P A N E L  O N E

Events of the Old Testament

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I. I’ll Make Me a Man

(\textit{Genesis I.26})

Just as the late James Weldon Johnson, the Aframerican poet, heard some of the mastersinging ministers of my people in his childhood in Florida, so it was my childhood experience in my “Angel Mo” community in Georgia to hear the same sermons sung-preached by Charles Foster and others. These great song sermons and prayers, too, of the mighty Aframerican preachers of pre-Civil War days became Ritual and thereafter were given by all the great and near-great who followed.

The particular song sermon, “I’ll Make Me a Man,” which is the first song of this collection, is an excerpt from the “Creation” sermon. Mr. Johnson’s collection of poems called \textit{God’s Trombones} contains the words of this sermon in its entirety.

When I recall the mastersinger types, the original creator of the song sermon, “Creation,” stands vividly before me, a giant in stature, commanding in presence and eloquent in delivery. Yes, I see him in magnificent, dynamic gesture fired by the Divine Spirit as he strides (even prances) over the pulpit platform with the Holy Bible on his shoulder, depicting the manner of God’s creative methods in these thunderously eloquent tones: “\textit{Then God walked around.”} In these words are majesty, and the sonorous simplicity of utterance such as to stir the imagination. This great master of oratory, as with the plastic strokes of a sculptor, carved out sentence upon sentence which seemed to pause in their cosmic flight to embrace a loving image tenderly, “\textit{Like a mammy bending over her babe.”}

“\textit{And man became a living soul.”} With these words, given as with a hammer stroke in a stirring outburst of eloquence, ends this truly great song sermon. It was born of masterful imagery of a heaven-taught soul — but otherwise untutored. The music in this song realizes its mood in a setting spare and tense which alternates between chant and dramatic recitation; where all is bound together by an inevitable rhythmic pulse that rises to an emotional climax with the reiterated, exultant “\textit{Amen.”}
I'll Make Me a Man

Arranged by Roland Hayes

Voice

Largo

Recitativo—ad lib.

Then God walked around, And God looked around on all that He had made.

He looked at His sun, He looked at His moon, And His

Hi-stars... He looked on His world— with all its living things, And God

said, "I'm lonely still!"

God

col canto

a tempo quasi vivo
Declamando

sat down on the side of a hill, God sat down where He could think, God

sat down by a deep, wide river, God sat down with His head in His hands, God

thought and thought, till He thought "I'll make me a man!"

Up from the bed of the river, God scooped-a the
And by the bank of the river, God kneeled Him down. And there this great God almighty!

Who lit the sun and fixed it in the sky, Who flung the stars to the most far corners of the night, Who rounded the earth in the hollow of His hand, this
great God, This great God like a mammy bending over her babe,
kneeled down in the dust, toiling over this a lump of clay till He
shaped it, He shaped it, till He shaped it in His own image. Then
into it He blew the breath of life, And man became a living soul.
II. Let My People Go!

(Exodus VIII.1)

Exodus VIII.1 is clearly an evocation that mirrors the lot of my race as a people. It cannot be said too often that behind the heartbreaking beauty of human fate stands in undiminishing, stark reality the story of man's injustice and cruelty to his fellow man, as an accusing, moral reminder toward a better way of life. As Moses opens his soul to the presence of God, so we experience in this song a mutation, a melting over of ourselves through Moses to God. There is grave simplicity in the lines of this noble song that has stamped it indelibly with universal human appeal. When France was in the grip of the Nazis, its poets and artists of the underground sought expression through the symbol of the word. There is evidence of this kind of camouflage in "Let My People Go." Not daring to speak openly of freedom, my people, enslaved, found through song a means to give this utterance of incredible strength.

Let My People Go!

Arranged by Roland Hayes

Maestoso

Piano

1. When Is-rael was in Egypt's land, Let my peo-ple go.
2. "Thus saith the Lord," bold Mo-ses said, "Let my peo-ple go!"
Op'pressed so hard they could not stand,
"If not I'll strike your first born dead!"

Let my people go.
Let my people go.

Go down Moses

way down in Egypt's land.
Tell old Pharaoh to

D.S. D.S.

let my people go.
let my people go.
III. Deep River

(*Joshua III.8*)

At the source of this tune ring the words from Joshua: "When ye are come to the brink of the water of Jordan, ye shall stand still in Jordan."

