coexist with education, artistry, and self-control. Such a performance took part in what is sometimes termed "the politics of respectability."[17]As Michelle Alexander explains, "This political strategy is predicated on the notion that the goal of racial equality can only be obtained if [B]lack people are able to successfully prove to whites that they are worthy of equal treatment, dignity and respect."[18] It is sobering to contemplate the anti-Black racism giving rise to such a strategy and the burden borne by those employing it, including Dawson, his students, and countless others.[19]

Far more than any message the Tuskegee Institute

Choir might convey to audiences, Dawson cared about the message his music sent to his students. And just as the spirituals had different meanings for those who first created and sang them than for white people who might hear them, his arrangements do their most important communicating in the shelter of the rehearsal space.[20] Striking evidence of their inward orientation lies in the subtle way these works engage with European classical music.

Dawson acquired great skill in European contrapuntal techniques through his extensive formal education in composition, and he loved and frequently programmed polyphonic works by Tomás Luis de Victoria, George Frideric Handel, and others. Although his spiritual arrangements frequently employ polyphonic textures, they do not strike the ear as Baroquifying folk music (so to speak). Dawson knew, both from childhood experiences of spirituals and from attentive listening as an adult, that richly textured, multi-part singing was part of African American folk practice. That tradition's numerous individual parts, ostinati, and call-response structures formed a natural bridge to Dawson's sensitive incorporation of European contrapuntal techniques. From the graceful imitative polyphony of *There Is a Balm in Gilead* to the ecstatic whirling of *Ezekiel Saw de Wheel*, the composer deploys his formal training in service of the text, mood, and history of the original folk songs. In addition, the musicianship fostered by polyphonic passages in his arrangements helped his students to perform a wide variety of music.

More basically, Dawson's scores were no less detailed or specific than those of European composers. Because the Tuskegee Institute Choir performed both, students could see the similarity, and Dawson's insistence on fidelity to the markings in the score (whether his or another composer's) drove the point home. Since audience members don't typically follow the score, this message is only for the singers.

To my mind, *Ezekiel Saw de Wheel* contains the most delightful example of internal communication in Dawson's choral music. In the third verse of his arrangement, the text reads:

> Some go to church for to sing an' shout
> Before six months dey's all turn'd out

Dawson interpolates a series of "hallelujahs" between the two lines, evoking the singing and shouting of the congregation. Surprisingly, the interpolation evokes not the texture and energy of a Black congregation, but rather a late Baroque piece such as Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus." Additionally, Dawson abruptly shifts key during this brief passage from B♭ major to D major, the key of the famous "Hallelujah." The allusion to Handel is sufficiently subtle that it is easily (and routinely) overlooked, but Dawson undoubtedly highlighted the connection in rehearsal, and his regular programming of the "Hallelujah" chorus would have made it a familiar work to his students.

By not actually quoting Handel's famous work, Dawson avoids eliciting a laugh from audiences, which he never sought to do with any spiritual. As he wrote, "It cannot be stressed too strongly that these songs should never be sung for the expressed purpose of amusing or even entertaining the hearer. There is nothing humorous in the sentiments expressed by the words or rhythms of the music."[21] Moreover, his allusion allows him to appropriate Handelian style without drawing a startling contrast between European and African American music, as a direct quote would unavoidably do. Dawson fervently believed that spirituals had a place in the American concert hall, whether in arrangements or through their incorporation in pieces like his own *Negro Folk Symphony*. In none of his compositions does he seek to contrast spirituals with other musical genres or styles.

Dawson was deeply concerned with developing his students' knowledge, and his students would have understood the many differences between their enslaved ancestors' music and the European canon. He taught them about the historic origins of the spirituals, their religious content, and their ongoing significance; he also taught them about European classical music. But in his spiritual arrangements, Dawson showed the equality and compatibility of these musical traditions. He gave his students what they needed to succeed in an American society that told them that African diasporic culture was inferior to European, and that European culture was off limits to them. His compositions showed them how to excel as classical musicians while treasuring the richness of their Black heritage. Dawson

Photo 2. Cecile and William Dawson at the Silver Rail Bar and Grill, New York City, August 1951. William Levi Dawson Papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

knew that few of his students would become professional musicians, but the musical education he offered equipped them with experience, knowledge, and pride that would serve them well in any life path.

The Person

Dawson's nearly fifty-five-year marriage is the obvious place to look for evidence of his kindness and caring. Cecile DeMae Nicholson Dawson was a successful businesswoman whose academic accomplishments rivaled her husband's. She was smart, capable, and independent. The couple adored one another. They enjoyed traveling together; when he traveled alone, he wrote long letters (helpfully preserved in the Emory University archives) and bought her presents. They often entertained company in their home and were renowned in Tuskegee and beyond for their good taste in food, decor, and fashion.[22] Photo 2 shows them enjoying a night out in elegant midlife, looking happy and relaxed. When his wife's declining health required her to move into a Montgomery assisted-living facility, the elderly Dawson drove forty miles from Tuskegee every day to visit her.

By contrast, in the professional realm Dawson's sweet center usually remained secure inside its crunchy shell. Nonetheless, his heart occasionally revealed itself in interactions with students. Zenobia Powell Perry, a Tuskegee piano student from 1935 to '38 who went on to an illustrious career as a composer, described how Dawson encouraged her to write down her piano "doodlings" and show them to him. He even respected her ideas about his own arrangements during choir rehearsals, responding to her critique with "Don't tell me what it oughta be," before adding, after a well-timed comedic pause, "Now, what did you say that oughta be?"[23] Addie Mae Stabler Mitchell, another choir member from this period, relates that when she was struggling with hoarseness prior to an off-campus performance, Dawson invited her to ride in a faculty member's car instead of on the bus with the rest of the choir, so that she could "get some extra rest."[24]

The experience of Ralph Ellison is revealing. As a young man, the famed author aspired to be a compos-

er. He idolized Dawson from afar based on accounts of his greatness from a few friends who had met him. Hearing a radio broadcast of the Tuskegee Institute Choir sealed the deal, and Ellison enrolled at Tuskegee Institute in 1933. Although he was a trumpet player and never sang in the choir, he played under Dawson's direction and took classes from him. As is often the case, the real person did not match the fantasy, and Ellison was deeply disappointed that Dawson did not show him any special favor.[25] Finding Tuskegee equally disappointing, Ellison left after three years without completing his degree. Elements of his bitter experience were fictionalized in his famous novel *The Invisible Man*.

Ellison was an ambitious but unremarkable musician; after Tuskegee (and owing in part to his growth there) he emerged as a truly exceptional literary figure. He and Dawson reconciled and became mutual admirers. They followed one another's careers, corresponded warmly, and occasionally visited in person. It speaks well of both of them that they overcame their fraught history and developed a lasting friendship.

Over the years Ellison offered several eloquent tributes to Dawson, both in formal speeches and writings and in informal settings. He told one interviewer, "Dawson was a strict taskmaster, but he made you feel you possessed abilities and potential; but you had to work hard to bring them out."[26] Dawson's belief in his students' capability for excellence was a common feature of Ellison's tributes: Dawson "gave you a sense of possibility." On the occasion of Dawson's 90th birthday, Ellison wrote to him in a letter, "You took my artistic ambitions seriously…. The discipline and encouragement which you provided was far more important in my development than I am able to tell you."[27] His words confirm that at base, Dawson's rigorous pedagogy was rooted in profound optimism and care for his students' potential.

In the half of his career that followed his 1955 resignation from Tuskegee Institute, Dawson traveled widely, sharing his knowledge and wisdom with fellow choir directors. At the conclusion of one speech, he exhorted his listeners: "Remember we are working with young voices; we must make them express their best qualities. Think of your choir as a world and its members as inhabitants looking to you as a leader to teach them the power and beauty of their voices."[28] His work with generations of students extended far beyond their singing—he showed them a world in which they were listened to, valued, and cared for.

The Covid-19 lockdown of 2020-21 created an unprecedented situation for educators. Few faced a greater challenge in adapting to online teaching than choir directors, for whom the shared rehearsal space and bodily immersion in communal sound are so fundamental. It was often necessary in those days to prioritize care, flexibility, and student engagement over anything else we might ordinarily have centered, including rigor and depth. Many of us are still in the process of recalibrating our approaches. Surmounting the challenges of his time and place to create a choral program for the ages at Tuskegee, William L. Dawson offers an exceptional role model as we strive for the right balance of rigor and supportiveness, firmness and flexibility, professionalism and care. CJ

Author's Note: I acknowledge with gratitude the many people who have contributed to my understanding of the topics in this article. I am especially indebted to Eugene Thamon Simpson, whose consistent encouragement, generosity, and frankness were indispensable to my research and writing on his friend "Bill." I treasure his memory. I also thank Joe Williams for his perceptive feedback on this article.

NOTES

[1] Dawson disliked the term "spirituals," greatly preferring to call them folk songs (or, more specifically, "religious folk-songs of the American Negro"). In this article I use "spirituals" for clarity and convenience, meaning no disrespect to Mr. Dawson's preference. See Mark Hugh Malone, *William Levi Dawson: American Music Educator* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2023), 80–1.

[2] Clyde Owen Jackson, "Weaver of the Arts: The William Levi Dawson Interdisciplinary Method for Teaching Musically Illiterate Young Adult Students," lecture presented at Tuskegee University, September 21, 2001. Tuskegee University Archives.

[3] David Lee Johnson, "The Contributions of William L. Dawson to the School of Music at Tuskegee Institute and to Choral Music" (EdD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana, Champaign, 1987), 136–66.

[4] See Gwynne Kuhner Brown, "Whatever Happened to William Dawson's Negro Folk Symphony?" *Journal of the Society for American Music* 6, no. 4 (November 2012), 433–44.

[5] Bertha L. Gilbert, "Tuskegee Choir Opens Her Eyes to Negro Music," *Pittsburgh Courier,* August 25, 1934. Note: I have corrected "pianoissimo" and "undescribably," found in the original.

[6] See Eugene Thamon Simpson, *Hall Johnson: His Life, His Spirit, and His Music* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2008), 5–25.

[7] H.H., "Music," *New York Times*, February 10, 1933.

[8] "Tuskegee Choir: Negro Group Gives Concert for Forum in Academy of Music," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, February 10, 1933.

[9] Thomas B. Sherman, "Classical Records: Mozart Magic," *St. Louis (Missouri) Post-Dispatch*, December 5, 1955.

[10] For more on this topic, see Gwynne Kuhner Brown, "Gender in the Life and Legacy of William Levi Dawson," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 73, no. 3 (Fall 2020), 754–63.

[11] *The Tuskegee Institute Choir Sings Spirituals*, Westminster Recording Co., WM 18080, 1955. The album can be heard on YouTube. Vernon Huff writes perceptively about "There Is a Balm in Gilead" in *Choral Journal* 59, no. 10 (2019), 23–4.

[12] Elinor Hastings Foster and Arthur Shaw, quoted in Johnson, 137 and 139.

[13] Foster, quoted in Johnson, "The Contributions of William L. Dawson," 137.

[14] William L. Dawson, handwritten biographical notes ca. 1973, William Levi Dawson Papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

[15] Huff illuminates Dawson's originality by comparing four of his spiritual arrangements to earlier printed versions in "William Levi Dawson (1899–1990): Reexamination of a Legacy," *Choral Journal* 59, no. 10 (May 2019), 20–32.

[16] William L. Dawson, "Interpretation of the Religious Folk-Songs of the American Negro," *Etude* (March 1955), 61.

[17] The concept was first theorized by Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham in *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[18] Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2012), 212.

[19] Marti Newland Slaten provides thoughtful consideration of the ongoing relevance of respectability politics for HBCU choirs in "Sounding 'Black': An Ethnography of Racialized Vocality at Fisk University" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2014).

[20] Mark Hugh Malone provides a detailed, succinct overview of encoded messages in spirituals in *William Levi Dawson: American Music Educator* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2023), 84–8.

[21] Dawson, "Interpretation of the Religious Folk-Songs of the American Negro," 61.

[22] Cecile was named among the country's "best dressed women" in *Ebony*'s May 1963 issue.

[23] Jeannie Gayle Pool, *American Composer Zenobia Powell Perry: Race and Gender in the 20th Century* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 93.

[24] Quoted in Johnson, "The Contributions of William L. Dawson," 151.

[25] Caroline Gebhard, "Ghosts of Tuskegee," in *Ralph Ellison in Context*, ed. Paul Devlin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 25–8.

[26] Quoted in Johnson, "The Contributions of William L. Dawson," 143.

[27] Malone, *William Levi Dawson: American Music Educator*, 151.

[28] Undated speech, William Levi Dawson Papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University. Quoted in Vernon Huff, "William Levi Dawson: An Examination of Selected Letters, Speeches, and Writings" (DMA thesis, Arizona State University, 2013), 36. Huff transcribes the full handwritten speech as Appendix A, 59–67.

Book Reviews

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William Levi Dawson: American Music Educator
Mark Hugh Malone
University Press of Mississippi
203 pp.
$25.00 (Softcover), $23.75 (Kindle)

William Levi Dawson: American Music Educator is an excellent resource for a deeper look into the life and work of William Dawson. The author, who both personally interviewed Dawson and spent countless hours in the Rose Archives at Emory University in Atlanta, presents "information on Dawson that could be used by a variety of scholars such as historians, musicologists, critical theorists, and others" (p. 5).

The book is divided into five chapters. Chapter one presents the first thirty years of Dawson's life, including his education at the Tuskegee Institute, his first position at a high school in Kansas, and his pursuit (really, a lifelong quest) of additional education. His skill and experience as a fine trombone player is also mentioned, including this review from a concert the Tuskegee Male Quintette presented in Burlington, Vermont, on August 17, 1921:

> William L. Dawson, second tenor, was also a trombone artist of note. His three trombone solos during the day were among the features of the program and patrons would gladly have heard more had there been time for it. (p. 21)

The second chapter chronicles not only his years as the head of the School of Music at Tuskegee, but also the history of music education at the Institute and the changes brought about by economic depression and war.

Chapter three focuses on the nationally renowned Tuskegee Institute Choir under Dawson's direction, tracing the choir's multiple tours and appearances on radio and television. One of these was their performance at the opening of Radio City Music Hall in Manhattan in December 1932. A review of that performance in the *Wall Street Journal* stated:

> Mr. Dawson plays upon the voices of his mixed choir as if he were playing an organ, and an organ is the only instrument to which the tones he evokes are comparable. It is grand music. (p. 57)

Also included are the many media critics who responded to the choir's performances at that time, allowing the reader to form a sense of the way Dawson and his choir were received by mainstream—largely white—America.

The fourth chapter shares a timeline of Dawson's life as a composer and his compositions within the framework of American music, delving into his approach to authentically compose and perform African American folk music for both choral and instrumental ensembles. The composer's preferences for the nomenclature of his arrangements was:

> [H]e objected to the word "Black" to describe the music, explaining his belief that the basic elements of music consist in vibration rather than pigmentation. He preferred the word "Negro" for its Latin roots, explaining that the word, at least at that time, was used in all the Romance languages to refer to people of African descent. (p. 81)

There is also discussion on the label of "Spirituals," which Dawson believed "was not for audience entertainment; rather, the songs, if approached correctly, should reveal the spirit of God contained in the music and serve as a holy blessing to both performer and listener" (p. 81). Malone also includes a chart with possible meanings of the words found in spirituals.

The closing chapter examines Dawson's pedagogical legacy. He came to believe:

> The conductor is everything! The conductor, he asserts, is responsible for every activity in which the group engages… The effective conductor…also needs to be able to give a personal example, when necessary, during the rehearsal period. An accurate model is frequently more helpful than excessive explanation. (p. 117)

The book concludes with three appendices: Dawson's choral and orchestral compositions and arrangements; his awards and honors; and significant letters, speeches, and interviews he gave during his lifetime. For many of us who were first introduced to African American choral music through the arrangements of William Dawson, this book is a valued read for conductors to learn of his legacy and trailblazing career.

Gregory M. Pysh
Van Wert, Ohio

From the *Choral Journal* Archives—William Dawson

John B. Haberlen, "William Dawson and the Copyright Act," (March 1983, page 5).

Mark Hugh Malone, "William Dawson and the Tuskegee Choir," (March 1990, page 17).

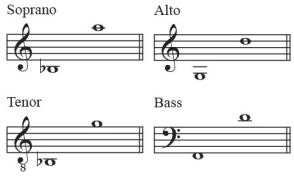
Vernon Huff, "William Levi Dawson's Life in Speeches, Letters, and Writings," (August 2014, page 65).

Vernon Huff, "William L. Dawson: Reexamination of a Legacy," (May 2019, page 20).

Choral Reviews

Compiled by Marques L. A. Garrett

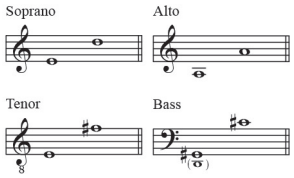
Zion's Walls
Traditional Negro spiritual
Arr. William L. Dawson
SATB divisi unaccompanied, Soprano solo
Neil A. Kjos Music Company (5:00)



"Zion's Walls" is simply heavenly! It is one of Dawson's finest choral arrangements in his Tuskegee Choir Series. His take on this traditional Negro spiritual, "Great Day," will test the musicianship of collegiate and professional choruses alike. This majestic arrangement has a celebratory tone that portrays Zion's celestial splendor. The chorus takes on the nature of a symphony orchestra or pipe organ as Dawson develops the piece with varied vocal textures. His use of divisi in the lower voices is akin to a brass choir, and his contrapuntal development in the upper voices has the sweetness of woodwinds. Interpretively, conductors may take liberties to broaden the tempo in the measures that precede the *a tempo* markings. The soprano solo presents a similar opportunity with a quicker strict tempo in the first verse and possibly a broader free tempo in the second verse. A strong rhythmic drive is important throughout the fugal section of the piece that leads to the grand climactic ending.

Colin Lett, M.Div, MA
Director of Vocal Studies
Center for the Visual and Performing Arts
at Suitland High School

There is a Balm in Gilead
Traditional Negro spiritual
Arr. William L. Dawson
SATB divisi unaccompanied, Soprano solo
(Also available for SSA and TTBB)
Neil A. Kjos Music Company



Dawson's setting of the spiritual "There is a Balm in Gilead" was published in 1939 while he was serving as director of the Tuskegee University Choir. The setting is voiced for SATB mixed choir with soprano solo but could be sung by any voice comfortable with the

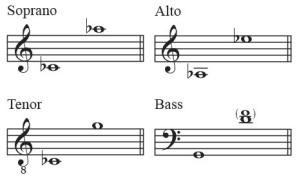
tessitura.

Dawson's reverence for the spiritual is clearly apparent, as his treatment of the melody is delicate and sensitive. An example of this is his decision to end the first phrase of the theme with a meter change to 6/4, facilitating a stylistic character of holding the word "whole" in a manner that feels somewhat unmetered when the tune idiomatically performed. Dawson codified this style when he added the two extra beats to the measure.