It is primitive in its wonder; yes, ecstasy before the incredible. "As God was with Moses, so shall I be with him at the time of my delivery." In the embrace of death lies fulfillment. As celebrated as the theme of Beethoven's Fifth, the musical phrase, "Deep river, my home is over Jordan," lies deeply rooted in the consciousness of mankind. It has a suggestive quality of inescapable power. Three times the last phrase, "I want to cross over into camp ground," is repeated. That repetition, a sort of incantation, is not unlike the litanies of the Catholic Church. Repetitions are phenomena of imaginative, poetic intoxication that, choosing word sounds irrespective of meaning, identifies the person with the mood. Thus I remember Will Garlington felling a tree and chanting a monotony of syllables, transforming the felling of the tree, and himself, into an entity.

Deep River

*Arranged by Roland Hayes*
want to cross over into camp-ground. O don't you want to go to that
gospel feast, To that promised land, where all is peace. Lord, I
want to cross over into camp-ground, Lord, I want to cross over into camp-ground.
IV. Ezekiel Saw de Wheel

(Ezekiel 1.21-23)

There is a kind of humor, a quality of smile that can accompany serious matter, either as a natural balance to gravity or as the more elusive spirit of radiance. Often, in the songs of my people, a light humor, not lacking in serious import, however, can enter very aptly and deftly into reverence. We have a way of standing on both feet and, though we lose ourselves in the contemplation of our spiritual destiny as in the preceding songs, we are children of the earth. The earthiness enables us to give voice to our dialogue with God in the manner, at times, of the cajoling child. We surround God on all sides. So our rhythms and metaphors dance before God. With a child’s delight at glimpsing a toy, we lift, temporarily, the realism of an object out of the context of a poem and it lights with sunny frivolity. “Ezekiel Saw de Wheel” sings of the oneness of the human family — “De big wheeel run by faith; an’ de lit’l wheeel run-a by de grace of God.” The power of the symbol, the profundity of the experience, are barely hidden under the saving grace of light. The big wheel — there springs to mind a big wheel in a circus — motion, gaiety, wonder, spontaneous humor.

Ezekiel Saw de Wheel

Arranged by Roland Hayes

Voice

Piano

Way up in demiddle of de air, E-ze-kiel saw de wheel, Way in demiddle of de air. E-
ze-kiel saw de wheel of time, Ev-ry spoke was of hu-man kind, A

wheel in a wheel, Way in de middle of de air. O de

col canto

big wheel run by faith, An' de lit'-l wheel run-a by de grace of God, A

wheel in a wheel, Way in de middle of de air.
Lento declamatory—quasi recitativo

Way over yonder in the harvest field
Mind my brother how you walk on the cross

Way in the middle of the air.
O de
O your

Tempo primo

Angels a shovin' at the Chariot wheel
Foot might slip an' your soul get lost

Way in the middle of the air.

D.S.

Tempo primo

Ze-kiel saw the wheel,
Way up in the middle of the air,

D.S.

Ze-kiel saw the wheel
Way in the middle of the air.

Re-kiel saw de wheel of time, Ev'ry spoke was of hu-man kind. A

wheel in a wheel, Way in de middle of de air. O de

big wheel run by faith, An' de lit'-l wheel run-a by de grace of God, A

moto rit a tempo

wheel in a wheel, Way in de middle of de air.
V. Lit’l David Play on Your Harp

(Psalms CXXXVII.4)

"Lit’l David play on yo’ harp.” How deeply the accents of this most beautiful among the Psalms must have haunted the first singer, "Little David." "How can we sing the Lord’s songs in a strange land?" Was it like an echo of his own people’s anguish finding constancy in song and word? I recall years ago, when with the unpredictable waywardness of artistic consciousness this song came back to me. On a muleback ride-walk over fields and up the slopes of Granada, in Spain’s Sierra Nevadas, and thinking of Schubert’s “Der Musenssohn,” I suddenly heard the tones of a flute, played by a peasant coming across the hills. With that single sound, so full of pathos, there flashed through me the sunny tenderness of “Lit’l David,” with a definite clarity of its meaning and feeling.

Lit’l David Play on Your Harp

Arranged by Roland Hayes

Voice

Piano

Allegrto, legato e sempre marcato

Lit’l Da-vid play on yo’ harp, Hal-le-

Lu, Hal-le-lu-jah, Lit’l Da-vid play on yo’ harp, Hal-le-lu.
David had a harp, Had ten strings, Touch one string, An' de whole heaven ring. 
David play on yo' harp, Hallelu, Hallelu, Hallelujah; Lit'l David play on yo' harp, Hallelu. I say to David, "Come play me a
David said to me, "How can I play, when I'm in a strange land?" David, play on yo' harp, Hallelujah.

David play on yo' harp, Hallelujah, Lit'l David play on yo' harp, Hallelujah.

David play on yo' harp, Hallelujah, Lit'l David play on yo' harp, Hallelujah.
VI. Dry Bones

(*Ezekiel XXXVII.1–15*)

This song deals with the resurrection of my people. Its hope, like that of Israel, is revived in living with the promise of Christ’s Kingdom. “I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them forevermore.”

In the form of an exhortation, this ringing narrative chooses as always the most vivid means to appeal dramatically through the emotions. By similar means the Biblical oratorios react on us, and indeed the opening recitative suggests the spaciousness of a Handel recitative.

Elsewhere in this collection we have texts drawn from Biblical chapters far more simple to follow than the complexities of Ezekiel. Here in his delivery of the sermon on the “dry bones” is an example of how the gifted Aframerican preacher adapted himself to the limitations of his congregation. To heighten the effect and to ease the way to the understanding of his flock, he impersonates the questioning layman in his congregation. “Tell me, how did de bones get to-gether wid de leg bone?” He poses the query with such fervor that the whole of his congregation assumes the attitude of the imaginary questioner — while his tones hint before the unfolding of the miracle.

The mode interchanges between major and minor. The narrative of his discourse is told in repeated phrases, bit by bit — a voice from the congregation interrupting at intervals — while his listeners, with wonder and eagerness, wait to hear the prophecy fulfilled.
Dry Bones

Recitative quasi

God called Ezekiel by His word.

ad lib.

"Go down and prophesy!" "Yes, Lord!"

Ezekiel prophesied by the power of God;
commanded de bones to rise.

Dry bones, deygon-na walk a-roun' wid de

Dry bones, why don't you

rise an' hear de word of de Lord.

"Tell me,
how did de bones get together wid de leg

bone? Prophesy!

"Ah, well, de toe bone connected wid de

foot bone; De foot bone connected wid de

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Ankle bone; De ankle bone connected wid de

Leg bone; De leg bone connected wid de

Knee bone; De knee bone connected wid de thigh

Bone. Rise and hear de word of de Lord!
VII. Give-a Way, Jordan

(Josua III)

For me there lies in this melody the poignancy of something far away, ancestral. In the symbol of River Jordan lies promise of magic fulfillment. Through it, through the flow of music and word, sings the meekness and humility of the soul crossing over to the Throne of God. The reference to Nebuchadnezzar seems sudden and irrelevant. But no doubt this fragment from the Book of Daniel had its own poetic logic for the first singer.

Give-a Way, Jordan

Arranged by Roland Hayes
Give-a-way, Jordan, Give-a-way, Jordan, Lord,

Give-a-way, Jordan, I mus' go for to see my Lord.

No-bu-chad-nez-zar sat on his royal seat. I mus' go for to see my Lord. He
I saw the three Hebrew children bound hands and feet...

I must go for to see my Lord.

Give a way,

Jordan, Give a way, Jordan, Lord,

Give a way, Jordan, I must go for to see my Lord.
VIII. Two Wings

*(Ezekiel 1.2, 5, 6)*

Again we find, in “Two Wings,” evidence of detachment of humor that achieves a freedom. It is a priceless heritage in my people’s fantasy to set free serious concern — life, death, union with God — through the ability to laugh, to smile, to follow gaily in the steps of poetic suggestion. A particular charm of this song lies in its syncopation, which must be sung without stress or heavy accent, on tiptoe, so to speak. The motion of the melody is like reaching for something not quite within reach. With the accompaniment played in strict time, but with elasticity here and there, the airy quality of the voice part will be realized. To escape the triviality which a too thumpy accent might give to this beautiful song, it is well to remember the sheer ecstasy of mystic longing that trembles in word and music. To me, the song represents a metamorphosis clearly taken from Ezekiel, Chapter I, verses 2, 5, 6. The more ardent, slower middle part of the song achieves a synthesis of Old and New Testament promise and fulfillment.