Sensitivity to the nature of the piece is shown in the polyphonically enlivened homophony in the lower voices. There is a clear "hymn-like" feeling in the texture with beautiful and subtle moments of counterpoint that highlight both his understanding of the style and his own compositional prowess. The solo is strictly the melody but makes room for a singer to add appropriate embellishments that mimic the subtlety of Dawson's own liberties.

Jason A. Dungee, DMA
Director of Choral Activities
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Out in the Fields
William L. Dawson
SATB Chorus, piano (also available for SSA choir and solo)
Neil A. Kjos Music Company (3:30)
Difficulty: Moderate



"Out in the Fields" is a standout example of the non-idiomatic choral works of William L. Dawson. Known for his arrangements of Negro folk songs, Dawson demonstrates his penchant for the lyricism and lush harmonies of Romanticism in this work. Dawson dedicated the piece to the memory of his first wife, Cornella Lampton, who passed away a year after their marriage.

Although the pitches and rhythms are not difficult, an ensemble of singers with moderately advanced vocal skills (especially sopranos and basses) and balanced sections is required. Sopranos carry the melody throughout and should be able to sustain pitches in the upper register and have the vocal flexibility to execute the arpeggiated intervals and larger leaps in the melody. The alto, tenor, and bass voices support the melody, sometimes with sustained note values and at other times by echoing fragments of the text in varying rhythmically and lyrically interesting passages, especially at cadences. Basses anchor the harmonic progression. However, there are passages where the basses sing in a high tessitura, especially when they join the tenors then the other voices in singing the melody in unison. There is one measure of *divisi* in the bass part leading to the end, and an optional low pitch for bass on the final chord.

A skilled pianist will be needed to play the virtuosic piano part, which plays a prominent role in the dramatic effect of the piece, especially in the contrasting section marked *presto*, with passages of arpeggiated triplet figures for the left hand while octave chords are played in the right hand. A note in the score indicates that orchestral or wind ensemble accompaniments are available on rental.

Dawson effectively musically illustrates the text, portraying the sense of calm found in leaving behind worries and fears through a connection with God and nature. "Out in the Fields" would be appealing to experienced singers and suitable for a variety of programming themes.

A. Jan Taylor, DMA
Choral Conductor
Houston, TX

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2025 ACDA National Conference
Dallas, Texas
March 18-22, 2025

The American Choral Directors Association will sponsor a research session at the conference in Dallas, Texas, March 18 - 22, 2025. The intent of the research poster session is to bring current research to light that impacts and informs our profession and to encourage our colleagues in the choral world to stay in touch with research in choral music. We want to showcase the scholarship that is currently being done--including studies focusing on rehearsal techniques, performance practice, repertoire choice, or trends within the choral field. Of particular interest are papers about repertoire, performance practice, conducting pedagogy, rehearsal pedagogy, vocal development, critical editions, theoretical analysis that impacts performance, and research on vocal or compositional practices in contemporary choral music.

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1. Abstracts submitted for presentation must comply with the following guidelines:

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(b) The paper may have been submitted but must not be in print or in press prior to the submission deadline of the conference.

2. The research may be of any type, but a simple review of literature will not be considered for presentation. Manuscript style of articles representing descriptive, quantitative, or qualitative studies must conform to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th edition, 2020). Authors of other types of studies (e.g., historical, theoretical) may submit manuscripts that conform to either *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (K. L. Turabian, 8th edition, 2013) or *The Chicago Manual of Style* (16th edition, 2003).

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The submission form will also ask if this is your first time submitting to the research poster session as well as if you are a member of a historically marginalized group. These questions, in an effort toward equity and inclusion, will have no bearing in the blind review process, but will help ensure that emerging scholars as well as scholarship from diverse perspectives appear on the national research program.

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An example of poster session boards from the 2023 National Conference in Cincinnati.

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On the Voice

Matthew Hoch, editor <mrh0032@auburn.edu>

"I'm Sick—Should I Sing or Not?"

by Mary J. Sandage and Mariah E. Morton-Jones

At some point, all singers face the dilemma of whether it is safe to sing while feeling under the weather. Choral directors are often the most trusted voice professional in a singer's life and will often be consulted about whether singing is advisable. The answer to this question is not straightforward; however, by reviewing commonly encountered scenarios, providing updated evidence, and doing some myth busting, a clearer path may emerge.

The severity and type of illness will matter. Having a high fever (>100° F) should preclude performance of any kind to avoid exposing choral colleagues to potential infection and to allow time for healing and recovery. A gray area is when a singer experiences a low-grade fever. Some singers may feel up to performance if symptoms can be medically managed; however, to be a good citizen of the chorus, spread of infection to choral colleagues should be a consideration. Unfortunately, COVID, influenza, and RSV still circulate in most communities and the spread of infection is particularly notable in singing communities. Singing masks are available to limit aerosolizing spread; however, unless it is a high stakes performance, it is probably best to stay home and rest.

Symptoms that are more likely to negatively impact singing voice include nasal congestion, laryngitis, and pulmonary infection because these symptoms affect the subsystems of singing: vocal tract tuning, phonation, and respiration. Given that management of subglottal pressure, vocal fold posturing, and resonance are all key mechanisms for managing vocal loudness and pitch stability, impairment of any of these mechanisms due to illness, will likely cause difficulty with singing. We will address these individually and then discuss how the conditions often overlap.

Nasal Congestion

Nasal congestion typically accompanies the common cold, sinus infection, allergic rhinitis, and sometimes COVID. Physiologically, when the sinus spaces in the face and the nose are congested with thick mucus, it is harder to create the ringing vocal quality that many choral singers aspire to produce. Vocal tract tuning—the ability to change the shape of the spaces in the neck and face that extend from the vocal folds to

the lips and nose—is a critical contributor to the acoustic boost needed to sing louder or to hit higher notes with ease. Many singers rely, at least in part, on vocal tract tuning to achieve the choral dynamics expected by the director. Nasal and sinus congestion that fill or block these resonating spaces make it difficult to sing easily and some singers will develop maladaptive strategies to sing while congested. Compensations for nasal congestion often include using more phonatory effort to achieve louder voice, which over time may result in throat discomfort as well as increased vocal effort while singing and increased vocal fatigue.

When experiencing nasal congestion due to a cold or sinus infection, it would be most helpful for optimal singing to manage the congestion with over-the-counter (OTC) remedies. Nasal sprays to open the nasal passages can be helpful in the acute phase and allow the congestion to drain out of the nasal and sinus spaces. Some individuals may try OTC antihistamines to dry up the mucus; however, there is some evidence that the drying effects for the nose may extend to drying the surface of the vocal folds, making production of voice more effortful. In general, it is best to avoid anything that dries the mouth or throat. Steam inhalation from a vaporizer device or even via a bowl of hot water has been shown to alleviate symptoms and increase nasal patency for those with common colds. Some relief from more persistent allergic rhinitis symptoms may be found with use of nasal irrigation with hypertonic saline rinses (e.g., a Neti pot). If nasal congestion is the only symptom of illness and this can be managed with OTC remedies, then singing would likely be fine. For persistent nasal congestion, it would be helpful to see an ear, nose, and throat physician (otolaryngologist) for medical management.

Laryngitis

Laryngitis is the term used when a singer experiences persistent difficulty producing voice throughout the range. Difficulty producing voice due to laryngitis is attributed to swelling in the vocal folds that prevents optimal vibration of the vocal folds resulting in effortful voice production characterized by a limited singing range and often times reports of increased vocal fatigue. Acute laryngitis is probably one of the most difficult symptoms to sing with and it is not advised. A quick litmus test to see if there is vocal fold edema (swelling) present, is to produce lip trills or tongue bubbles (tongue held out of the mouth, not to be confused with tongue trill) or your favorite semioccluded vocal tract (SOVT) task throughout the singing range. If SOVTs can still be freely produced throughout the performance singing range, then singing may still be possible. If SOVTs cannot be freely produced, then the singer should sit out the rehearsal or performance and limit extensive talking to let the vocal fold swelling subside. It is very important not to force the voice as such behaviors could exacerbate the issue.

The experience of laryngitis will likely affect each singer differently and the impacts of mild vocal fold swelling may be more limiting for some styles of choral singing versus others. Further, the voice part being produced may matter as well. High soprano singers will likely experience voice difficulties, particularly when producing the highest notes with mild vocal fold edema, whereas a lower alto singer may not encounter any difficulty at all with mild vocal fold swelling.

When experiencing acute laryngitis, vocal rest for both the speaking and singing voice is advised until the swelling subsides. It will also be important for the

singer to practice excellent vocal hygiene by limiting drying agents such as alcohol or antihistamines. Belief that caffeine is dehydrating is a persistent myth in the singing world that has recently been debunked.[1] Recent evidence indicates that caffeinated drinks are not dehydrating for individuals who routinely take caffeine. The tannins in coffee and some teas can leave the individual with a feeling of dry mouth, which can mislead one to believe that coffee is dehydrating at the level of the vocal folds. What is probably more concerning for the singer who is unwell is the acidity of the coffee that may result in an upset stomach or laryngopharyngeal reflux. A remedy for dry mouth that we have suggested for some time is to mix a pectin-based juice with the water in your water bottle. Adding about ¼ of the volume of the bottle with apple, grape, or cranberry juice can reduce the perception of dry mouth. We would also caution singers from taking mint or menthol lozenges when sick. Menthol is an airway irritant and may perpetuate throat symptoms when sick. Instead of menthol lozenges, take lozenges with pectin or glycerin for throat relief (i.e., Luden's cherry lozenges).

Pulmonary Infection or Disease

Illnesses that affect the lungs and pulmonary system, like pneumonia, COVID, or RSV, often present with cough and difficulty providing enough respiratory support for singing. While most individuals with pulmonary infection do not feel well enough to sing, difficulty providing adequate breath support for the singing voice, a primary mechanism for increasing vocal loudness, can also lead to maladaptive compensations. A frequently encountered compensation is increased laryngeal ef-

fort. When individuals cannot inhale enough air and achieve enough pressure from the respiratory muscles due to illness, then the muscles of the larynx and neck are often engaged to a greater degree to help achieve louder voice. This can lead to increased throat discomfort, soreness, and vocal fatigue.

For singers diagnosed with asthma, it is important to take the medications prescribed to manage asthma in order to support the best singing voice. Asthma is characterized by difficulty exhaling all the air out of the lungs. If a singer has difficulty exhaling air with control because asthma symptoms are not well managed, then maladaptive breath support may transpire. Asthma inhalers are vitally important for best pulmonary function for singer with asthma; however, they can also sometimes cause mild hoarseness. Should that occur, the singer should contact their physician and ask if their medication can be adjusted.

Singing through nasal congestion, laryngitis, or pulmonary infection may all result in the development of maladaptive singing technique and motor learning patterns that can persist even after the illness passes. Most speech-language pathologists (SLPs) who specialize in rehabilitation of the singing voice will relate that many their clientele started having persistent vocal difficulty after singing while sick. If singing difficulties persist for more than a few weeks after recovering from an acute illness, the singer is advised to see their primary care doctor and ask for a referral to an otolaryngologist, preferably one who specializes in voice (laryngologist). The otolaryngologist can do a thorough head and neck examination to rule out any persistent conditions and provide medical management as needed. The otolaryngologist can also provide the referral to an SLP for

assessment and therapy. Some SLPs specialize in rehabilitation of the injured singer—those who specialize in singing voice rehabilitation can usually get singing voice technique back on track within a few therapy sessions.

So, the question remains: "I'm sick – should I sing or not?" We suggest following the recommendations provided, seeking professional care, and not forcing your instrument. Listen to your body when singing becomes increasingly effortful. Singing through an illness for one or two performances will not be worth it if such efforts could cause long term vocal issues. CJ

Mary J. Sandage is a professor in speech, language, and hearing sciences at Auburn University. She is a speech-language pathologist with an internationally recognized clinical specialty in the rehabilitation of injured singers.

Mariah E. Morton-Jones is a speech-language pathologist specializing in voice and upper airway disorders. She is currently a Mancosh postdoctoral fellow in the School of Communication at Northwestern University.

NOTES

[1] Lawrence E. Armstrong, et. al., "Fluid, Electrolyte, and Renal Indices of Hydration during 11 Days of Controlled Caffeine Consumption," *International Journal of Sport Nutrition and Exercise Metabolism* 15, no. 3 (2005), 252–65; Vasilis L. Georgalas, et. al., "The Effects of Caffeine on Voice: A Systematic Review," *Journal of Voice* 37, no. 4 (2021): 636–e7.

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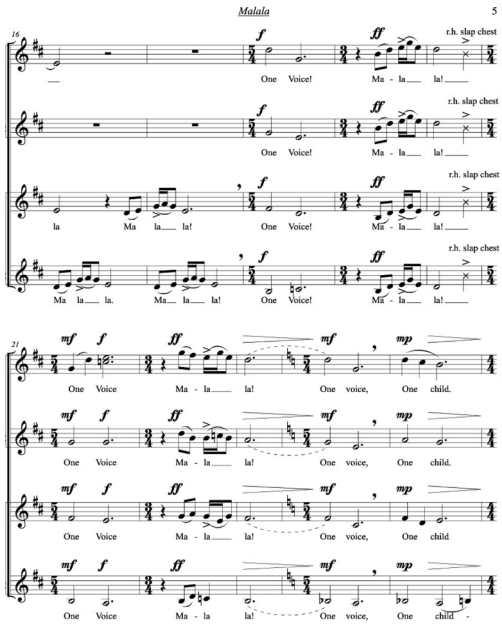

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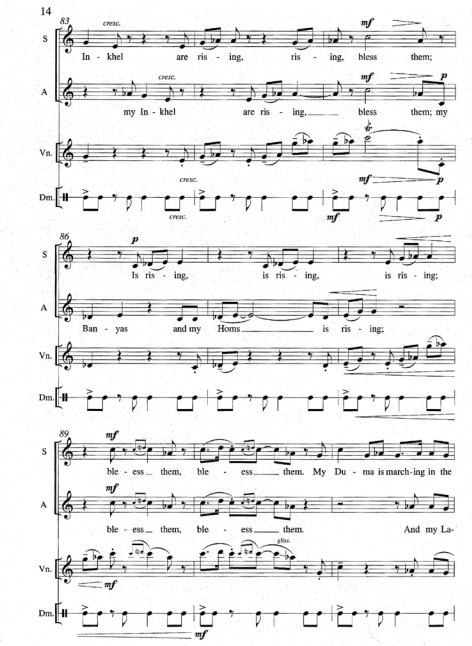

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Unison Singing: A Choral Experience for All Ages

by Lynne Gackle

Editor's Note: This article was originally printed in Choral Journal, *May 2006. The author has slightly revised the article for 2024. Lynne Gackle was a previous National R&R Chair for Children's Choirs and past ACDA National President.*

"Unison singing—easy, quick—accessible for all!"

This statement often expresses the view that many choral directors have when approaching unison music with their singers. The fact that unison singing is seen as easy, harmonically speaking, can deceptively lead choral educators away from the inherent value found in this musical experience. In fact, unison singing is not so "easy" and can provide wonderful learning challenges to *all singers*.

Choral educators such as Jean Ashworth Bartle have advocated the use of unison singing with developing/young singers as a precursor to singing in harmony.[1] In fact, if students have difficulty singing in unison, it stands to reason that singing harmony will be even more unsuccessful. In the *We Will Sing!* Series,[2] Doreen Rao utilizes beautiful unison songs such as *Sally Gardens* and *Oliver Cromwell*, arranged by Benjamin Britten; Jubilate Deo, by Praetorius; and Eric Thiman's *The Path to the Moon* as basic literature for children's choirs. Those who have conducted children's choirs and treble youth choirs can personally attest to the positive effects of this type of literature on the vocal development of young singers. In fact, many would agree that beginning with unison song is really the only way to develop young voices. Marie Stultz states that she uses Gabriel Fauré's beautiful aria, *Pie Jesu*, as a lovely unison anthem with children's voices because of its "ideal range, large melodic leaps, and extended phrase shapes… The piece is ideal for developing tone accuracy and head tone singing."[3]

There is no doubt that these experiences are very important for the young choir. Through the use of unison singing, such concepts as intonation, vowel unification, consistent vocal line, breath management, and resonance can be made paramount for the young singer. It is, however, important to remember that the concepts inherent in unison singing can also benefit the intermediate and advanced singer as well.

Often, we hear choirs singing SA, SSA, SSAA, or even SATB literature and we think, "That's a nice sound: the words are understandable, there is a sense of line, there is some evidence of dynamic contrast within phrases, but it seems a bit out of tune at times, individual voices are audible, and the vertical harmonies are often sluggish. The singers seem to be singing 'at' the notes rather than singing each actual note! Something is wrong!" In fact, if we asked each section to sing their respective part (yes, in unison), we would find that they are singing anything *but* unison! There are discrepancies in pitches, in intervals, in vowel shapes, in place-

ment of tone, in dynamics within the phrases—even the breath is taken at different intervals, using inconsistent methods!

How can choirs achieve good intonation, consistent vocal line, good breath management, vowel unification, and beautiful tone with sensitive nuance? There is really only one way, and that is through teaching good vocal technique. As stated previously, in training young singers, one of the most effective and highly suggested ways to teach these concepts is through the *unison singing* experience! Why, then, do choral conductors seem to look at unison singing with intermediate and more advanced choirs with disdain? We seem to feel that unison singing is somehow "beneath" these singers and is, therefore, no longer a valid musical experience for them.

Often, we think that our advanced choirs should sing music that is harmonically difficult—and certainly, we should challenge our singers in this and many other ways. However, I think we often forget the pedagogical opportunities, the simplistic beauty, and the powerful creative essence of choral music that can be found within the framework of unison singing.

As a young conductor years ago, I remember sitting in the audience at an ACDA National Conference listening to the Toronto Children's Choir (Jean Ashworth Bartle, conducting) perform a beautifully emotional and expressive concert. Within the context of this performance was a simple yet stunning unison piece that literally reduced the audience to tears. The exquisite musicality demonstrated by this choir through the simplicity of the unison song left everyone in the audience speechless.

Over the years, I have purposely programmed selections such as the aria *Ich Folge dir Gleichfalls* from J. S. Bach's *St. John's Passion* for my advanced treble choirs and other treble honor choirs. My high school community treble choir performed this aria at the 2005 ACDA National Conference. This work was not an easy "unison" piece of music for these singers! It was a challenge in every way—from the German words, to the melismatic lines, to the intervallic skips, to the Baroque phrasing and style. This piece was filled with teaching concepts! There were wonderful learning opportunities for the entire choir as well as for each individual singer as they studied and performed this work. In the final analysis, this composition was one of the choir's favorite selections and yielded a great feeling of accomplishment for each singer. The transfer of vocal technique from Bach's aria into the other selections became evident as they continued to polish the entire program. This transfer is very important to note. The lessons learned from the unison experience can be carried to new selections and different applications. It was the simple unison piece that allowed this to happen.