Two Wings

Arranged by Roland Hayes

Voice

Piano

Gracefully, and with easy (not thumpy) motion

Lord, I want two wings to

veil my face, I want two wings to fly away; Lord,
I want two wings to veil my face, And I want two wings for to
fly away; Lord, I want two wings to veil my face, Lord,
I want two wings to fly away. I want two wings to
veil my face, And I want two wings for to fly away.
Lento—pleadingly

O, meet me, Jesus, meet me,

(pleadingly) molto legato e sempre

meet me in the air, And if these two wings fail me, Just

give me another pair. O, I want two wings to

a tempo—gracefully

veil my face, Lord, I want two wings to fly a way, Lord,
I want two wings to veil my face, And I want two wings for to fly away...
I want two wings to fly away, Lord, I want two wings to veil my face, And I want two wings for to fly away.
IX. Didn’t My Lord Deliver Daniel?

(Daniel VI)

“Didn’t My Lord Deliver Daniel?” corroborates what is said in my remarks on “Give-a-Way, Jordan.” The soul about to cross over recalls the promise to Joshua in the Old Testament. The music is built on a pentatonic scale and has, despite its apparent hopeful character, a strange feeling of poignant longing.

Didn’t My Lord Deliver Daniel?

Arranged by Roland Hayes

Voice Allegretto

Did-n’t

Piano

my Lord de-liv-er Dan-iel, de-liv-er Dan-iel, de-liv-er

Dan-iel_ A-did-n’t my Lord de-liv-er Dan-iel, An-a
why not a ev-er-y man? He de-liv-ered Dan-iel from de li-ons den, An'-Jo-nah from de bel-ly of de whale. An' de He-brew chil-lun from de fi-er-y fur-nace, An'-a why not de-liv-er po'-me? A-did-n't me?


1. D.S. 2
X. A Witness
(The Sum of Many Prophets)

In characteristic and picturesque pattern, the narrator in “A Witness” summons prophets of both Old and New Testaments. Knitting them together, he presents to his congregation the oneness of Truth. He concludes the song sermon with the pertinent question: “Who’ll be a witness for my Lord?” This song sermon, like “Dry Bones” and “I’ll Make Me a Man,” seems to me to be based on sound principles of psychology and aesthetics. Audience participation, rapt attention in the art of worship by means of word and music, has been pointed out to me by religious leaders as of significant importance. The need for such identification with religious feeling is greatly felt. Perhaps the ecstasy, the forgetting of one’s self in a communal feeling of faith, trust and love, contains a hint for both music and religion. In these simple, naïve, religious song poems may live the germ for some future art form, which as with Bach and the chorale will achieve its typical, grandiose expression. In their very simplicity, these song sermons speak, profoundly, to whoever hears them with simplicity of heart and reverence for their spiritual and human truths.

A Witness

Arranged by Roland Hayes

Voice

Moderato e legato

My soul is a witness for my Lord,
My soul is a witness for my Lord. You read about Adam, he was the first.
God created him out of the dust, Then God made a woman, and He called her Eve, An'
told her not to eat of the forbidden tree. Now that's the first witness for my Lord, That's
—the first witness for my Lord.

You read again, and you'll understand, Methuselah was the oldest man. He
lived nine hundred an' sixty-nine; He died an' went to Hea'vn, Lord, in due time. Me-
thus'lah was a wit-ness for my Lord; Me-thus'lah was a wit-ness for my Lord.
You read a-bout Sam-son from his birth; He
was the strong-est man on earth. Sam-son went out at a one time, An'}
killed a thousand of de Phil-is-tine. De-li-lah fooled Sam-son, this we know, For the

Ho-ly Bi-ble tells us so. She shaved his head just as clean as your hand. An’ his

strength be-came as a com-mon man. Now that’s an-oth-er wit-ness for my Lord. Now_

that’s an-oth-er wit-ness for my Lord.
Daniel was a Hebrew child, Who went to pray to his God for a while. The king at once for Daniel did send, An' he put him down in de lions' den. De Lord sent an angel, de lions for to keep. Then Daniel laid down, An' he went to sleep. Dan...