Even now, as my choirs rehearse compositions with more complex textures, we often go back to the unison experience of each vocal line as though it were a solo unison phrase. When all parts once again join together, the end result is more consistent tone, better intonation, a deeper sense of ensemble, and musicality that feels more organic and innate to each individual singer. As we continue to seek ways to help our singers perform with greater expressivity while improving vocal technique, the *unison choral experience* is one that should not be forgotten, regardless of the age or level of musicianship for the singers. This wonderful pedagogical tool transcends age and ability, always encouraging the singer and the conductor to look perfection "in the eye" on new and different levels.

From the Archives:
Unison Singing

"Selecting Music to Improve and Inspire Your Children's Choir: An Annotated List," by Marie Stultz. December 1993, page 35.

"The Importance of Unison Singing in Male Chorus Development," by Jonathan Reed. September 2002, page 71.

"Children's Choral Repertoire with Highlighted Pedagogical Elements," by Katrina Turman. June-July 2021, page 57.

Lynne Gackle is professor emeritus of music at the School of Music, Baylor University, and a member of ACDA's Past National Presidents Council.
Lynne_Gackle@baylor.edu

NOTES

1 Jean Ashworth Bartle, *Sound Advice: Becoming a Better Children's Choir Conductor* (New York: Oxford, 2003).

2 Doreen Rao, *We Will Sing! Choral Music Experience for Classroom Choirs* (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1994).

3 Marie Stultz, *Innocent Sounds Building Choral Tone and Artistry in Your Children's Choir* (Fenton, MO: Morning-Star Music Publishers, 1999), 85.

Music in Worship

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The Choral Style of Derek Healey in *A Posy for the Christ Child*, Op. 140

by Lester Seigel

The Christmas Carol cycle or collection has grown to a vast literature in the last 150 years, beginning with the great English settings of the Victorian and Edwardian era composers, through Benjamin Britten, Gerald Finzi, and into more recent times by composers such as John Rutter and the late Stephen Paulus. The purpose of this article is to acquaint readers with one such collection by the Canadian American composer Derek Healey (b. 1936). Healey drew on memories of childhood Christmas caroling and a lifetime of work as a composer in a variety of genres to create the choral collection "A Posy for the Christ Child" in 2014. The composition is a major style shift from the composer's longtime modernist compositional language to one based in modal scales and ethnic/folk styles. The work represents a significant contribution to the genre of the Christmas choral cycle.

Background

A native of England, Derek Healey was born in Wargrave in 1936 and attended the Royal College of Music, studying composition with Herbert Howells. He later worked with Boris Porena and Gofredo Petrassi in Italy. His website lists around fifty published works in the U.K., Canada, and the United States, including works for large ensembles, opera, choral and chamber works for all combinations of instruments.[1] The works most often performed include the suite for orchestra: *Arctic Images*, and *In Flanders' Fields* and two sets of Canadian folk songs for choir. He is now retired from teaching and spends his time with composition and research, living in the Cobble Hill district of Brooklyn, New York.[2] Healey's works are available through Canadian Music Centre, Toronto, ON, Canada.

Healey's recollections of the genesis of *A Posy for the Christ Child* were inspired by his ruminations on Christmas memories, when, as a youngster, he and a friend would sing carols outside cottages in his village. In his days directing a choir at a private boarding school, he would repeat this practice with his singers and a wind quintet, performing carols. In 1980, "in a fit of nostalgia," Healey began a practice he continues to this day of sketching out two or three short choral works over the Christmas season. As a composer whose primary work was in instrumental composition, he noted that these formed nearly all his published choral works up to that time. In contrast to his largely atonal style of that time, these short holiday works tended to be modal, tonal, or folk-based, taken from a variety of international styles, and sometimes reminiscent of composers such as Peter Warlock and Frederick Delius. Healey refers to this as his "second" or "alternate stream" compositional style. He notes that the Posy was "an 'assembled work,' analogous perhaps to a collection of photographs, or a small child's posey of wild flowers."[3] It is dedicated to Jon Washburn and the Vancouver Chamber Choir and the copyright date on the score is 2014.

A Posy for the Christ Child consists of six choral songs:

1) Behold the Days Come

2) High Word of God

3) Hark, Shepherds, how the Angels Sing

4) How Vain the Cruel Herod's Fear

5) Moonless Darkness

6) Now Blessed be Thou, Christ Jesu

The total duration of the cycle is 13'27," scoring for SATB choir with occasional divisi and some brief solos for soprano, and harp. The title reveals something of the character and intention of the cycle. The archaic English term is best known as a small floral assortment, a nosegay—something festive yet small in composition. The brevity of each song, the light scoring for mixed voices and harp all can be related to this idea. The word's etymology also suggests that "posey," an alternate spelling, is related to the term "poesy."[4] In terms of "poesy," Healey's cycle reflects the varied assortment and sources of the poets, which include two Hebrew prophets, medieval carols, English folk sources, a nineteenth-century poet and a German carol adapted by an English cleric of the early Protestant era—a diverse "posey" indeed.

1) Behold the Days Come

The first carol setting is the only one to set two Bible verses rather than poetry. As such, it may be regarded in a different light than the movements that follow. From that basis, it is not surprising that the first movement is more complex in terms of structure, harmonic usage, and texture. The form of the first piece is in two parts, based on the two prophetic verses (Table 1).

With texts drawn from Jeremiah 23 and Isaiah 7, the first movement sets the scene for the cycle with prophetic visions about the coming of the Messiah. The second part of the carol sets Isaiah 7:14 in a most imaginative way that deserves special consideration. Consider the structure of the verse itself:

> Clause 1: "Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign:"
>
> (1)This narrative states "the Lord himself" as the subject, (2) imparts information, and (3) leads to "sign" as the direct object of the clause.
>
> Clause 2: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,"
>
> (1)The phrase begins with a directive, "behold," (2) imparts information, and (3) introduces the remaining actors, namely a "virgin" and "a son,"
>
> Clause 3: "and shall call his name Immanuel."
>
> (1)This phrase consists of the directive "and shall call his name" (i.e., "the Lord" shall call him by that name, implying all should), and (2) the direct object "Immanuel."

Healey develops this three-clause phrase strategically, using simple declamatory textures rooted in unison chant style for the narrative, informational passages (including the word "Lord," curiously enough), then high-

Table 1. *A Posy for the Christ Child*, Movement 1

Part 1	Part 2
mm. 1-26 (26 measures)	mm. 27-46 (20 measures)
Text: Jeremiah 5:25	Text: Isaiah 7:14
Whole tone ascent and descent, corresponding to two clauses, with significant repetitions in the musical setting.	Harmonic plan derived from three clauses of the text, with minimal repetition in the musical setting.

lighting significant directives and actors, ("Behold," "virgin," "son," and "Immanuel") by whole-tone and expanded triads.

Looking at this section more closely, the second part of the carol sets the Isaiah passage by first declaiming in octaves, with a pedal tone F in the bass: "Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign," against a minimal harp accompaniment, clarifying the texture. The chord at "sign" is appropriately enigmatic (as prophetic "signs" can often be); a chord filling the measure comprised of five whole tones, with an added D-natural, and/or a pandiatonic chord (E♭-A-F + D-G-B), forming an F7 in third inversion and G-Major triad in second inversion. Regardless, the overall effect on this significant object of the phrase is luminous and contrasts the simplicity of the rest of the verse. Finally, the last clause, "And shall call his name," is varied from the unison treatment by a simple imitative setting, leading to the final direct object "Immanuel," which can be heard as a B11 extended triad, or alternatively as a pandiatonic triad of B-Major and A-Major. This is a creative and original compositional choice that is both effective and consistent with the overall harmonic approach within the carol (Figure 1 on the next page).

2) High Word of God

A consistent 6/8 duple meter, *Allegretto gioioso*, brings a contrast from the immensity of the opening movement, which suits the metrical version by nineteenth-century Oxford professor and hymn writer Charles Bigg to the tenth-century hymn *Verbum supernum prodiens*:

> High Word of God, who once didst come,
> Leaving thy Father and thy home,
> To succour by thy birth our kind,
> When, t'ward thy advent, time declined.

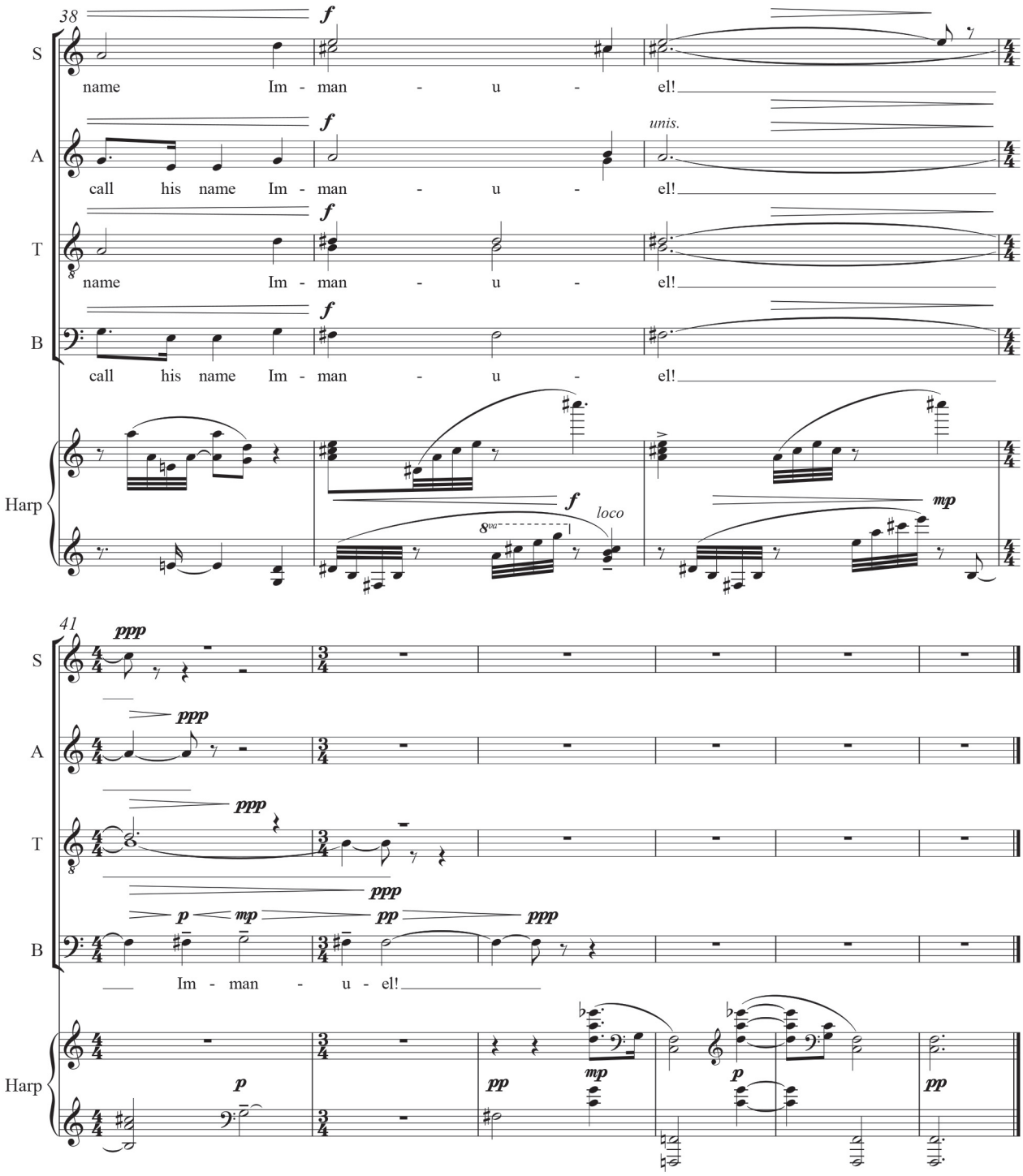

Figure 1. Derek Healey, *A Posy for the Christ Child,* mm. 38-46.
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Pour light upon us from above,
And fire our hearts with thy strong love,
That, as we hear thy Gospel read,
All fond desires may flee in dread;

That when thou comest from the skies,
Great Judge, to open thine assize,
To give each hidden sin its smart,
And crown as Kings the pure in heart,

We be not set at thy left hand,
Where sentence due would bid us stand,
But with the Saints thy face may see,
For ever wholly loving thee.[5]

In contrast to the opening piece's declamatory rhetoric and whole-tone harmonic plan, this carol exploits the potential for syncopation between duple and triple emphases inherent in 6/8, while keeping the homophonic text declamation of the first movement. The anapestic meter of Biggs' verse is cleverly interrupted by a trio of trochees in each verse: "to / **suc**-cour / **by** thy / **birth** our kind," etc., which Healey sets in 3/4.[6]

Harmonically, Healey relies on a slow harmonic rhythm and primarily diatonic sonorities, with a fondness for the spaciousness of the major seventh chords in both major and minor sections. The melodic range of a tenth in some phrases conveys joy and spaciousness (Figure 2).

3) Hark, Shepherds, how the Angels Sing

The text for this carol is noted by the composer as "Traditional Dorset." Healey has said that "The [entire] *Posy* was conceived around this carol, which had been a favorite of mine since its inception."[7]

The text is in two verses:

Hark, Shepherds, how the Angels sing
For joy that Christ is born.
A spotless Virgin did Him bring,
Into this world this morn.
A Saviour's come, by saints foretold.
Born of a spotless maid,
Foreshown by prophecies of old,
And in a manger laid.

Wise men from far, led by a star,
Which was their faithful guide,
At length did come where Jesus lay;
Then Him they glorified.
"Glory to God," arise and sing,
And usher in this morn,
Hark how the heav'nly air doth ring,
That Jesus Christ is born!

A tenor solo leads a call-and-response texture for the first four lines of the first verse. The carol is set in Dorian mode on D, with the prominent raised sixth (B♮) lending a rustic quality to the melody. The tempo marking (♪ = 96) in a 2/4 meter lends a solemn yet energetic feel to the musical flow, aided by a ringing ostinato in the harp with elements of D minor and A minor against a similar sonority sung wordlessly by the choir. The second half of the first verse adapts the call-

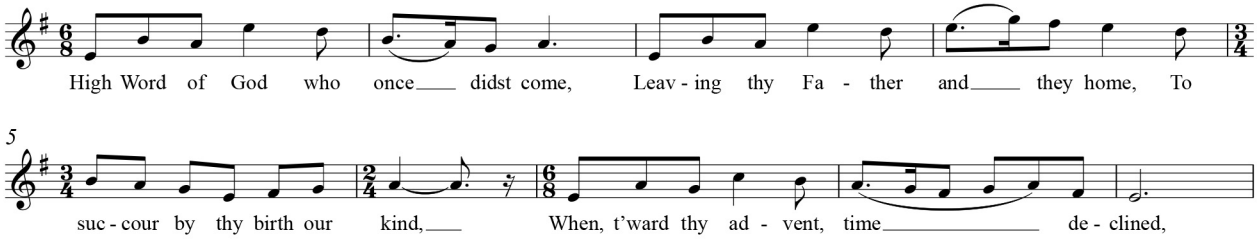

Figure 2. Derek Healey, *A Posy for the Christ Child,* mm. 1-9.
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and-response texture to a two-line declamation, as the harmony shifts to Dorian mode on A.

As the "Glory to God" is reached at the end of the second verse, Healey enriches the texture with some divisi in thirds to form parallel triads. The six-voice texture concludes a carefully controlled buildup from the arrival of the Wise Men to the climactic point of this carol, which concludes in seven parts by the final cadence employing the Picardy third.

4) How vain the cruel Herod's fear

The text of this carol is one of the great translations by John Mason Neale (1818-1866) of a fifth-century text by Coelius Sedulius, well known for the Christmas poem *A solis ortus cardine*. Neale's iambic tetrameter lends itself well to Healey's choice of the 6/8 rhythm. The composer prevents the meter from becoming hackneyed with carefully placed syncopations in 3/4 time. His text setting is almost exclusively homophonic, and the *molto ritmico* indication reinforces the sense that this carol is one of the more dramatic moments within the work.

The form is of a modified rondo (Table 2 on the next page). Note the harmonies are not always diatonic; Healey frequently employs modal elements. The last two sections, based on C, are the most typical of this, and the longest harmony employed.

5) Moonless darkness

Subtitled "a nocturne," this is the only movement to suggest a solo voice. These qualities perfectly suit the text by the Anglo-Catholic mystic Gerard Manley Hopkins.

Moonless darkness stands between.
Past, the Past no more be seen!
But the Bethl'hem star may lead me
To the sight of Him Who freed me
From the self that I have been.

Make me pure, Lord: Thou art holy;
Make me meek, Lord: Thou wert lowly;
Now beginning, and alway:
Now begin on Christmas day.

The mix of Romantic imagery and piety found in this poem suggests a rich harmonic treatment and utmost care in terms of timbre in the musical setting. The 2/4 rhythm suggests a gentle rocking, a most nurturing association, and a reference to the opening of no. 1 is heard in the rhythm of the harp octaves, creating a subtle link between the opening of the two halves of the cycle.

Harmonically, the piece hews to the Dorian mode on A.[8] The stability of the slow harmonic rhythm emphasizes color rather than activity, and the F-sharp diminished-minor seventh chord sustained over the first eight measures further reduces any sense of instability, as does the use of a dominant pedal tone (A natural) throughout.

When the harmonic progression begins, Healey uses a good deal of parallel quartal chords, leading to a weak resolution in m. 13 on B-minor7, then a new phrase on "But the Bethl'hem star" in A-minor heralds the first "action" in the poem (Figure 3a and 3b on the next two pages). It is notable that in this carol, Healey indulges in re-statement of poetic lines to strengthen the musical form. Both verses of the poem are repeated, with slight enrichments of harmonic texture and counterpoint each time, yielding an A-A'-B-B' form. The effect is to give more substance and balance to the piece and suggest imperativeness in the supplicatory prayer that forms the second verse.

Table 2. ***A Posy for the Christ Child*****, Movement 4.**

Section	Text (verse)	Principal key
A	verse 1	Am---Cm
B	verse 2	Cm
A′	verse 3	Am
B′	verse 4	Mixolydian on C (with ♭7)
A″	verse 5	

6) Now Blessed be Thou, Christ Jesu

The last flower in this posey is a consummate "finale" in the Mixolydian mode on F, "*Quasi allegro, con un ritmo stretto*." The lightness of the musical setting is reinforced in the reference in the second verse that Christ's birth "mak[es] us children of his light." Additionally, Healey uses a "la-la" accompaniment on an F pedal in this verse to suggest a dance-like quality in the texture.

Variations in each verse are carefully parceled out to avoid monotony. Verse 2 is set in three-part harmony in SAT, with echoes of *fauxbordon* style and the "la-la" F pedal mentioned above. In verse 3 the melody moves to the tenor, with a crisp and effective harmonization in the upper two voices that support without overshadowing.

The third verse is set with the melody in the soprano, with a simpler harmonic setting and a more homophonic texture. The harp part, which is intricate throughout the carol, is thinned to a two-part texture in a nice contrast. The final verse appropriately allows the liberty of "elaborating" the melody in the alto and tenor lines, relying on the listener's aural memory of the prior repetitions, while the soprano descant and a fanfare-like tenor line as well as some well-placed *glissandi* in the harp to conclude the entire work in a festive manner.

Conclusion

A Posy for the Christ Child is a delightful work to perform and to hear. The harp accompaniment is quite demanding and must be executed by a player of the highest caliber. Healey's musical style expertly balances modernist compositional techniques and the modal/folk

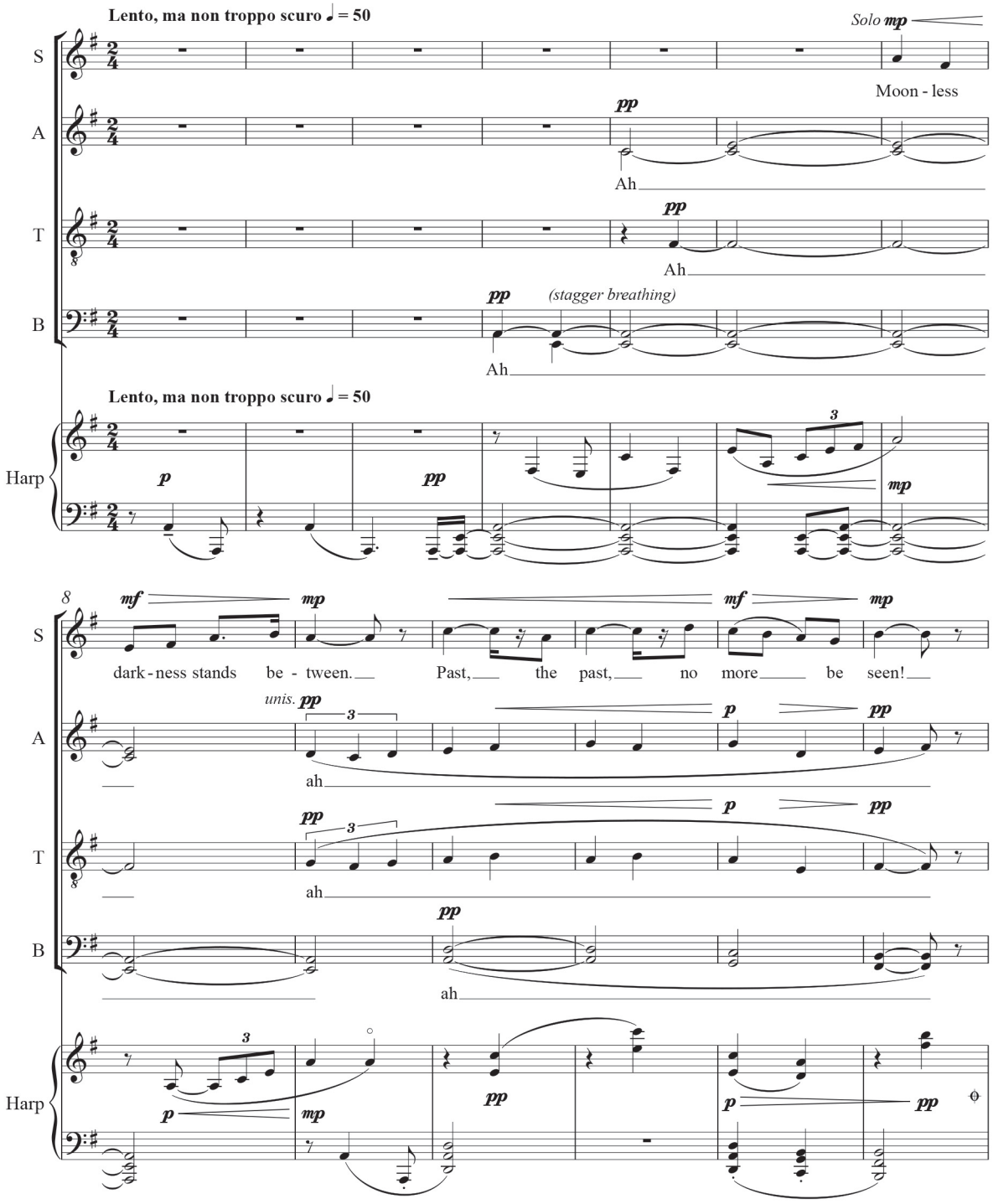

Figure 3a. Derek Healey, *A Posy for the Christ Child,* mm. 1-13.
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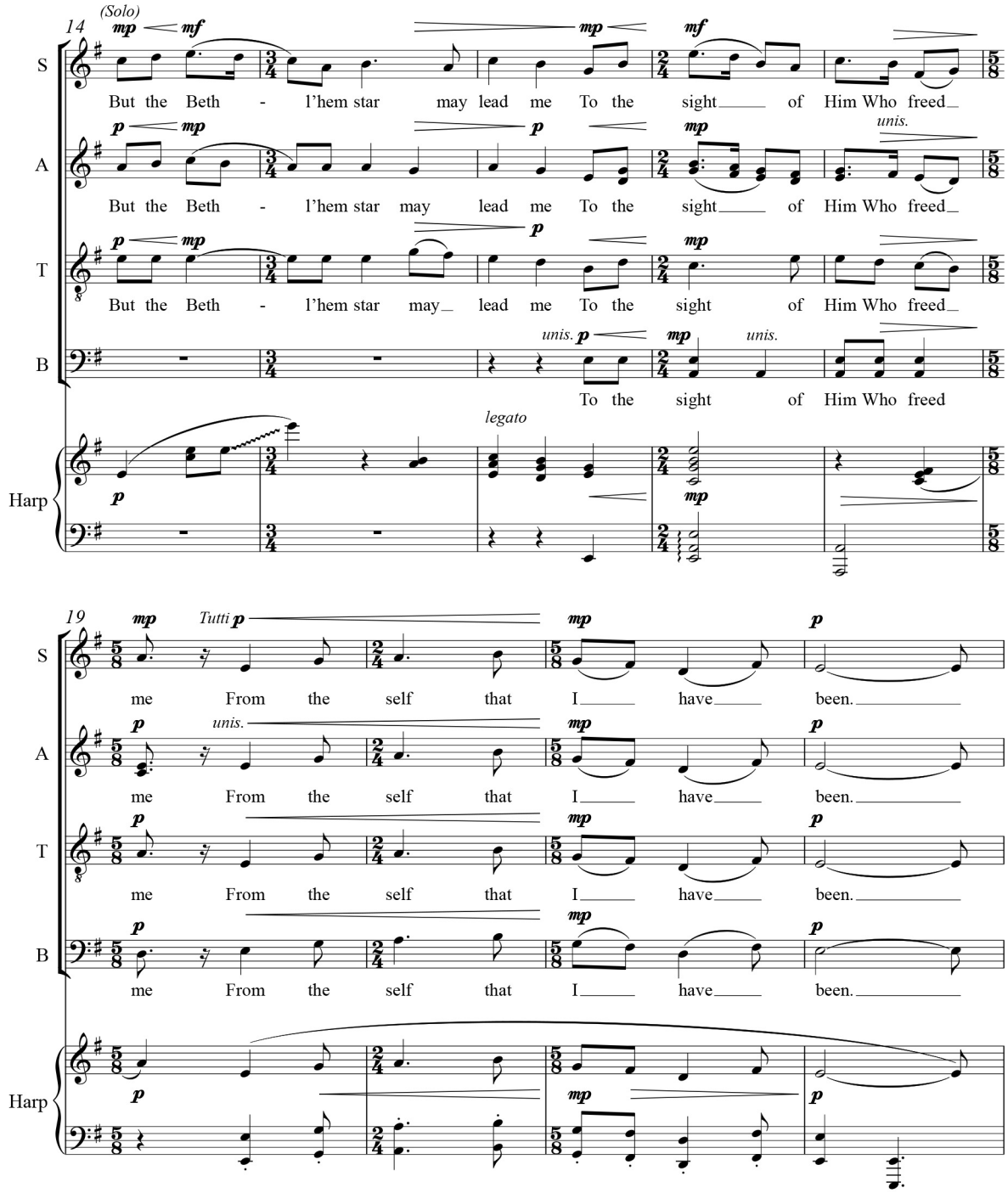

Figure 3b. Derek Healey, *A Posy for the Christ Child,* mm. 14-22.
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idiom of the British Isles made so popular by Vaughan Williams, Grainger, and others. The choral parts are accessible and will prove to be a rewarding experience for those who seek music that challenges and delights in equal measure. CJ

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NOTES

[1] www.derekhealey.com

[2] Adapted from the composer's biography at http://www.derekhealey.com/index.html#review and emails from the composer to the author in 2023.

[3] Ibid.

[4] See *The Oxford English Dictionary* (www.oed.com)

[5] In *The English Hymnal*, 1906, viii, the word "Lord" is used in place for "kind" in stanza 1, interrupting the rhymed couplets of each verse. As Dr. Healey pointed out to me in an email, his version is from the 1933 edition, and he noted the curious use of the word "kind" in the older version, despite its interruption to the rhyme scheme.

[6] Note that the last word, "kind," is also set in a simple meter on its single syllable, further reinforcing the syncopation of the preceding measure within the overall 6/8 pattern.

[7] From email to the author.

[8] The sole exception is an F♮ that appears twice, in the climactic phrase "Make me pure, Lord, Thou art holy/Make me meek, Lord, Thou art lowly," which gives a subdued but effective emphasis as an accented neighbor tone.

COMPOSITION INITIATIVES NATIONAL STANDING COMMITTEE CALL FOR MEMBERS

ACDA is seeking Composition Initiatives Committee (CIC) members. All interested and qualified individuals are invited to submit a curriculum vitae and letter of application to Robert Bode, CIC chair, by Thursday, September 5, 2024.

About the Composition Initiatives Committee: The Composition Initiatives Committee of the American Choral Directors Association aims to support and advocate for composers of new choral music. The committee manages several composition competitions, including the Brock Prize for Professional Composers and the Brock Prize for Student Composers. The committee also facilitates the Brock Memorial Commission, Composer Fair, and the newly established Focus Prize, which is designed to address identified gaps in the repertoire needs of ACDA members.

About Standing Committee Membership: ACDA Standing Committees Members are appointed for a two-year term, renewable twice, for a total of six years. Appointments are made by recommendation from the Committee to the Executive Committee of ACDA.

About the Role and Qualifications: The successful candidate for CIC membership will be a passionate advocate for the creation and performance of new choral music. The committee welcomes composers, conductors, and music educators of all levels.

Interested? Please email your CV and letter of application by **Thursday, September 5, 2024, to Robert Bode (RobertBode1957@gmail.com).**

DIVERSITY INITIATIVES NATIONAL STANDING COMMITTEE CALL FOR MEMBERS

ACDA is seeking Diversity Initiatives Committee (DIC) members. All interested and qualified individuals are invited to submit a curriculum vitae and letter of application, including a vision statement for ADEIBR in the Association, to Arreon A. Harley-Emerson, DIC chair, by Thursday, September 5, 2024.

About the Diversity Initiatives Committee: The Diversity Initiatives Committee of the American Choral Directors Association aims to foster diversity and inclusivity in our membership, ensembles, repertoire, and offerings through active engagement with underrepresented and historically marginalized choral musicians and potential choral participants. We will bring about a broader definition and understanding of choral excellence both as a result of this inclusivity and to maintain our relevance and expand both the reach and impact of our profession and its musical scope.

About Standing Committee Membership: ACDA Standing Committees Members are appointed for a two-year term, renewable twice, for a total of six years. Appointments are made by recommendation from the Committee to the Executive Committee of ACDA.

About the Role and Qualifications: The successful candidate for DIC membership will be a passionate advocate for diversity and inclusion with a commensurate history and background with demonstrated success leading diversity initiatives in ACDA state chapters or regions. The DIC also encourages those who have not served in ACDA capacities but have significant ADEIBR scholarship and leadership experience to apply.

Interested? Please email your CV and letter of application by **Thursday, September 5, 2024, to Arreon A. Harley-Emerson (arreon@equitysings.com) and CC the Diversity Initiatives Committee's inbox (DIC@acda.org).**

2024 ACDA INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON RESEARCH IN CHORAL SINGING

by Bryan E. Nichols, Symposium Chair <bnichols@psu.edu>

The Fourth International ACDA Symposium on Research in Choral Singing was held April 25-26, 2024, hosted by the Pennsylvania State University at the Big 10 Conference Center in Rosemont/Chicago, Illinois. To ensure a robust in-person meeting, US-based presenters appeared in person and attendees from all countries were encouraged to attend remotely. The meeting featured three pre-conference workshops: 1) Historical performance practice by Carolann Buff, 2) Qualitative research techniques by Julia Shaw, and 3) Quantitative research techniques by Brian Shaw. To kick off the symposium, a welcome was offered by Jessica Nápoles as chair of the ACDA Research & Publications committee and Robyn Hilger as ACDA Executive Director.

The fourth symposium was preceded by an in-person symposium hosted at Northwestern University (2018), a remote asynchronous symposium (Georgia State University, 2020), and a remote synchronous symposium (Georgia State University & Penn State University, 2022). This year's symposium began with the 2020 Herford dissertation prize winner, A. J. Keller, who gave an exciting presentation with musical excerpts on the Danish composer Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen (1932-2016). A. J. is the associate director of choral organizations at Northwestern University and the founder and artistic director of Stare at the Sun, a Chicago-based, twenty-four-voice professional chamber choir specializing in the curation and commissioning of music by living composers. The dissertation itself can be downloaded as a PDF without the need of a login at this address: https://arch.library.northwestern.edu/concern/generic_works/37720d088?locale=en

The dissertation prize winner was followed by twenty-one research presentations and twenty-one poster presentations in the form of lightning talks. A book author session featured five publications from recent years:

- Bridget Sweet, *Thinking Outside the Voice Box: Adolescent Voice Change in Music Education*
- Elizabeth Parker, *Adolescents on Music*
- Wendy Moy, *Resurrecting Song: A Pathway Forward for the Choral Art in the Time of Pandemics*
- Matthew Garrett, *Honoring Trans and Gender-Expansive Students in Music Education*
- Elisa Dekaney, *Music at the Intersection of Brazilian Culture: An Introduction to Music, Race, and Food*

The schedule featured a performance by Iowa City West High School (David Haas, conductor). Small Group Discussion Breakouts were convened by editorial board members from the *International Journal for Research in Choral Singing* (IJRCS), including:

- Vocal Health for All Ages (Melissa Grady)
- Gender in Choral Singing (Stephen Paparo & Matthew Garrett)
- Pedagogy, Skill Acquisition and Development (Rebecca Atkins)
- Adolescent-Specific Topics (Alfonso Jesús Elorriaga Llor, Patrick Freer & Jamey Kelley)

An international group of nearly seventy choral scholars met in-person and virtually to present and discuss research in a range of formats. The primary goals of the Symposium were to define the current state of research in choral singing, and to identify and coordinate issues and methodologies for future efforts. Participants represented forty-seven colleges and universities in the United States, with others representing universities in Austria, Australia, Canada, England, Germany, Hungary, and Spain.

The Symposium was a project of the American Choral Directors Association, supported by the National Standing Committee on Research and Publications. Among the Committee's many responsibilities is oversight of the *International Journal of Research in Choral Singing*, and the Symposium was developed to encourage a body of scholarship that might be published in the IJRCS. The IJRCS can be accessed online, free of charge, through the "publications" tab or at www.acda.org/ijrcs.

Symposium Leadership

The Symposium on Research in Choral Singing was hosted by The Pennsylvania State University (USA) in conjunction with Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (Spain) and De Montfort University (England). I served as Conference Chair, and Motje Wolf (De Montfort University, England) was Program Chair. Three student assistants rounded out the planning and hosting team: Jeffrey Chan (Penn State University), Justin Caithaml (University of Maryland), and Nicole Wills (Eastern Michigan University). The fifteen-member Editorial Board of the IJRCS evaluated all Symposium proposals: Rebecca Atkins (USA), Melissa C. Brunkan (USA), Alfonso Jesús Elorriaga Llor (Spain), Jason Goopy (Australia), Melissa L. Grady (USA), Scott D. Harrison (Australia), Jamey Kelley (USA), Marci L. Major (USA), Stephen A. Paparo (USA), Helmut Schaumberger (Austria), Julia T. Shaw (USA), Antonis Ververis (Greece), Justin J. West (USA), and Patrick Freer (Editor, USA), Adam White (Asst. Editor, USA). IT and other support was provided by Scott Davis, ACDA's IT Project Manager.

Call for Nominations – Editorial Board

Do you know someone who has contributions to make to choral research and to ACDA publications? See below for how you can formally nominate them . . . or you can simply request that we reach out to someone you feel might do great work; write to IJRCS@acda.org.

The editor of the *International Journal of Research in Choral Singing* requests nominations for 6-year membership on the Editorial Board. Terms begin January 1, 2025. Electronic files of nomination materials will be accepted through September 15, 2024, addressed to Patrick K. Freer, *IJRCS* Editor, at IJRCS@acda.org.

Editorial Board. Nominees should hold a completed doctorate and have a record of research publications. Nominations, including self-nominations, must include: 1) a letter that includes description of the nominee's qualifications to evaluate quantitative and qualitative research manuscripts; the letter should also highlight the nominee's most important research publications and any previous editorial/reviewer work; 2) the nominee's ACDA membership number/membership expiration date*; 3) the nominee's Curriculum Vitae; and 4) a PDF or direct link to a representative published research article selected by the nominee. Application materials may be emailed directly by the nominee; a letter of nomination from another individual may be sent separately, if desired.

*International nominees will need to hold ACDA membership upon appointment to the Editorial Board.

CHORAL JOURNAL CONTACT INFORMATION

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Choral Reviews	Amanda Bumgarner	abumgarner@acda.org
Lift Every Voice	Amanda Bumgarner	abumgarner@acda.org
On the Voice	Matthew Hoch	mrh0032@auburn.edu
Recorded Sound Reviews	Laura Wiebe	laurawiebe@gmail.com
Rehearsal Breaks	Jennifer Rodgers	rodgersj@iastate.edu
Research Report	Bryan Nichols	bnichols@psu.edu
Student Times	Micah Bland	mbland1613@gmail.com

For feature article submissions, contact the editor, Amanda Bumgarner, at <abumgarner@acda.org>.
View full submission guidelines at acda.org

Book and music publishers should send books, octavos, and discs for review to:
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OTHER ACDA PUBLICATIONS CONTACT INFORMATION

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